

The Works
of
Henry Mahan

Volume 1
Containing

With New Testament Eyes
Pictures of Christ in the Old Testament

and

The Gospel According to Isaiah

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Henry Mahan

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Produced and Published
by
Grace Books

A ministry of
Grace Baptist Church of Danville, KY

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Grace Baptist Church of Danville, KY
2734 Old Stanford Road
Danville, KY 40422

Cover design by Peter Meney

Cover Photo by Mike Bertrand

ISBN 978-1-4357-0619-4

Printed by Lulu Press Inc.

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Foreword

WHILE it is a difficult task to comment on my pastor and father, and those books of his being recorded in this volume, I do consider it a high honor and a privilege. Although this foreword will most certainly be perceived by some as merely from a personal (familial) standpoint, yet, I can truly say, I consider this man my pastor first. Scripture tells us ‘render honor to whom honor is due’, and to ‘Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow . . .’ Therefore, I consider it a privilege and a duty to honor and remember him in this way.

As my faithful pastor and teacher for over 50 years, it was that faithfulness that most stands out to me in the ministry of Henry Mahan. He was (and still is) faithful in the clear and consistent exposition of God’s Word, which alone ‘is able to make thee wise unto salvation.’ It was this ‘preaching of the Word, in season and out of season’ that the Lord used to bless so many over the years and me in particular. The commentaries are the compilation of years of Bible studies in the local church of which brother Mahan was pastor, and of which I was a member and eventually an elder. It was these studies from God’s Word that can be looked back upon as the means which God used to build that church and produce several preachers and teachers as well. In the early 1980’s, a ‘Preacher’s School’ was established by brother Mahan, with a dozen or so young men in attendance. In that school the thing most impressed upon us was the plain, consistent, and faithful exposition of Scripture. Most of those men learned that lesson well. I hope I have.

These short Bible commentaries are the result of brother Mahan gleaning several more lengthy commentaries of John Gill, Matthew Henry, Matthew Poole, John Calvin and others, as well as from personal experience in the word. He has done the hard work for us of bringing out the best and shortest explanation of a passage. They are the first to which I turn when in need of the clearest, most concise meaning. When first printed, a self-proclaimed scholar, in an attempt to criticize them, actually

complimented them when he said, 'They are too simple, and only say what the scripture says.'

After the New Testament commentaries, several studies of the Old Testament pictures and types of Christ followed. As with the commentaries, these are especially useful for the same purpose. These pictures of Christ bring the reader straight to the point of seeing Christ in scripture. Someone who has never seen these beautiful and amazing types of Christ will be greatly blessed, as well as those who study them over again. My pastor use to say, 'No type can stand on four legs.' By that he meant, no one type or picture can perfectly represent the Lord Jesus Christ and his great work of salvation. That is why there are so many. However, the ones included in this volume are some of the standards and the most fundamental to the faith. From the 'woman's seed' in Genesis to the 'Messenger of the covenant' in Malachi, Christ is clearly set forth in these commentaries.

It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend these works to the preacher, teacher or anyone looking for a true, clear, and easy to read help in their study of God's Word. May the Lord continue to bless this effort until he comes.

-- Paul Mahan, Pastor, Central Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, Virginia

Acknowledgements

The members of Grace Baptist Church of Danville, Kentucky consider it a great honor to have the works of Pastor Henry Mahan reprinted. We wish to acknowledge the contributions of many who have made it possible for us to do so. A special ‘thank you’ must be given to Evangelical Press for their kind permission to reprint the works originally produced and distributed by them.

Bro. Mahan personally asked that his dear friend and ours, Missionary Bill Clark be acknowledged. Bro. Clark, now with the Lord, was a faithful servant of our God, who labored tirelessly for the furtherance of the gospel around the world. It was Bro. Clark who persuaded Pastor Mahan to give Evangelical Press the rights to his commentaries.

The original books published by Evangelical Press and the other materials contained in these volumes were printed before computers were in common use. Consequently, all the material had to be scanned from the printed page, converted to text, and corrected. Bro. Ron Thompson (Ashland, Kentucky) and Brenda Davis (Louisa, Kentucky) scanned the material, did the text conversions, and made the necessary corrections.

Peter Menev, editor of New Focus magazine and of GO Publications, and pastor of Eggleston Baptist Chapel, Eggleston Barnard Castle, in England did the cover design. The picture on the front cover was contributed by Michael Bertrand of Friday Harbor, Washington. Other members of our congregation who must be acknowledged for their contributions include Susan Grant and Michelle Augustine who carefully proof read the manuscripts.

I cannot sufficiently thank these faithful servants of our God for all they have done to assist in the production of these volumes.

Donald S. Fortner, Pastor, Grace Baptist Church of Danville, KY

With New Testament Eyes

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Henry Mahan

The fall

Genesis 3:1-21

Chapters one and two of Genesis give an account of how God brought the world into being and created man in his own image (Gen. 1:26-29, Eccles. 7:29). God gave to Adam the law concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:15-17). How long Adam remained obedient we do not know, but chapter three gives an account of his disobedience and fall.

v. 1. Little is known about the serpent whom Satan used to tempt Eve. Some say that he was more naked, as they were, having no hair as the other animals. Some say that he was more beautiful, wise, and cunning (Matt. 10:16; 2 Cor. 11:3). Some ask the question, ‘Why would Eve stand and talk with an animal?’ While there are many questions we cannot answer, several things are quite clear.

1. Satan (Lucifer, the devil) was a great angel with power, majesty, and glory before he fell (Isa. 14:15; Luke 10:17-18): and it was Satan who appeared and talked to Eve in this particular form called the serpent. He was behind the entire temptation.

2. Eve was evidently alone: no mention is made of Adam at this time. In all probability she was near the tree or even looking at it.

3. Satan's question to Eve may have suggested the following: ‘You are superior creatures; the whole earth is supposed to be in subjection to you; yet you are not totally free nor fully blessed, for there is something God is withholding from you and will not allow you to have. Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’

v. 2-3. Eve replied, ‘We may eat of the trees in the garden, but not of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.’ She knew the commandment and repeated it to Satan; although she added, ‘Neither shall ye touch it’ (Gen. 1:29-30. Gen. 2:16-17).

v. 4. ‘Ye shall not surely die.’ This is a direct denial of the word of God. This is today and always had been Satan's way—to deny the word of God.

v. 5.

1. ‘This is merely a threat from God to keep you in subjection to him. He will not carry it out.’

2. ‘God knows all things; and he knows that if you eat of this tree, the eyes of your understanding will be opened, and you will know things that you do not now know.’

3. ‘You will be *like God*, or you will be gods yourselves and know good and evil. You will be greater and wiser, under no control from God.’ He may have eaten of the fruit himself to demonstrate to the woman that she would not die, for he did not die nor change upon eating it.

v. 6. Eve, being deceived by the serpent (1 Tim. 2:13-14), was convinced that the tree was good for the *flesh*, pleasant to the *eyes*, and a fruit that would make one *wise* (1 John 2:15-16). She ate it. Probably nothing happened; for it was upon *Adam's* eating the fruit that the fate of man depended, not the woman; for Adam was the federal head, the representative of all our race (Rom. 5:12, 17-19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45-48). She gave the fruit to Adam, and he ate of it willingly and knowingly.

v. 7.

1. ‘Their eyes were opened,’ not to advanced knowledge nor to things pleasant and profitable, but to things distressing—*evil*. They saw they had been deceived and had lost communion with God.

2. They knew they were naked, and they felt things they had never known before, such as shame, guilt, fear, and hate. The robe of purity and innocence had been stripped from their souls, and they were ashamed and afraid.

3. They began to try to *cover themselves* with leaves. The death and damage were inward; outwardly they were unchanged as yet, but they were dead *spiritually* (Matt. 15:17-20; Psalm 58:3; Jer. 17:9). They fell out of God and purity into themselves, from partakers of the divine nature to a nature of evil and flesh only (John 3:5-6). Adam's apron of leaves could not cover his true shame and guilt nor restore him to God's favor. His fallen nature produced guilt (v. 8), fear and shame (v. 10), self-righteousness and hatred (v. 12).

v. 15. Here is the first promise in the Scriptures of our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ—*the seed of woman!* All born into this world are the seed of men except Christ, who is born of the virgin (Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:28-35).

Christ, the woman's seed, the God-man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, shall come into the world, and by his life and death destroy Satan, all evil and death on behalf of his people. Satan shall bruise his *heel*; his human life shall suffer and die. But he shall bruise Satan's *head*, which is his power, government, and reign (Heb. 2:14-18).

v.21. Another picture and type of Christ is given here. God slew an animal, shed its blood, and made coats of skin for the guilty sinners. The first blood ever shed on earth was shed in sacrifice to cover a man's sin. Christ, the Lamb of God, must shed his blood and die to put away our sins and provide a robe of righteousness for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Since God is infinitely and unchangeably holy, sin can never be passed over without full payment and satisfaction of the justice of God (Exo. 34:7; Josh. 24:19).

Abel's offering

Genesis 4:1-15

v. 1. We have been bound in our thinking by pictures and stories in children's Bible storybooks that present a totally unrealistic view of the first family. Adam and Eve are pictured with only two sons, one of which killed the other and left them with only Cain, the fugitive, until Seth was born when Adam was 130 years old. There were no children born to Adam and Eve *before* the fall, but you can be certain that there were many born to them after the fall (Gen. 5:4). Cain was the first *man-child*. It is not certain that he was the first child or that Abel was the second. One commentary suggests that by the time Seth was born, Adam probably had as many as 32,000 descendants. As you will note in reading the Scriptures, the birth of a female was not usually even mentioned, only the male, and not all of them by any means. It is believed that when Cain was born to Eve, she thought he was the promised Messiah; 'I have gotten the man from the Lord.'

v. 2. God has singled out these sons of Adam to teach to all redemption by blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22) and to condemn salvation by works (1 Peter 1: 18-20). The way of Abel is the way of grace, and the way of Cain is the way of works. Here is the crossroads, and all who attempt to come to God must choose one or the other. There are only two religions in the world—grace and works (Rom. 11:6). Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd.

v. 3. Cain and Abel were not young boys at this time, but they were evidently heads of households with wives and children and occupations. Nor were these the first sacrifices offered to God for sin, for it is certain that God had instructed Adam as to how he was to worship and approach the living God. Adam, in turn, had taught his sons and daughters as Abraham taught Isaac (Gen. 22:6-7). As their father had done before them, Cain and Abel, as heads of families, brought their sacrifices and offerings

to God. Cain brought the fruit of the ground, which he had raised, and Abel brought a lamb.

vv. 4-5.

What was wrong with Cain's sacrifice?

It was a bloodless sacrifice, thereby denying his need of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Cain would be his own priest, his own mediator, and his own intercessor.

It denied that he was a sinner before God, who deserved condemnation and death. He approached God on the grounds of his own merit and works. He was proud of the fruit of his fields (Rom. 6:23).

He refused God's revealed way of worship and acceptance (Luke 24:44-47; Eph. 1:6-7).

Why did God have respect to Abel's offering?

It was an offering of faith (Heb. 11:4). Like Abraham, Abel believed God. He came to God as he was told to come.

It was an offering typifying Christ—the *lamb of God*—as we see in the Passover lamb (Exo. 12:5-6). A *lamb*, the innocent dying for the guilty. A *male* of the first year, in the prime of life. *Without spot or blemish*; Christ was without sin. *Slay it*, shed its blood, and roast it with fire; Christ suffered and shed his blood for our sins.

It was an offering confessing his sins and owning that they deserve death. Our sins deserve the wrath of God; and in order to justify us, the Lord Jesus must die before the Justice of God (Rom. 3:23-26). Christ, our *substitute*, made full *satisfaction* before the law of God and the justice of God, thereby enabling God to be just and the justifier of those who believe in Christ.

v. 6-8. Cain was angry and became depressed. The religion of works yields no comfort and no communion with God. Men go about their ceremonies but find no peace; they make professions and act religious but find no rest nor assurance because God is not reconciled (2 Cor. 5:19).

Cain was not angry with himself as he should have been, but he was angry with God and with his brother who believed God. Instead of looking into his own heart and finding the reason for his troubles, he turned on Abel.

Cain, rather than repenting and coming to God by faith in Christ Jesus, rose up against his brother and killed him. The first human blood shed on earth was over salvation by grace or salvation by works. Cain would come to God not by grace through faith in Christ, but by his own works and merit (Eph.2:8-9). This battle still rages and the results are the same. God is the same, sin is the same, men are the same, the way of life through the blood of Christ is the same, and 'the way of Cain' still persecutes the way of faith.

The ark of Noah

Genesis 6 & 7

In the first chapter of Genesis (Gen. 1:31) God looked over the whole creation and saw that it was GOOD. In this sixth chapter (Gen. 6:5) God looked over creation and pronounced it *evil*. God in justice planned to destroy all mankind from the face of the earth (Gen. 6:7). But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8). Though he would destroy all men (and justly so, for their evil), God made a covenant to preserve Noah and his family. Noah was not saved because of goodness and merit found in himself, but God was gracious to him in Christ. The judgment of the world was an act of God's wrath upon sin, and the salvation of Noah was an act of God's mercy through Christ. Verse 9 says that Noah was a just man, upright, and walked with God; but his character was a *result* of the grace of God in him and not the *cause* of the grace of God to him (1 Cor. 15:10; Eph. 2:8-10). God was pleased to show mercy to Noah and pass by all the others (Rom. 9:11-16).

As Noah prepared the ark, he preached to his generation (1 Peter 3:18-22). They refused to hear, to repent, or to enter the ark. Yet Noah believed God; and when the ark was completed (before one drop of water fell) , he willingly entered the ark (Gen. 7:1, 5). There is a decree of God and an everlasting covenant of mercy in Christ ordaining the salvation of a number which no man can number. Christ calls them his 'sheep,' given him by the Father. They are redeemed by him and called to him by his Spirit: yet, like Noah, they hear, believe, and willingly come to Christ, their ark of safety. By faith they do enter into Christ. The rest of Adam's race, though warned, though preached to, and though commanded to repent and believe, will not enter (John 10:24-30).

The flood is not fiction: it is fact. The ark is not a myth; it is a fact. And as the means of deliverance from the judgment of God against sin for this man who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, the ark is a beautiful

picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we are delivered from God's eternal wrath against sin (John 3:35-36).

The ark was the only way of deliverance.

The whole world drowned; only those in the ark were saved. The water stood high above the mountains (Gen. 7:17-21) so that no house, tree, building, nor mountain could serve as a refuge—only the ark.

Christ is the only Saviour (John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12; Isa. 53:4-6). This is the theme of the whole scriptures that Christ is *the* Redeemer, the *only* Redeemer, and the *sufficient* Redeemer (1 John 5:10-13).

The ark was big enough for all who came (Gen. 6:15).

There was enough room for all the people and animals that God purposed to save, plus all the supplies they would need for the year they would spend aboard. Our Lord Jesus is a sufficient Redeemer for all who believe. There is nothing lacking in his obedience nor in his atonement.

‘The cross on which Jesus died
Is a shelter in which we can hide:
And its grace so free is sufficient for me,
And deep is its fountain, as wide as the sea.’

He is able to do all that he promised (Rom. 4:21).

He is able to save to the uttermost all who come (Heb., 7:25).

He is able to keep that which we commit to him (2 Tim. 1:12).

He is able to keep us from falling (Jude 24-25).

He is able to raise us from the dead (Phil. 3:20-21).

The ark was a safe refuge able to survive the flood (Gen. 6:14).

It was pitched within and without, which made it safe from wind, water, and rain. None aboard would perish. The ark was designed by God and provided by God. How could it fail?

Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ is a sure foundation, a safe refuge, and a secure hiding-place. He cannot fail, nor can those perish for whom he died and for whom he intercedes (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:38-39). Noah's

safety and security did not depend on his seamanship but on the strength and durability of the ark. Even so, Christ himself is our hope.

The ark had but one door and one window.

There was but one door for the tall giraffe and the lowly snail. Even so, Christ is *the door*. He said, ‘By me if any man enter in he shall be saved;’ one door for the rich and the poor, for the old and the young, for the Greek and the Jew.

The ark had but one window, and it was not provided for them to see out but for light to shine in. There is but one light—Christ. He is the light of the world. The glory of God is seen in the face of Christ. He is our light and the revelation of the Father.

The ark brought them all safely through the flood (John 6:37-45).

‘Firm as his throne his gospel stands,
my Lord, my hope, my trust;
If I am found in Jesus' hands,
my soul can never be lost.

His honor is engaged to keep
the weakest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.

Nor death, nor hell shall ever remove
His people from his breast;
In the dear bosom of his love,
they shall forever rest.’

Sarah and Hagar; law and grace

Genesis 4:21-31

There are no two things in the Bible more different than *law* and *grace*, which is nothing more than salvation by our works or salvation by free grace through the obedience and death of our Lord Jesus. The first assignment in learning the gospel is to learn the difference between law and grace. He who learns the lesson well can call himself a theologian.

Paul calls the story of Sarah and Hagar an allegory (Gal. 4:24). An allegory is a story in which the characters are used to picture other real characters and real actions.

God promised Abraham a son by his true wife, Sarah. Time passed and no son was born; so Sarah gave her servant, Hagar, to Abraham to bear him a son. Ishmael was born to Hagar by Abraham. In due time the promised son, Isaac, was born to Sarah. The son of the servant, Hagar, mocked Isaac and proved that the two could not live together; so Hagar and Ishmael had to be put out of the household. Isaac reigned alone as the heir of Abraham.

Paul said that these two women represent the two covenants. Hagar, the servant, represents the covenant of law, works, and ceremonies from Mt. Sinai. In the covenant of law and works God says, 'Do this and live.'

Sarah, the true wife of Abraham, represents God's eternal covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. This covenant was first, was from all eternity, was not made between God and men but between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Heb. 7:22; Heb. 13:20; John 17:2-3). The covenant of grace says, 'Do this, O Christ, and men shall live.' God gives eternal life without works from men (Rom. 3:19-24).

Though Hagar bore the first son, as the covenant of works gave us fallen Adam and a depraved race, yet Sarah was the original and first wife of Abraham, as the covenant of grace was the first covenant. The covenant of works was *revealed* first: but before there was ever a sinner, there was a covenant of grace and its surety, Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ was the Lamb

slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; Rev. 17:8; 1 Peter 1:18-21). We were chosen in Christ before the world began (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

Hagar was never intended to be the wife of Abraham, nor was Ishmael *that seed* which was promised. Hagar was the handmaid of Sarah. So the law was never given nor intended to save anyone. It was only a handmaid to grace to point men to Christ, the seed (Gal. 3:21-29; Gal. 3:16). The law properly used is a blessing. It shows our sins, our inability; it shuts men up to Christ. If the law is the servant to grace, that's well and good; but when the law tries to be the master or on equal footing with grace, it must go! (Gal. 4:30-31.)

Hagar was never free and Sarah was never in bondage. The covenant of works and none of her children are free. All who live by the law are under the curse (Gal. 3:10-13). But the seed of Abraham by faith are free: 'for if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'

Hagar must be cast out as well as her son (Heb. 10:1-10). The covenant of works has ceased, being fulfilled by Christ. It cannot have a place in the redemption and reign of Christ Jesus. Nor is he a son of Abraham who is one by flesh or natural birth. He is a son of Abraham who is one by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:7-9, 16, 29).

As the two women are types of the two covenants, so the two sons are types of those who live under each covenant.

Ishmael is the man who trusts his works and seeks a righteousness before God by his deeds. Isaac is the man born supernaturally of God (John 1:13), brought to faith in Christ, and walks in the spirit, not the flesh, whose wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption is Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10).

Ishmael is the older, as the old man is older than the new man created in Christ Jesus. We are all born flesh first, then born again with that new nature which lives forever.

Ishmael is the son of the flesh; Isaac is the son by divine power. We are all born sons of men, then sons of God.

Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac (Gal. 3:29) is the same attitude the legalist displays toward sons of grace today. You will never find a free-

will legalist to be tolerant toward the gospel of grace. The gospel of grace destroys his very foundation, which is *merit*, not *mercy*!

The Lord will provide

Genesis 22:1-14

Genesis 22 records Abraham's greatest trial and Abraham's greatest revelation of the gospel of Christ (John 8:56). Genesis 22 is full of Christ and could rightly be called 'the gospel of Mt. Moriah,' which mountain many believe to be Mt. Calvary, where Christ died.

v. 1. The chapter begins with 'after these things;' that is to say, after nine or ten great trials (the Jews say that Abraham had ten great trials), Abraham was called upon to endure the greatest trial of all--the sacrifice of his only son. Our sovereign God does all things he has purposes to do 'in due time' (Rom. 5:6) and 'in the fullness of time' (Gal. 4:4). 'After these things:' after the fall, the flood, the exodus, the tabernacle, the prophets and kings, it pleased God to fulfill every promise, prophecy, and pattern in the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son. All that had gone before pictured and pointed to this hour when Christ would die (Acts 10:43; Luke 24:27, 44-46).

v. 2. The words of this verse taken one by one reveal the greatness of the gift, the love behind it, and the agony endured through it. Can you imagine the grief of Abraham when he received this command? the sorrow he suffered in considering the death of his son at his own hand? the great love he revealed in his willingness to give Isaac? or the supreme sacrifice involved?

1. 'Take thy son.' The Lord Jesus is the Son of God.

2. 'Thine only son.' Is he not called 'his only begotten son'?

3. 'Whom thou lovest.' God said, 'This is my beloved son.'

4. 'And offer him for a burnt offering.' Christ Jesus became our burnt offering, our sin offering, our sacrifice by the will of the Father, who was pleased to bruise him (Isa. 53:10; Heb. 10:9-10).

vv. 3-4. Abraham had three full days in which to consider the sacrifice of his son, Isaac. As they journeyed through the days and slept through the nights, this burden and sacrifice lay upon his heart. But the eternal Father foreordained and purposed the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, not three days or three thousand days, but ‘before the foundation of the world’ (Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:3-4). What love, what grace, and what a sure and certain promise we have in our Lord Jesus Christ and in God’s eternal purpose, which has never changed! (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:20; Num. 23:19.)

vv. 5-6. Abraham carefully prepared all that was involved in the sacrifice—the wood, the sharpened knife, and the fire. What shall we say of our great God, who carefully prepared, predestinated, and foretold all events, all people, all nations, and all actions of the greatest event of all time—the death of Christ (Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27-28). Abraham commanded his servants to remain at the foot of the mountain, and the father and the son went together to the mountain. Redemption is the work of the Father and the Son. ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself’ (2 Cor. 5:19); yet Christ was in the hands of and under the wrath of God for our sins (Isa. 53:4-6). Twelve went with him to the Passover, eleven went with him to the garden, three went with him to pray; but when he went to the cross, he went there alone (Heb. 1:3). Upon Isaac, Abraham laid the wood, even as the cruel cross was laid upon the shoulders of our Lord.

vv. 7-8. As Abraham and Isaac walked up the mountain to offer a sacrifice and to worship God, Isaac asked, ‘Father, behold the wood and the fire; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Isaac knew that (God being holy, righteous, and just and man being guilty, sinful, and evil) there can be no acceptance, no forgiveness, no communion between God and men without the blood (Lev. 17:11; Exo. 12:13; Heb. 9:22). He knew about Cain’s error and condemnation. Abraham uttered that great prophecy which is the very heart of all God’s purpose, the gospel, and our hope — ‘My son, God will provide himself a Lamb for a burnt offering.’ He later named the place ‘Jehovah-Jireh’—the Lord will see to it or provide! This prophecy says many things:

1. The Lord will provide *himself* as the Lamb: for our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, *is God!*

2. The Lord will provide *for* himself a Lamb: for the Lord God is the offended majesty *to* whom and *for* whom the blood was shed, that he might be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:23-26).

3. The Lord will *provide* or see to it that redemption for all his sheep, the honoring of his law, the satisfaction of his justice, the fulfillment of his covenant, and the eternal glory of his Son is accomplished in full. Nothing will be left undone. ‘It is finished,’ the Saviour cried; and it is!

v. 9. ‘Abraham bound his son and laid him on the altar.’ Isaac did not resist the will of his father, even as Christ Jesus was willing and obedient even to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). Christ could not have come, could not have been arrested, could not have been bound to the tree, and could not have died except it pleased the Father.

vv. 10-13. Here Isaac, the type of Christ, ends; for Isaac was removed from the altar and a ram took his place, which also is a picture of the Lord Jesus dying for us. The ram pictures Christ, our sacrifice; and Isaac pictures the believer, who is spared.

A bride for the heir

Genesis 24

No picture nor type of Christ is perfect. God uses earthly stories and people to illustrate heavenly truth, and the very fact that the characters are flesh and the incidences take place in the world is enough to make them imperfect illustrations. In this story of Abraham's servant seeking a bride for Isaac (Abraham's son), Abraham represents the heavenly Father; Isaac, the Lord Jesus; the servant, ministers of the gospel (instruments of the Holy Spirit); and Rebekah, every true believer.

vv. 1-4. Abraham was very wealthy, and his son, Isaac, was the heir of all things that Abraham possessed. He sent his trusted servant to find a bride for Isaac, a bride who would share with him all the riches and glories of the kingdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God's love, is the heir of all things. The Father has given all things into his hands (John 3:35; John 5:23; Col. 1:16-18). He is Lord and King by design, by decree, and by his death (Rom. 14:9; John 17:1-3). God has chosen out of every tribe, kindred, and nation a people to be the bride of his Son and joint-heirs with him of all that he purchased and owns (Rom. 8:14-17; Rom. 8:29-31; Eph. 1:3-7).

The Father calls and sends his servants (preachers of the gospel) out into the world to find this bride of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 1 Cor. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

vv. 5-9. I'm sure that the servant was full of questions about his mission; but the one great question was, 'What if the woman is unwilling to leave her home and family to love, marry, and give herself to a man she does not know and has never seen?' Abraham assured the servant that he was not going forth alone but that the Lord God, who made Isaac the heir, would go with him and reward his efforts. 'He shall send his angel before thee.'

God's preachers do not go forth into the world alone to persuade men to love, believe, and come to Christ by their own logic, power of persuasion, and rhetoric. The Spirit of God goes before them to quicken, awaken, and give sinners ears to hear the gospel, eyes to see the beauties of Christ, and a heart to love him (Psalm 110:3; Eph. 2:1-10). The bride had been chosen (2 Thess. 2:13), the servant will journey and endure all things to tell the bride of her beloved (2 Tim. 2:9-10), the bride will hear the voice of her beloved through the message of the servant (John 10:23-30), and the bride will come (John 6:37-40; 2 Cor. 2:14-16).

vv. 10-14. The servant went to the place where the women came to draw water and, knowing the great responsibility upon him and the impossibility of the task humanly speaking, sought divine help in sincere prayer.

The opening of the heart to Christ, the resurrection of the spiritually dead, conviction of sin, genuine repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus are 'impossible with men' (Matt. 19:24-26; 1 Cor. 2:9-12). We preach, but the Spirit of God reveals the Lord Jesus to the heart (John 16:13-15). We teach the head, but only the living God can teach the heart (John 6:44-45). All who come to Christ and receive him must be born of God (John 1:10-13), for true repentance and saving faith are the gifts of God (Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29).

vv. 32-51. The servant was welcomed into Rebekah's home, but he would not partake of their comforts until he had accomplished his mission and declared his message. Even so, the servants of Christ are men on a mission who care not for the world's comforts and honors but are taken up with what God called them to do—to make Christ known (Acts 20:33). The servant declared to Rebekah and her kindred the glories of Isaac and his master's house. The servants of Christ have one message—Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-2). The bride must not be attracted to the servant nor to anything he has to offer, but to Christ.

vv. 56-58. Finally, after the case had been fully stated, the question was put directly to Rebekah, 'thou go?' And she said, 'I will go.' Faith in

Christ, salvation in Christ, and a saving interest in the Lord Jesus is an individual, personal, and total commitment. Children cannot be sprinkled into the covenant and kingdom, young people are not saved because their parents know God, wives and husbands do not partake of grace because they are married to believers (remember Lot's wife), and salvation is not the result of group therapy. Knowing the true God and Jesus Christ is a personal experience as God is pleased to reveal himself to an individual (Gal. 1:15-16; 2 Tim. 1:12; Psalm 9-3).

Bethel – the house of God

Genesis 28:10-22

Blessed is the man who can read the Scriptures and find the key of knowledge—Christ Jesus! ‘Had you believed Moses, you would believe me, for Moses wrote of me,’ said the Lord Jesus (John 5:46). God spoke to these Old Testament believers by the prophets, by pictures and types, and by dreams and visions to reveal his redemptive purpose and grace through Christ Jesus.

Jacob is a man difficult to understand, but the one thing we know about this man is that he was one of God's elect and ‘God loved him’ (Gen. 25:21-23; Rom. 9:10-13; Gen. 35:9-13).

1. His name means supplanter, which is to take the place of another through force or plotting (Gen. 27:35-36).

2. He tricked his brother, Esau, into selling him the birthright (Gen. 25: 29-34).

3. Through his mother's influence and help, he deceived his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing reserved for the first-born (Gen. 27:19-24).

4. He had to flee from his father's house and from the wrath of his brother (Gen. 27:41-44).

5. God met Jacob on his flight from Esau; and what a night that was as God spoke to Jacob, promised his presence and mercies, and revealed to Jacob the way to God—Christ Jesus!

vv. 10-11. There is one reason why Jacob is out here in the desert alone, away from his home and family, and fleeing for his life; and that is *his sin*. What we are (proud, covetous, lonely, unhappy, depressed) and where we are (away from God, under the curse of the law, without strength, help, or hope) is because of our sins. ‘Your sins have separated you and your God.’ How undeserving and unworthy is Jacob and all of us Jacobs. As

David said, ‘God is just in condemning us and clear when he judges us’ (Psalm 51:3-4). Every man who is an object of God's love and grace judges himself, stops his mouth, and justifies God in his righteous judgments against our sins.

vv. 12-14. The Lord revealed his mercies to Jacob in a dream. What a blessed time it is when the Lord is pleased in his grace to speak to us on our road to destruction and reveal his mercies in Christ Jesus to the chief of sinners (Eph. 2:1-7; Rom. 5:6-8). Jacob, the sinner, was still and quiet: and God spoke, revealing Christ in the dream.

The *ladder* stood upon the earth, but the top reached to heaven. So Christ Jesus, although he stood on the earth in the flesh, yet he is the Most High God, who never left the bosom of the Father (Phil. 2:6-8; John 1:14).

The *angels* went up and down on the ladder, which declares to us that we are able to ascend to God only in and by Christ Jesus (John 14:6) ; and it is by and through Christ that God comes to us. ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.’

The *Lord God* stood above the ladder and made all of his rich promises to Jacob; so God in Christ and through Christ makes all the promises of spiritual blessings, eternal life, and glory to us (Eph. 1:3-7.).

v. 15. What God spoke to Jacob in this verse is his promise to all believers in Christ Jesus.

‘I am with thee’ in covenant mercies, in redemptive grace, and in constant indwelling love (Rom. 8:28-39).

‘I will keep thee.’ None whom God has chosen, for whom Christ died, and who are brought by the Spirit to believe shall ever perish (John 6:37-45; John 10:24-30).

‘I will bring thee into this land.’ Canaan is but a type of heaven. Christ, our surety, will bring to glory all of his sheep. In heaven there will be plenty of room but no vacancies. Every place prepared will be occupied by those for whom it is prepared (John 14:1-3).

‘I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. ‘ Our Lord shall not fail. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand (Isa. 53:10-11).

vv. 16-19. Jacob called the place ‘Bethel,’ house of God and gate of heaven. This cannot be church buildings, which men call the house of God. This can only be where God actually dwells. The house of God is where God is, where God dwells, and where God reveals himself. The gate of heaven is *the door*; and Christ said, ‘I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.’

vv. 20-22. Jacob responded to God's call, to God's revelation, as all of his called ones respond. ‘Thy people shall be willing’ (Psalm 110:3). Christ said, ‘Other sheep I have, them I must bring and they *shall* hear my voice, and there *shall* be one fold and one shepherd’ (John 10:16). The people of God are not saved against their wills but *are made willing* (2 Thess. 2:13). No man *can*, is able, or has the desire to come to Christ except he is taught of God, called of God, and has learned of God; but those who are called, taught, and drawn to Christ *shall* come (John 6:44-45).

Peniel - the face of God

Genesis 32:24-32

v. 24. 'And Jacob was left alone.' Was there ever a man more troubled, more frightened and confused, more alone than Jacob at this time? His whole life had been one of trouble and disappointment.

1. He was born second to Esau; he was inferior to Esau; his father preferred Esau.

2. Pushed by his mother to deceive his blind father, he had stolen the birthright.

3. Threatened with death by his brother, he fled from his country.

4. God met him at Bethel, promised his blessings, and confirmed what I'm sure his mother had told him (Gen. 25:22-23; Rom. 9:10-13).

5. He had been deceived by Laban, as he had deceived Isaac, and married a woman he did not want (Gen. 29:16-26).

6. He was told by God to return home (Gen. 31:3).

7. On his journey home he was told that Esau, his brother, was coming to meet him with 400 men (Gen. 32:6-8).

Now Jacob is alone, afraid, and helpless. There's no more time nor room for plotting, scheming, and manipulating. He is shut up to the sovereign power and deliverance of God. Like Israel at the sea and Jonah in the whale, his salvation is totally in the hands of God (Jonah 2:9; Exo. 14:13). Those whom the Lord is pleased to save and to whom he will reveal his mercy in Christ Jesus will all be brought to the place of human helplessness and inability. There must be left no room for boasting nor glorying in the flesh (Psalm 107:1-6, 11-13; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

'There wrestled a man with him.' Who was this man? There is no doubt that it was Christ, who frequently appeared in human form to saints

of the Old Testament in token and pledge of his future incarnation (Heb. 7:1-3). Verses 26, 28, and 30 reveal who the man is.

Jacob, being an object of God's love and mercy, was laid hold of by the Lord Jesus in sovereign power and purpose (Rom. 8:29-31); Jacob, in his loneliness, fear, and need, laid hold of Christ. This was a physical, mental, and spiritual conflict which had to be resolved. God is sovereign and man is responsible; God will have his people and his people will have their God (John 6:37-39); the Lord is King by right, by decree, and by his death; but he will be the King in the hearts of his people by true submission and surrender (Psalm 110:3; Rom. 10:9-10). 'They wrestled until the breaking of the day.' This was no brief and passing encounter, as an indifferent decision at the front of the church. Great issues are at stake; eternal matters will be resolved right here as Christ personally meets Jacob. God will bless and use Jacob; but it will be a conquered, subdued, and surrendered Jacob.

v. 25. 'When he saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, he touched his thigh and crippled him.' There is no question but that the Lord could have easily subdued Jacob. The conflict was ordered by God, and the *outcome is not in doubt*. But God's people are not puppets nor robots; and through his revelation, trials, and dealings with them, they must see, feel, and experience the frailty of flesh, the emptiness of this world, the glory of God in Christ, and desire *above all things* his salvation and his presence. Finally, the Lord struck a crippling blow and Jacob went down.

v. 26. He had touched Jacob and would leave; but Jacob held on, crying for the Lord's blessing and power. 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' He had had an unusual revelation, he had wrestled with God, he had been wounded; but the battle is not over for Jacob until he is assured of the Lord's permanent blessing upon him and his peace within him. This was life or death for Jacob—a battle that would not be fought again. He had heard promises of God's blessings; now he wanted them in truth. He was still Jacob, his past clouded with sin. He was a wanderer in a strange country and must still face Esau, his angry brother. He knew he was no

better off for this experience unless the Lord gave him his approval, acceptance, and presence.

v. 27-28. Our Lord asked, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob,’ cheat, supplanter, deceiver, holder of the birthright by human effort. He had laid claim to the blessing by his mother’s and his decision and deception; now he wanted the blessing *from God* by God's will and purpose! The Lord changed his name to *Israel*, a prince who has power (acceptance, union, and sonship) with God. This position is not one achieved by merit, works, nor human will but by his grace (John 1:11-13; Rom. 9:15-16; Eph. 1:3-7).

v. 29. Jacob asked, ‘What is your name?’ The Lord replied, do you ask my name?’ We can only speculate, but ...

1. Human curiosity has a way of prying into things God has not volunteered.

2. Perhaps Jacob looked for proof and signs. Is not his word enough?

3. Maybe there was a little pride and ambition to be on a first-name basis with God.

One thing is certain—Jacob will not be carried beyond the bounds of faith prescribed for the age in which he lived. We believe God as he has been pleased to reveal himself to us, and true faith demands nothing more.

v. 30. Jacob called the place, ‘Peniel,’ the face of God; for he said, ‘I have seen God face to face.’

1. This was no mere emotional experience; he had met Christ.

2. No soul-winner nor preacher told him that he was saved; he had personally encountered the Redeemer himself.

3. He knew that his life was preserved by the will and act of God, who could have justly destroyed him (Rom. 8:33-34). I met God and came away preserved—what a small matter it is now to meet Esau!

Joseph opens the storehouses

Genesis 41

Joseph had been sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, who resented Jacob's great love for Joseph (Gen. 37:3-4) and the dreams Joseph had in which God revealed that his brethren would one day bow to and serve Joseph (Gen. 37: 5-8). Due to several acts of God's providence, Joseph wound up in prison in Egypt, where he met the chief butler of Pharaoh's court and interpreted his dream. Later, when Pharaoh had a dream which no one could interpret, the chief butler remembered the young Hebrew, Joseph (Gen. 41:9-14); and he was called before Pharaoh to interpret his dream. God revealed to Joseph that there would be seven years of plenty in the land followed by seven years of great famine (Gen. 41:28-32). Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be the ruler over all Egypt, second only to himself (Gen. 41:39-44).

There are so many lessons to be learned from this story.

1. The sovereign providence and divine purpose of God in the life of Joseph, bringing him from a Hebrew shepherd boy to the throne of Egypt. God ruled and overruled all events, all creatures, and all their actions to accomplish his will and purpose toward Joseph (Gen. 45:5; Gen. 50:20; Isa. 46:9-11; Acts 4:26-28; John 6:37-39).

2. The sovereignty of God not only over men, but over the weather, crops, heathen nations, and even over men's dreams.

3. The faithfulness of God's servant, Joseph. In the greatest trials, adversity, and surroundings Joseph walked with God and maintained a strong testimony to truth and grace. Even in a heathen nation, Joseph glorified God and God blessed him.

But this entire story, as all scripture, is given to praise, exalt, and reveal our Lord Jesus Christ in his redemptive work (Luke 24:27, 44-45).

During the seven years of famine, Joseph supervised the crops and filled the storehouses; and when the famine was over the land, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold unto all who had need (Gen. 41:56).

1. Joseph opened the storehouses by royal authority

Pharaoh gave all things (all authority and all the food) into the hands of Joseph (vv. 41, 44-45). When people came to Pharaoh, he sent them to Joseph. By God's royal decree and design, all things pertaining to life, salvation, mercy, and heaven have been given into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:35-36; John 17:2-3; Col. 1:14-19; Col. 2:9-10).

What? all spiritual blessings, all fullness.

Where? in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3-4).

Why? 'It pleased God' (Acts 2:36).

2. Joseph was the only fit person to open the storehouses

Joseph prophesied the famine; no one else knew about it. Joseph planned the crops and the storehouses (v. 35). Joseph gathered the corn and stored it up (v. 49).

Our Lord Jesus is the only fit and qualified one to open the storehouse of mercy to sinners.

He foreknew the fall and famine of human nature (Rom. 5:12, 19).

He purposed and planned the everlasting covenant of mercy whereby a people would be saved from Adam's race (Heb. 13:20-21).

He came to earth in the likeness of human flesh and obeyed the law in order that his people might have a perfect righteousness before God's law, and he died on the cross that they might all be justified in God's sight. He filled the storehouse with grace and

mercy for all who would come to eat; as the disciples replied, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’

He is the only one who has the *capacity* to contain all the fullness of God, the only one who has the *wisdom* to distribute the fullness of God, and the only one who has the *eternality* to continue to be our fullness (2 Tim. 1:12; Phil. 3:20-21).

3. *Joseph opened the storehouses!*

That is why Joseph filled the storehouses, in order that the people might eat. That is why Christ became our surety and our sin-offering, in order that sinners might be saved (Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 19:10).

To have kept the storehouses closed would have brought no glory to Joseph nor good to the people. He had plenty and was delighted to distribute it. Our Lord is plenteous in mercy, and he delights to show mercy. His chief glory is his goodness (Exo. 33:18-19). He says, ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters’ (John 7:37-38).

Joseph opened the storehouses *at a fit time*. ‘When the people cried for bread, Joseph opened the storehouses.’ All who are hungry will be fed (Rom. 10:13; Gal. 1:15).

Joseph opened the storehouses *to all who came* (v. 57). Not the Egyptians only, but all nations came to Joseph. Our Lord Jesus opens the storehouses of grace to Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free. ‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life’ (Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17). As the famine is universal, the command to repent and come to Christ is universal. ‘He is able to save to the uttermost *all* who come to God by him’ (Heb. 7:25).

Joseph and his brothers

Genesis 42-45

God, in his wisdom, uses the natural world, creatures, and events to illustrate the spiritual world, his saving grace, and his redemptive work in Christ Jesus. The wonders which God performs in the heart can be seen in the wonders God performs upon earth and records in his word (1 Cor. 10:4; John - 3:14; Matt. 12:40). It is the duty of the preacher and the teacher to look for these parables and pictures and preach Christ from them. Joseph's dealings with his brethren is a picture of our Lord's dealings with his erring brethren, given him by the Father and purchased with his blood.

41:57 - 'The famine was in all lands'

The terrible famine was not only over the land of Egypt but over all lands and reached to all people. There was no food even in Israel, the chosen people.

This is what the word of God declares concerning sin and spiritual death. It is a famine of sin and spiritual death which is over all of Adam's race, even the elect of God.

‘Death passed upon all men, for all have sinned’ (Rom. 5:12).

‘For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God’ (Rom. 3:23).

‘We were by nature children of wrath, even as others’ (Eph. 2:3).

‘You were without Christ, having no hope and without God’ (Eph. 2:12).

42:1 - Jacob heard some good news

‘There is corn in Egypt.’ Jacob called his sons together to tell them the good news. ‘We do not have to die, for I have heard that there is plenty of corn in Egypt.’

This is the good news of the gospel preached to hungry, weary, and dying sinners—we do not have to continue in spiritual poverty, hunger, and death; for there is life, mercy, and grace in Christ Jesus.

‘If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink’ (John 7:37).

‘He hath filled the hungry with good things’ (Luke 1:53).

‘I am the bread of life’ (John 6:48-50).

Jacob could not be sure that the rumor he had heard about corn in Egypt was true, but we can be sure the bread of life and the water of life in Christ is true because we have the sure word of God (1 John 5:9-11).

Jacob did not know that his own son was in charge of the corn in Egypt; therefore, he might have entertained doubts that he could buy food there. But we can be sure that all who come for mercy and grace will be received and blessed; for our heavenly Father has given all things to Christ our Saviour, brother, and friend, who loves us and gave himself for us!

Jacob wasn't sure that he could get enough food for such a large family. There were 70 of them. But we know that our Lord's grace is sufficient to save to the uttermost ALL who come to God by him (Isa. 1:18; 1 John 1:7-9; Matt. 11:28).

Jacob sent money to Egypt to buy corn. God's grace is free. ‘All the fitness Christ requireth is to feel your need of him.’ (Isa. 55:1-3.)

42:1-2 - ‘Why do you hesitate’

Why do you stand looking at one another? Get down to Egypt and buy food that we may live and not die!’

This is the urgent, immediate command of the gospel. You are a sinner, you have no life nor hope in yourself nor in another; if you remain where you are, you will perish forever. There is life in Christ Jesus, Who,

of God, is made unto us all we need (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10). Come to Christ, flee to Christ, believe on Christ (Isa. 45:20-25; John 5:39-40).

Read Chapters 42-44 and study the dealing Joseph had with his brethren who had hated him without a cause, who had sold him into slavery, who had dealt so harshly and cruelly with him. Their sin must be revealed to them, and they must own their guilt (Gen. 42:21-23). These proud brethren must be humbled before him, bow down, and plead for mercy (Gen. 44:14). There must be evidence of genuine repentance (Gen. 44:33-34).

Is this not a picture of God's dealing with all whom he saves?

1. Our sin, sins, and even the corruption of our best deeds are brought before us (1 John 1:8-10; Isa. 64:6). We own our guilt of unbelief and our part in Adam's fall and the crucifixion of God's dear Son (Isa. 53:1-3).

2. We come hungry, empty, and needy before God's throne of grace, confessing our sins and owning God's justice in condemning us (Psalm 51:3-4). We fall at the feet of Christ Jesus, whom we denied, rejected, and crucified, and own that he is Lord and can do with us what he will (Matt. 8:1-2; Rom. 10:9-10; Phil. 2:9-11).

3. This is not outward form nor ritual nor feigned repentance. Like Judah of old, we are genuinely pleading for his mercy to the undeserving and waiting upon the Lord. Salvation is in him, of him, and his to give. He can justly condemn us or mercifully save us. We have no claim on him; nor is he obligated to help us, only as he is faithful to his covenant in Christ.

45:1-5 - In due time Joseph revealed himself to these brethren and spoke peace to them.

Christ will in due time reveal himself to sincere seekers and speak peace to their hearts (John 6:37-45).

Shiloh

Genesis 49:8-10

Before the written word was given, God spoke to the fathers in various ways about the coming Messiah. Who can say what Abel understood as he, by faith, brought the blood sacrifice? Who knows what Enoch understood (Jude 14), or Abraham, of whom Christ said, 'He rejoiced to see *my day*'?

In this chapter the dying Jacob (Israel) called his twelve sons together for the purpose of prophesying future things relating to the twelve tribes which descended from them. He had a word for all of them; but Judah is praised and good things are prophesied of him, particularly that 'Shiloh,' or the Messiah, should spring from him. From the tribe of Judah came David, Solomon, and the Lord Jesus. The Israelites are called Jews. Over Christ's cross was written, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.' Paul wrote, 'He is a Jew which is one inwardly' (Rom. 2:28-29). What Jacob said of Judah, he spoke with regard to the Lord Jesus.

v. 8 'Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.'

The name Judah means 'praise.' His mother gave him that name when he was born and said, 'Now I will praise the Lord' (Gen. 29:35). Christ Jesus, our Messiah and King, is worthy of, deserving, and shall have the sincere praise of his people.

'Now to the Lord, that makes us know
the wonders of his eternal love,
be humble honors paid below
and strains of nobler praise above.

To Jesus our atoning priest,
to Jesus our superior King
be everlasting praise confessed,

and every tongue his glories sing.’

Nothing is more inconsistent with faith than murmuring and unhappiness.

v. 8 ‘Thy hand shall be on the neck of thy enemies.’

When one has his hands securely on the neck of his enemies, he can stop the breath and destroy them. Christ shall be victorious over his enemies (Heb. 1:13).

1. Our Lord met Satan and defeated him.
2. Our Lord took our sins to the cross and conquered.
3. Our Lord met death, lay in a tomb, and arose triumphantly.
4. There is no enemy of his, his people, nor his kingdom that shall not finally be destroyed.

v. 8 ‘Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.’

It is true that the nation Israel bowed before David and Solomon and the kings of Judah, and this prophecy refers immediately to that; but the greater honor and glory, is reserved for David's son, before whom not only believers shall bow but the entire universe (Phil. 2:9-11). He is Lord by his deity, by the Father's design and decree, and he is Lord by death (Rom. 14:9; 10:9-10).

v. 9 ‘Judah is a lion's whelp.’

The Lord Jesus is compared to a young lion because of his strength, power, and courage. The lion is called the king of the jungle. Our Lord is called ‘the lion of the tribe of Judah’ (Rev. 5:5).

‘From the prey, my son, thou art gone up.’ He left heaven and came to this earth to engage the enemy and redeem a people by his mighty arm. He has accomplished that work (‘it is finished’) and ascended to the right hand of majesty.

‘He stooped down.’ Was ever such a stoop as this? He made himself of no reputation, took on himself the form of a servant. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7-8).

‘As an old lion, who shall rouse him up?’ He stooped, he conquered, he arose, he ascended, he sat down, having accomplished his pleasure. Who shall disturb him? Who shall question him? Who shall interfere or stand against him? Like an old lion who has killed and devoured his prey, who shall rouse him?

v. 10 ‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come.’

Here is the great and glad word! Here is the great prophecy! The Messiah shall come through the tribe of Judah, the family of Jesse, and the house of David. Where did Jacob get that name? God gave him a special name for a special person and a special time. Here are some of the meanings given to the word by various writers.

1. Shiloh means *sent* (John 9:7). Some point out the likeness between Siloam and Shiloh. Christ is truly the sent one. ‘As my Father sent me...’

2. Shiloh means the *son*, others say (Isa. 9:6-7). He is the true Son of God, the Son of David, and the Son of man.

3. Shiloh means ‘*the one to whom it belongs*’ (Ezek. 21:25-27). The sceptre, the crown, the throne, and the worship belong to him. All others are imposters (Col. 1:14-18).

4. Shiloh means *peace*. It is said that the word comes from the same word as ‘Salem, King of Peace.’ The Lord Jesus is our peace (Rom. 5:1). He made peace through the blood of his cross.

v. 10 ‘To him shall the gathering of the people be.’

The object of his covenant, his cross, and his coming to earth was to redeem a people and gather them to himself forever. They shall come! In repentance, faith, and love, they shall come! (John 6:37-39; John 10:14-16; John 17:1-10).

The Passover

Exodus 12:1-13

The Lord had sent plague after plague upon the Egyptians; but each time Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not allow the Israelites to leave Egypt. The Lord spoke to Moses (Exo. 11-1) and declared that he would bring one more plague upon Egypt; after that plague, Pharaoh would send them forth out of the land.

The Passover Lamb is a special type of Christ, perhaps the clearest and most complete of all the types and pictures; for in it the Lord God preached to the Jews *the whole doctrine of the gospel*—(1) in the choice of the sacrifice—John 1:29, (2) in the characteristics of the lamb—I Peter 2:22; (3) in the death of the lamb and the sprinkling of the blood—Heb. 9:11-14; (4) in the eating of the lamb and the faith that rested—John 6:53-54, and (5) in the grand results of it all—the people were delivered and God was glorified—Exo. 12: 26-27; Eph. 3:21.

One of the best ways to study the Passover as a picture and type of Christ is to look at the parallels between this Passover and ‘Christ, our Passover, who is sacrificed for us’ (1 Cor. 5:7).

The lamb was to be without blemish.

This signifies the absolute perfection and sinlessness of our Lord Jesus (Heb. 4:15; 11 Cor. 5:21). The Lord Jesus, in order to be our righteousness, must live a perfect life; and in order to atone for our sin, he must have no sin of his own. ‘The sacrifice shall be perfect to be accepted’ (Lev. 22:21).

The lamb was to be taken out of the fold.

Jesus Christ, our Lamb, was taken from among men (Deut. 18:15-19). He was the seed of woman, the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), and made of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3).

The lamb was to be a year old and was to be killed

This shows that our Lord in his full strength of life should be put to death.

The lamb was to be roasted with fire

This probably signifies the manner of Christ's death. He was crucified, enduring the fire of God's wrath for our sins, and the burning fever of his wounds.

The lamb was to be roasted whole

Not a bone was to be broken, as the Scriptures declare of Christ (John 19:36).

The blood of the lamb must be sprinkled upon the lintel and the sides of the door of the Israelites

Just as the blood of Christ is applied by faith, there is no salvation nor deliverance apart from faith (John 3:36). God did not put the blood on the door; the people put it there, believing God (Heb. 11:6). The blood on the door denotes an outward confession and evidence of heart faith. In all our going out and going in, the blood of the Lamb is before us.

The Israelites were to eat the flesh of the lamb

This signifies that we must, by faith, feed upon Christ. Truly believing on Christ and receiving Christ within us is called eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6: 55:58).

They were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread.

Leaven is a type of evil. This is to signify that those who come to Christ, the true Passover, are to come in sincerity and truth, hating evil and hypocrisy. They were also to eat the lamb with bitter herbs, which probably shows the sorrow for sin and repentance in the hearts of those who come to Christ. The Lamb was not to be eaten raw nor sodden with water, that is, not boiled in wine, oil, or water. Christ endured the full wrath and judgment for our full justification; and nothing is to be mixed, added, nor joined to him.

Nothing of the lamb was to remain.

This says that the whole Christ is to be received and fed upon by faith—Christ in both natures, divine and human; Christ in all his offices, prophet, priest, and king; Christ in all his person and work.

They were to eat the Passover dressed and ready to move out of Egypt

This is the Lord's Passover and effectually saves. The world, as Egypt to Israel, is no longer our home. We are pilgrims, temporarily here but awaiting his call to move out and go home to Canaan.

'When I see the blood, I will pass over you'

This is why the ordinance was called *the Passover*, because the Lord, at the sight of the blood of the lamb, passed over the Israelites and delivered them. His judgment and wrath pass over us because of the blood of Christ (Rom. 8:1; Eph. 1:7).

The manna

Exodus 16:11-18, 31;

John 6:28-35, 48-51

Would we be faithful ministers of the gospel of Christ? Would we be faithful teachers and preachers in our generation? Would we be faithful students and rightly divide the word of truth? Then we will search the Old Testament Scriptures and preach Christ from the types, patterns, and prophecies as did our Lord and the disciples (Luke 24:26-27, 44-47; 1 Cor. 10:4; 1 Cor. 5:7).

In John 6 our Lord refers to the manna which fell in the wilderness and calls himself ‘the true bread from heaven.’ In Rev. 2:17 John writes, ‘to him that overcometh will I give to eat of *the hidden manna.*’ How is the manna, which God gave to Israel, a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, ‘the true bread’?

Manna was a strange and mysterious thing to the Israelites

They had never seen anything like it before and said to one another, ‘What is this?’ (Exo. 16:15).

Nothing is more mysterious and wonderful than the incarnation of God in human flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). He who made the world was in the world (John 1:10). He who made woman was made of a woman (Gal. 4:4-5). The living God became a man and dwelt among us, numbered with transgressors, subject to every trial and temptation of the flesh, yet without sin (John 1:14; Heb. 4:14-16). Without the aid of men (no plowing, no planting, no reaping) the bread lay upon the ground. Even so, without the aid of men the Son of God was conceived and born into the world (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:30-35).

Manna was prepared in heaven and came down to earth

The people of Israel must have food. It was impossible for them to provide for themselves in the wilderness, so their bread was prepared in heaven and sent down to earth (Num. 11:9).

Christ Jesus had a body prepared of the Father that he might be food for believers (Heb. 10:5). In the wilderness of flesh and sin there is no food. 'In the flesh dwelleth no good thing.' 'That which is impossible with men is possible with God.' All the nourishment Israel needed was found in the manna from heaven, and all that a believer needs is in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10).

Manna was a gift

It cost them nothing. All they needed to do was to gather it and eat it. Christ Jesus is the unspeakable gift of God's love (2 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 6:23). Our Lord said to the Samaritan woman, 'If you knew the gift of God, you would ask and I would give.' The bread of life, Christ Jesus, is free. That for which men labor never satisfies and in the end will cost them dearly (Isa. 55:1-3).

Manna was provided for all who were hungry

The poor and the rich, the young and the old, male and female, leaders and followers, all had one thing in common. They were hungry, and the manna met everyone's need (Exo. 16:16-18). All men, of whatever distinction, have one thing common—all have sinned and all need the Saviour. He is the *only Saviour* and the *only bread* (Matt. 11:28; John 6:53-54).

The Israelites gathered the manna daily, and the man who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. We feed on Christ daily, 'to whom coming.' There is not a day without a fresh feeding upon him, and whether we have strong faith (much), we have none over, or weak faith (less), we have no lack of nourishment and life. *He is sufficient!*

Manna was pleasant to the taste

How sweet and satisfying is the Lord Jesus to those who taste (Exo. 16:31)! His word is sweeter than the honeycomb (Psalm 34:8). He becomes all things to those who believe, meeting their every need.

In many ways the manna in the wilderness does not picture Christ.

Manna was food for the outward man only. Christ is the bread of life for the inward man.

The manna was eaten by those who later died. We eat of Christ and never die.

The manna rotted and decayed when kept. Christ ever lives! He abides the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The manna was only found in the morning. Christ is our food morning, noon, and night.

The manna ceased when they entered Canaan. Christ, our bread, is our bread forever. In glory he will be the subject of our song, the joy of our heart, and the object of our worship.

Go worship at Emmanuel's feet
See in his face all wonders meet!
The whole creation can afford
But some faint shadow of my Lord.

Is he compared to *wine* and *bread*?
Dear Lord, our souls would thus be fed!
Is he a *tree*? Then we receive
Salvation from his healing leaves!

Is he a *rose*? Not Sharon yields
Such fragrancy in all her fields!
Is he the *vine*? his heavenly root
Supplies the branch with life and fruit!

Is he the *fountain*? There I bathe
And heal the plague of sin and death.
Is he a *fire*? He will purge my dross
So the true gold sustains no loss!

Is he the *rock*? How firm he proves

The Rock of Ages never moves.
Is he the *way*? That leads to God,
There would I walk in lines of blood!

Is he the *door*? I'll enter in
To feed on pastures large and green!
Is he the *temple*? I'll adore
The indwelling majesty and power!

Is he the *sun*? His beams are grace,
His course is joy and righteousness!
His *beauties* we can never trace
'Till we behold him face to face!

Water from the rock

**Exodus 17:1-7;
Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 10:4**

The people of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of sin and pitched in Rephidim. There was no water to drink. The people murmured against Moses because there was no water.

If we did not know something of the evil of the human heart from scripture (Jer. 17:9) and from our own experience (Rom. 7:24), we would be at a loss to account for the unbelief, ingratitude, and insensibility of these people to God's goodness and faithfulness. They had been delivered from Egypt. They had seen the hand of God at the Red Sea. They had been fed with quail and manna. Now they are ready to stone Moses because they have no water.

We learn from Israel in the wilderness a needed lesson, and that is the unvarying tendency of the human heart to *doubt God!* The smallest cloud of trouble is sufficient to hide the face of God. We had rather lean on a cobweb of human resources and wisdom than on the everlasting omnipotent arm of God. It is well called, 'an evil heart always ready to depart from the living God.'

Note, if you will, the age-old questions in Exodus 16 and 17, 'What shall we eat? What shall we drink?' The only question missing is, 'What shall we wear?' After these things do the heathen seek.

Faith has a brief but comprehensive answer to all these questions—*God!* There is nothing that exceeds the wickedness of the human heart except the abounding grace of God! The only thing greater than our sin is *his grace!* Someone once said, 'Two things man has never fathomed—the depth of sin and the grace of God.'

vv. 4-6. 'Go out, take the elders and your rod. I will stand upon the rock in Horeb. You shall smite the rock. There shall come water out of the rock. The people shall drink.'

What makes this event so special? What is there about the rock smitten that is so special? Paul answers (1 Cor. 10:4) in four words, *‘that rock was Christ.’*

1. The people thought that they would perish

All hope was gone, the simple fact being that there was no water. No water—no life. Is this not our state and condition by birth, nature, and practice? No spiritual water, no life, only death in a dry, thirsty, and barren land (Psalm 63:1-2). The human well is dry, the religious well is dry, the philosopher's well is dry. There is nothing that we can do nor the world of flesh can do to save our souls.

2. There is a rock

‘There is a rock in a weary land; its shadows fall on the burning sand.’ In appearance it is only a rock like so many other rocks. Without anointed eyes one would never see it nor know the power, beauty, and life-giving water therein. Christ said to the woman, ‘If you knew, you would ask and I would give you living water.’

Look at the rock! A rock is an unlikely thing to afford water. Only a rock, yet God stood on that rock. Christ was called ‘only a carpenter: no beauty that we should desire him: you are only a man; how can you be God?’ Oh, for anointed eyes to see that ‘God was in Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:19). ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father’ (John 14:9).

3. The rock was smitten

There was no water coming forth from the rock until Moses smote it with his rod. So our Lord Jesus Christ was smitten, scourged, and crucified that his precious blood might flow forth for the redemption of our souls. ‘He was smitten of God and afflicted’ (Isa. 53:4, 10-12). You may get as technical as you wish; but the message of the word is clear, ‘He was smitten and afflicted’ by the wrath, judgment, and justice of God for us and ‘by his stripes we are healed.’

4. The rock was smitten for a rebellious people

No need to dress up Israel. They were a sinful, undeserving people, as we are; they were thirsty, as we are; they could do nothing about it, as we can't; God had mercy upon them, as he did upon us, and gave them water and life from the rock, as he has given us life in Christ. The rock yielded water abundantly. It required no purification by men, no effort to pipe it, only to drink of it freely. 'All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him.'

5. The rock followed them (1 Cor. 10:4)

It followed them through the wilderness, over the hills and valleys to Canaan. All the desert could not dry up that rock. So Christ is our fountain of life and the source of all grace through the wilderness of this world until we come to the heavenly Canaan. Also read Numbers 20:1-12.

The blood before the Lord

Leviticus 4:1-7

All through the Scriptures we meet with the blood (Exo. 12:13; Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18-19). If we have any apologies in reference to sermons on the blood of Christ, it is that we do not preach on it as often as we should.

What does the shedding of blood mean in reference to sin-offerings and sacrifices in the Scriptures? It means not merely suffering, which could be typified by blood, but it means ‘suffering unto death.’

Sin deserves death! The punishment for sin is not discomfort but death. ‘In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die’ (Gen.2:17). ‘The soul that sinneth, it shall die’ (Ezek. 18:4, 20). ‘The wages of sin is death’ (Rom. 6:23).

Christ, our Redeemer and Substitute, must suffer unto death! The only way that God can honor his holy law, satisfy his perfect justice, fulfill his righteous sentence, and yet forgive and justify guilty sinners was for Christ Jesus, the God-man, to come into this world and ‘suffer unto death’ for us (Rom. 3:25-26; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18).

All of these blood sacrifices under the law of Moses were typical of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus in the place and stead of sinners (Luke 24: 45-47; Isa. 53:4-6).

The animals sacrificed were always of a tame sort, not wild beasts which by force are brought to the slaughter- for Christ shed his blood and laid down his life willingly (Isa. 53:7).

The animals must be young males, signifying the strength and excellence of Christ; and they must be without spot or blemish, which shows the holiness of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19; Heb. 9:14).

The blood of the sin-offering was to be poured out, showing how the blood of Christ, our true sin-offering, should be poured forth (John 19:34).

1. The blood was shed 'before the Lord.'

Note in these brief verses how many times the blood is said to be 'before the Lord.' Whether any man saw it or not was of small account, for it was *before the Lord*. When the Passover lamb was slain in Egypt, where was the blood placed? It was on the outside of the door, before the Lord. He said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.'

The suffering and death of Christ on behalf of his people was *before the Lord*, unto the Lord, to declare his righteousness, to honor his holiness, to satisfy his justice, to fulfill his purpose, to glorify his divine character, to enable God to be both just and justifier (Isa. 45:21).

The atonement does not change the nature and character of God, for God is unchangeable; but rather it honors and magnifies the character of God. The death of Christ is not the *cause* of God's love but the *result* of it (John 3:16). God is not merciful to sinners because Christ died; Christ died because *God is merciful* (Exo. 33:18-19). God is love, God is merciful and gracious; but God is holy, just, and righteous. In order that every attribute might be expressed, glorified, and honored, God gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the sacrifice and sin-offering of a chosen people.

2. The blood was brought into the tabernacle and placed on the altar, giving power to the intercession of the priest (v. 5)

The priest laid his hands on the head of the bullock (v. 4), signifying our sins laid on Christ and that we lay the hand of faith upon him.

The shedding of actual blood shows Christ's oneness with us. Has Jesus Christ human blood? Yes, he is truly man; and as a man, he died.

The shedding of his blood shows the full payment of the debt. His blood is no longer in his veins: it is on the altar.

The blood of the bullock was brought into the tabernacle, showing that our Lord Jesus entered into heaven by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12).

The priest sprinkled the blood seven times before the Lord, showing the *perfection* of Christ's sacrifice, the number seven being the number of perfection. Christ's death is effectual and sufficient (Eph. 1:7).

The altar of sweet incense (v. 7) is a type of the intercession of Christ on behalf of his people. The sweet incense is the prayers and intercession of Christ, and the blood on that altar signifies the *power of that intercession!* He pleads his blood and sacrifice (Rom. 8:34). The cancellation of our debt of sin is because he died (Heb. 9:26-28).

His blood on the altar shows the fulfillment of the covenant (Heb. 13:20). A covenant or testament is 'of no value until the testator is dead' (Heb. 9:16-22). *Christ died* that the inheritance might be ours, and *Christ lives* at God's right hand to guarantee that the inheritance shall truly be ours.

3. *His blood atonement gives acceptance to our persons and worship.*
(*Eph. 1:6-7*)

His blood removes even the sin of our worship, prayers, and works (Isa. 64:6).

His blood enables us to come into the holiest (Heb. 10:19).

Every prayer, act of worship and praise, work of faith, and labor of love will be acceptable to God in proportion as they are done or offered through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The ram of consecration

Leviticus 8:22-24

In this chapter Aaron, the High Priest, and his sons were consecrated for the priesthood and the service of God about the tabernacle.

(vv. 4-5) All that was done this day was according to the commandment of the Lord. It is a picture of all believers who are separated, sanctified, justified, and consecrated to the Lord (Rev. 1:5-6).

v. 6. Moses washed Aaron and his sons with pure water, to show that all who bear the name of God, the vessels of God, and hold the mystery of faith do so with a pure conscience, clean life, and holy motive (1 John 1:5-7).

vv. 7-9. Moses put upon Aaron the coat of fine linen next to his flesh, the girdle of needle-work and the robe of the ephod, which had at the hem of it the golden bells and pomegranates (Exo. 28:31-35). He then put upon him the ephod made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen, which had two shoulder pieces (Exo. 28:6-12). He put the breastplate upon him, which was made of the same material as the ephod and put upon him the Urim and Thummim, which, according to Exo. 28:17-21, seems to be the twelve stones with the names of the twelve tribes. Then the mitre of fine linen with the plate of gold declaring 'Holiness to the Lord' was placed on Aaron's head (Exo. 28:36-38).

vv. 10-12) Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle, all that was therein, and Aaron, sanctifying them, setting all apart for holy use and service.

In Verse 2 the Lord had instructed Moses to take the *oil* with which he anointed Aaron, a *bullock* for a sin-offering, and *two rams*—one for a burnt-offering and the other a ram of consecration.

vv. 14-17. Moses slew the bullock, putting the blood on the horns of the altar and pouring the blood at the base of the altar, thereby separating it for holy use that it might be fit to have sacrifices offered upon it (Heb. 9:22). But the body of the bullock was taken without the camp to be burned. This is a picture of our Lord Jesus, God's Lamb, who suffered without the gates of Jerusalem a painful and shameful death; and the wrath of God was poured out upon him in order to make an atonement for his people (Exo. 29:14). This bullock is a *sin-offering*.

vv. 18-21. The first ram was slain as a *burnt-offering*, its blood sprinkled upon the altar. But its body was not taken outside to be burned: it was burned *there upon the altar* (Exo. 29:18) as a sweet savour or a sweet smelling fragrance to God. This is clearly denoting the delight and pleasure which the Father has in the death of his Son for sinners! *Read Ephesians 5:2!*

vv. 22-24. The second ram was brought forth and is called *the ram of consecration* (Exo. 29:22). Let us see three things that are evident.

1. The transfer of the sinner's sins to the sacrifice

In one sense the transfer of our sins to Christ is done by God through the same eternal covenant and purpose by which the sacrifice was selected (Heb.7:22; Heb. 13:20).

In another sense, the transfer of our sins to Christ was complete when he died on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

Yet in another sense, the transfer of our sins to Christ becomes a fact in time when we receive Christ as our Lord and Saviour, when we by faith actually lay our hands on Christ and there confess our sins, leaving them with him to bear away. This is what is demonstrated in Verses 14, 18, and 22, when 'Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram.'

2. The death of the bullock and the ram

Verses 15, 19, and 23 declare that the sacrifices were killed. On whomsoever the guilt is found, on him must the penalty lie; and from him

must that penalty be exacted to the uttermost. Our sins were laid on Christ and he must die.

Power is not enough. Even love armed with power is faced with righteousness, and righteousness is stronger than power. Omnipotence cannot conquer holiness (Rom. 3:26).

Holiness is not enough. He that would save us must also bow to the law's last sentence, 'The soul that sinneth shall surely die.'

3. *The consecration of the servants (vv. 23-24)*

Aaron and his sons were not plunged into the blood, for the quantity of blood is of no consequence. The blood was applied to three places on their bodies, and by this the whole man was consecrated.

The tip of the *right ear* denotes that his ears were turned only to the *word of God*. 'Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth.'

The thumb of the *right hand* indicates that all of the servant's skill, talent, resources, and effort are dedicated to his master. 'Lord, what will thou have me to do?'

The great toe of the *right foot* signifies that the servant's walk is changed, consecrated, and determined by the blood of Christ. His walk is in paths of righteousness.

'O Master, let me walk with thee,
In lowly paths of service free.
In peace that only Christ can give,
With thee, O Master, let me live.'

The Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16:1-22

Before Adam sinned he lived in communion with God; but after he had broken the commandment, he could have no more familiar fellowship with God. Even under the Mosaic dispensation when God was pleased to dwell among a chosen people, it was painfully revealed that the *sin and separation* were still there (Isa. 59:2). The presence of God was hidden away from mortal eye, hand, and foot. God's presence was revealed in the Holy of Holies of the wilderness tabernacle; and no man might come near except in *one way*, and then only the High Priest once a year--not without the blood (Heb. 9:1-8).

How can a son of Adam approach God? How can a sinner come before God, be accepted, and forgiven? Only in the way God has decreed--no other way! God has, in grace and mercy, purposed to show mercy and grace to sinners in a way consistent with his righteousness, justice, and truth. That way is by the obedience and death of his only begotten Son, by whom we have received the atonement (John 14:6; Rom. 5:8-11; Heb. 9:11-12; Heb. 10:19-22). Long before Christ came to earth and fulfilled all that was promised and prophesied of him, God pictured the person and work of Christ, our great High Priest and Redeemer, in the Day of Atonement, taught in this chapter.

This Day of Atonement was only a type, a shadow of good things to come by Christ. These sacrifices could not put away sin (Heb. 10:1-4). These blood atonements only continued until Christ died, and they are no more (Heb. 10: 11-14, 18).

v. 2. The Holy of Holies might be called God's presence-chamber, where he appeared in his glory upon the mercy-seat. Neither Aaron, the High Priest, nor any man might approach God except at the time God designates and in the way God appoints.

v. 3. Only Aaron shall come into the Holiest. There were other priests who ministered about the tabernacle; but Aaron represents our Lord Jesus Christ, the one great High Priest of the eternal covenant. All believers are kings and priests unto God (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; Rev. 5:9-10). But only Christ is the great High Priest, the one Mediator, and his atonement and intercession make our presence acceptable.

v. 4. Aaron, the *humble and spotless* High Priest, came into the holiest. Over and over Aaron must wash his flesh in pure water (Exo. 30:18-21) and be clothed in simple, white linen. Christ, our High Priest, was holy and harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26); and having laid aside his glorious adornment, he was clothed in the humility of flesh.

vv. 5-8. Aaron was to select two goats for a sin-offering and one ram for a burnt-offering. The ram was to be offered as an atonement or sacrifice for himself and for his house. He was then to cast lots upon the two goats. One would be for the sin-offering on the mercy-seat and the other would serve as the *scape-goat* (Lev. 16:20-22). Christ Jesus is both our scapegoat, on whom God laid our sins, and our sin-offering, who died for us.

vv. 12-13. In the first part of the tabernacle there was a candlestick, which is Christ the light of the world, a table of shew bread, which is Christ the bread of life, and, before the veil, an altar of incense which burned continually. This incense symbolizes the prayers and intercessions of Christ our Lord. When Aaron came into the Holiest, he was to bring a censer of live coals and a handful of that incense which he put upon the fire. The cloud of the incense covered the mercy-seat, as the intercession of Christ fills the throne of grace for us (Rom. 8:34).

vv. 14-16. Aaron sprinkled the mercy-seat with the blood of the sin offering and made atonement for the sins of the people. Our Lord Jesus has died, entered the presence of God with his own blood, and made an eternal reconciliation and atonement for our sins (Heb. 9:11-15; 9:22-28; 10:12-14).

v. 17. No man was to be anywhere near to Aaron as he accomplished this work of atonement. Even so, Christ, our Lord, *by himself* purged our sins (Heb. 1:3; John 16:32).

The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus enables us to enter into the presence of the eternal Holy God (Heb. 10:19-22). The veil was rent in twain when he died (Matt. 27:50-51).

Caleb - the faithful dog

Numbers 14:1-25

This series of lessons is about Old Testament pictures of Christ. While Caleb is not what one would call a type of Christ, yet the story of Caleb's faithfulness to the Lord gives us an excellent text from which to preach Christ and his faithfulness to those who believe him.

The children of Israel encamped below Mt. Sinai for about a year; and during this time God gave them the law, tabernacle, feast days, etc. Moving across the desert with the cloud before them, they came to Kadesh-Barnea (Num. 32:8), on the edge of the desert and on the border of the land God had promised them. The Lord ordered Moses to send men to search out the land which he had given to them (Num. 13:1-20). The spies were in the land for forty days and returned, bringing fruits from the land and their report about the land and its inhabitants (Num. 13: 23-27).

All of the spies except two, Joshua and Caleb, discouraged the people from entering the land (Num. 13:31-33). Caleb and Joshua believed God; they urged the people to obey God and go into Canaan (Num. 13:30; 14:6-9).

The people would not hear these two faithful men but rather listened to the majority and would have stoned God's true servants (Num. 14:10). God turned them back to die in the wilderness. All who were over twenty years of age (except Joshua and Caleb) would never enter the land (Num. 14:24, 28-33). It is significant to note that Caleb was of and represented the tribe of *Judah*, from which our faithful Redeemer came (Gen. 49:10).

1. The name Caleb means 'dog' or 'faithful dog'

I don't know why Caleb's father gave him a name which means faithful dog; a dog is a dog! But I do find that the people to whom the Lord Jesus has been merciful and to whom he has revealed his person and work are never too proud to take unto themselves the name 'dog.' Mephibosheth called himself 'a dead dog' before the mercies of David (2 Sam. 9:8). The

Canaanite woman acknowledged that she was a dog before the Lord (Matt. 15:25-27).

Christ came *not* to call the righteous, the good, and the moral; he came to save sinners. He died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6-8; Matt. 9:10-13). A person must be lost to be saved; he must be emptied before he is filled; he must be humbled before he is exalted. God will put us in the dust of nothingness in order that Christ may have all of the glory (1 Cor. 1:26-31). God will shut our mouths before he opens our ears to hear the good news of redemption in Christ (Rom. 3:19-24).

Men in the Scriptures, who were blessed to see the glory of God in Christ, confessed themselves to be nothing before him, yea, even dogs! (Job 42:5-6; Isa. 6:1-5; 1 Cor. 3:18).

2. What is it to follow the Lord fully

Caleb, the faithful dog, was said to have ‘followed the Lord fully’ (Num. 14:24, 32:12; Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:9).

It is to follow HIM! ‘My sheep hear my voice and they follow me, a stranger they will not follow.’ He is their Lord and Master, and their *only* Master. They delight to do HIS will. ‘Thy will be done.’

It is to *follow* him! They do not run ahead of the Lord but rather they follow him. They do not move until the cloud moves. We dare not run ahead of his good providence but are content to ‘wait on the Lord.’

It is to follow the Lord *in heart*! ‘My son, give me thine heart.’ Following the Lord is not a physical exercise but a heart relationship and experience. Paul declared, ‘It is the *love* of Christ for me and my love for him that constrains me, motivates me, and thrills me.’ There are many churches with crosses on their steeples which have long since taken the cross out of the pulpit. Our Lord said to Peter, ‘If you love me, feed my sheep.’ If we love him, we will! And our obedience, service, and labor are motivated by love, not fear nor covetousness.

It is to follow the Lord *all the days of our lives* (Josh. 14:6-14). Caleb was forty years old when he stood firmly before Israel and urged them to believe God and take the land. Forty-five years later he declared, ‘I still believe God; give me mine inheritance.’ Some follow Christ for loaves

and fishes, some for miracles, and some for tradition and custom. These soon fall away but those who know, believe, and love him will follow him all the days of their lives (Col. 1:21-23; Heb. 3:6, 14).

It is to follow Christ *even if we stand alone* (Num. 14:10). Even when all the congregation refused to believe and would have stoned Caleb, he believed God. One man may turn the tide; but turn or not, the man who believes Christ will believe him even if he must stand alone (Acts 20:22-24). Stephen stood alone and died for the gospel he believed.

It is to follow Christ *by the power and strength of his spirit!* (Num. 14:24). ‘My son, Caleb, had another spirit with him.’ It is not by our wisdom that we believe, nor by our merit that we receive grace, nor by our power that we stand. It is by his Holy Spirit. ‘Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.’ We are made willing in the day of his power, and we are kept by his power through faith. ‘Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory!’ The true believer does not take credit for anything he is, has, or does (1 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 15:10).

The high priest intercedes

Numbers 16:41-50

The authority of Moses and Aaron had been questioned by Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and 250 men of renown in the congregation of Israel (vv. 1-4). Moses tried to show them the unreasonableness of their rebellion (vv. 5-11). Moses commanded them all to appear before the Lord the next day, with Aaron, to have the matter settled (vv. 16-18). When God would destroy the whole congregation, Moses and Aaron interceded for them (vv. 19-22). God opened the earth and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, Abiram, their families, and all that pertained to them (vv. 26-33). He then sent fire from heaven and consumed the 250 men who followed them and offered incense (vv. 34-35). The rebellion was not only against Moses (the prophet and leader) but against God's appointed High Priest, Aaron (vv. 9-11), which reveals rebellion against God's way of redemption through Christ; for Aaron represents Christ, our High Priest (Lev. 16:17-18; Lev. 16:33-34; Heb. 9:7-8).

One would think that this incident would have a lasting effect on the people of Israel, but it did not; for the very next day all of the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron saying, 'You have killed the people of the Lord' (v. 41). This reveals the total blindness and hardness of the human heart. No amount of signs, miracles, nor witnesses will bring men to God apart from divine regeneration and revelation. In John 5:32-40, our Lord declared to the religionists, '*John bore witness to me... the works I do reveal who I am...the Father himself has verified my claims the scriptures testify of me.. but you will not come to me!*'

The wrath of God arose against the rebellious people and he said to Moses, 'Get you up from among this congregation that I may destroy them' (v. 45). Moses instructed Aaron to take a censer, put fire in it from off the alter with incense, and go quickly unto the congregation and make an atonement for them before the Lord. The plague from God had begun (v. 46). Aaron, the High Priest, ran with the censer of incense and stood

between the fallen dead and the living, for the plague had already killed 14,700 people. As Aaron stood between the Holy God and the people with the atonement, the plague stopped (vv. 47-49). This is one of the strong Old Testament pictures of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. We will consider the type as we look at Aaron.

1. Aaron loved the sinful people

These people certainly did not love Aaron. The whole plot was against him—to strip him of his office and take it unto themselves. Is not this the attitude of Adam's race against Christ? In the garden of Eden, at the tower of Babel, and at the cross the cry has been and is, 'We will not have him reign over us.' 'They hated me without a cause.' We would rob him of all his preeminence.

Yet Aaron loved the people, and with no regard for his own life or safety, he rushed down among the people who were under the wrath of God and was identified with them. Christ, our Lord, loved us, came to earth, identified with us in the flesh under the law of God, and took upon himself the form of a servant (Phil. 2:6-8). 'Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10).

2. Aaron acted as God's High Priest

Aaron did not rush before God empty-handed with only a plea for mercy and a prayer for compassion. The people had sinned, and the wrath of God cannot be lifted without a sin-offering and an atonement (Heb. 9:22). Aaron brought the censer of incense. Even so, Christ, our Lord, as our High Priest, must have somewhat to offer (Heb. 8:1-3). His *tabernacle* is his body; his *sacrifice* is himself; his *atonement* is his own blood (Heb. 9:11-12).

Aaron did not plead their works and deeds, nor promise that they would do better in the future. He held up the atonement. Christ does not plead our righteousness, but *his*! He does not plead our works, but *his*!

3. Aaron served as the mediator

The people were dropping like dust as Aaron stepped between them and God to plead God's mercy for them. He was saying, 'Death and judgment, you must march over me and my atonement; you must smite God's High Priest and ignore God's atonement if you destroy the people.' Wrath and judgment have a claim on us. Justice is ready to smite the sheep. But Christ, the Mediator, stands between us and the justice of God and says, 'You must walk over me and ignore my blood to destroy my sheep' (1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 8:33-34).

Aaron and his atonement was the *only hope* the people had, as Christ in you is the hope of glory. Aaron was the *unaided mediator*: he stood alone waving the censer, as Christ, by himself, purged our sins! Aaron was the *sufficient saviour*. Death came to his feet and stopped. Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ is the effectual, sufficient Redeemer of all who believe. Judgment must stop at his feet (Rom. 8:1); for 'he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Heb. 7:25; Heb. 10:12-17).

The brazen serpent

Numbers 21:4-9

John 3:14-18

There is no better type nor picture of Christ, our Redeemer, and the way that sinners are saved to be found in the Old Testament than the one before us; for our Lord, himself, chose this Old Testament picture to illustrate the gospel to Nicodemus, the religious Pharisee (John 3:14-18). Would you learn the way of mercy and life? Then follow this story prayerfully and carefully.

1. The people rebelled against God. (vv. 4-5)

They were discouraged because of *the way!* It was away from Canaan instead of toward Canaan, but it was the way they had chosen at Kadesh-Barnea. They could and should have entered the land of milk and honey, but their unbelief turned them away from God (Heb. 3:19).

Our wanderings in the wilderness are of our own choosing. In our father, Adam, we chose not to believe God (Rom. 5:12). We wanted to be our own god and to have our own way, and the consequence was death for the whole race.

The people spoke against God. Paul, in 1 Cor. 10:9, said they spoke against Christ. They murmured against Moses, God's prophet and leader. Nothing that the Lord or Moses, his servant, had done pleased them. They spoke against the way of God and the word of God.

Our generation is no different. Instead of recognizing that our condition and troubles in the spirit and the flesh are of our own making and justifying God in his judgments, we murmur against the Lord, his way, his word, and his servants. The lust for *our own way* (Isa. 53:6; Isa. 55:8) got us in the mess we are in, yet we still reject God's way and desire our own.

The people found fault with the bread from heaven (manna) and the water from the rock. 'Our soul loatheth this light bread.' What a horrible,

condemning statement, especially in the light of the fact that ‘that rock was Christ’ and the manna a picture of Christ, God’s gift of life

How many in the world or religion today are content with Christ, the bread of life and the water of life? (John 5:40; John 6:51-52; John 6:55-60.) Like Israel of old and the Jews of apostolic days, we will not have *this man* reign over us nor rejoice in his way of life.

2. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. (vv. 6-7)

Because of their sin of murmuring and rebellion, God judged the people, sent deadly poisonous serpents among them, and the people bitten by the serpents died.

Our sin has separated us and our God. The serpent of sin has left its poison in every son of Adam; and death, the wages of sin, is upon us (Rom. 5: 17-19). ‘In Adam all die.’

There was no human cure for the fiery serpents’ bite, as there is no human cure for the guilt and condemnation of sin. Spiritual death is in us, physical death is upon us, and eternal death awaits us. ‘Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.’

The people entreated Moses to intercede for them with God. Only the great mercy of God could deliver them. Grace is God giving us what we *do not* deserve, and mercy is God not giving us what we *do* deserve.

3. God provided the remedy—a picture of Christ, our redeemer. (vv. 8-9)

A serpent was made in the likeness of the fiery serpents. So Christ, our Lord, was made in the likeness of flesh (Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7). He was made of a woman, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh (Luke 24:39). He was numbered with the transgressors (Isa. 53:12).

The serpent of brass had no venom, as Christ had no sin. He was tempted as we are, yet without sin.

The serpent of brass was lifted up on a pole. So Christ was lifted upon a cross (John 3:14-15). Bearing our sins, he was nailed to a cross (Isa. 53:4-6; 1 Peter 3:18).

There was but one remedy—the serpent on the pole. There is but one Saviour, one Redeemer, one deliverer—the Lord Jesus Christ, our substitute (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; John 3:35-36).

All that the people were required to do was look. God provided the remedy, fully and completely, and commanded them to look. Our command is the same, ‘Look and live’ (1 John 5:11-13; Rom. 3:28). The remedy was sufficient and effectual for dying sinners. No matter how severe the case, it was ‘look and live.’

The common notion is that salvation is for good people, church workers, and those who are examples and moral specimens. But how different is the word of God and how different this example! God's grace is for the guilty; Christ the Saviour is for sinners (Rom. 5:6-8; Matt. 9:10-13). God's mercy is for the miserable who cannot help themselves. We have no gospel for sham sinners nor pretended professors. Our gospel is for the lost, as Moses' serpent was for the hopelessly bitten Israelites.

An interesting commentary on human nature is found in 2 Kings 18:1-4. The people saved the serpent of brass and began to worship it, so Hezekiah, King of Judah, had to destroy it, calling it ‘only a piece of brass.’ Do not people today tend to worship the land where Christ lived, calling it the Holy Land? Do they not worship the place where he died and lay buried? Is not the cross itself an object of worship? What idolatry! It is not the cross that saves but the Christ of the cross.

A Prophet like Moses

Deuteronomy 18:18-22;

John 4:25-26

1. It is the clear teaching of the word of God that our Lord Jesus Christ has a three-fold office—prophet, priest, and king.

While others, as types of Christ, have held one (or maybe two) of these offices, no one has ever been prophet, priest, and king except Christ

How good and gracious is the Lord to send among us so great a prophet as ‘the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us’ (Matt. 1:23; Matt. 17:5).

What a prophet he is—coming from heaven, above all, having the spirit without measure, fulfilling what others only talked about, declaring the whole counsel of God, and bringing life and immortality to light through his gospel (John 3:31-35; 2 Tim. 1:8-10).

We see the absolute necessity of such a prophet, without whom we would sit in darkness and be left to stumble in blindness (2 Cor. 4:3-6). But his words are true and faithful, and to hear him is to hear God (John 12:48-50; Heb. 1:1-2).

How blessed are those who hear and believe him (John 5:24), and how inexcusable will be those who refuse to hear him (John 3:18). He is the *one great prophet*, of whom Moses was but a type (Heb. 3:3-6). He is the *one great eternal High Priest*, of whom Aaron was but a type (Heb. 7:21-25). He is the *one great king of kings*, of whom David was but a type (Luke 1:30-33).

2. The promise declares that the Lord thy God will raise up this one great prophet! (v. 18)

All of the true prophets and faithful priests were ordained and sent of God, for no man takes these offices of himself (Heb. 5:4-5). But this promise is of *one person--one prophet* who is the Messiah and is actually the *Word* of God himself (John 1:1-4, 14). He that hath seen him hath seen the Father

(John 14:9), and he that hath heard him hath heard the Father (John 3: 33-36).

The promise declares that God would raise up this prophet ‘from the midst of thee; of thy brethren.’ He is of Israel, according to the flesh, of the tribe of Judah and the household of David (Rom. 1:1-3; Rom. 9:4-5; Matt. 1:1). He was ‘like unto Moses’ in that he is a man, he is God’s prophet, he is a mediator between God and the people, he performed great miracles, and he delivered his people from bondage. But he is infinitely superior to Moses and to all the other prophets, for he is the Son of God! (Heb. 3:1-4; Heb. 1:8.)

God declares, ‘I will put my words in his mouth’ (John 7:16; John 8:28; John 17:6-8). His words are the *words of life*, not just true facts concerning God and the kingdom of heaven; but he speaks and men live spiritually (John 5: 21, 24; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), even as he spoke and Lazarus came forth. His words are the *words of truth* (John 1:14-17; John 14:6; John 18:37). His words are the *words of grace*. He is full of *grace and truth*. His words bring peace, pardon, life, and salvation from sin. That Prophet came not to condemn the world, for the world stood condemned; but he came that we might have life more abundantly. He is the gospel (the good news), and he came bringing the gospel. If any man hear his words and believe on him, he shall never die (John 8:51; John 14:23-24). The gospel is actually ‘the power of God unto salvation’ (Rom. 1:16). One cannot separate the Saviour and his word, for he is the word. No one can call on him who does not believe him, and no one can believe him who has not heard him (John 5:24; John 20:31).

3. *There is also a promise given to those who refuse to hear that prophet —the promise of judgment! (v. 19)*

All who will not hearken to the gospel spoken by Christ, in the name of the Father who sent him, will feel the wrath and judgment of God. To despise the words of Christ is to despise Christ, and to despise Christ is to deny and despise the Father. There is no remedy for rebellion against the Redeemer (John 3:35-36).

We may also note the following points:

(1) All other prophets were inspired by Christ and sent by Christ. He is more than a prophet- he is 'God with us' (Matt. 1:23).

(2) All other prophets pointed to Christ and spoke of Christ (Acts 10:43). Christ is the sum and substance of their prophecies. He fulfilled and completed all that they foretold (John 1:45; Col. 2:9-10).

(3) All other prophets did begin the holy books and the message of grace. Christ did finish and complete the books, the message, and the work (Heb. 1:1-3).

(4) All other prophets spoke of God by inspiration and learning, but Christ spoke of the Father as being with him and by him (Prov. 8:29-30; John 1:18; Matt. 11:27).

(5) All other prophets have left their work and are gone. Jesus Christ abides in all his offices continually. As he is a Priest forever, so he is the Prophet and the King!

The cities of refuge

Deuteronomy 19:1-10;
Joshua 20:1-6

The Lord gave to Israel clear instructions for dealing with thieves, criminals, and murderers. ‘An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot’ (Exo. 21:24). The scripture teaches that the punishment shall be *according to the crime!* If a person murders another in anger and malice, the murderer shall be put to death by proper authority. In many cases this would be by the near kinsman of the victim, called the avenger of blood (Deut. 19:6, 12).

However, suppose that two men go into the woods to cut wood; and while one is swinging his axe, the head of the axe comes off the handle and strikes his neighbor in the head, killing him. What is to be done? The killer had no hatred, no intention to kill, and no malice afore-thought.

The Lord instructed Israel to appoint six cities of refuge among the forty eight cities given to the Levites (three at the beginning and three as their borders were enlarged). The slayer who killed another accidentally and unwittingly could flee to one of these cities and state his case to the elders of that city. The elders were to take him in, give him a place to dwell among them; and when the avenger of blood came looking for him, they were not to deliver him into his hands. The slayer could abide in safety until his case was heard or until the death of the High Priest (Joshua 20:6). But if the slayer should leave the city of refuge and the avenger of blood find him and kill him, the avenger shall not be guilty (Num. 35:26-28).

The word refuge in the Hebrew means hope or safe habitation, and is commonly used to denote a place or a person to which we flee that we may be safe and secure from danger or death. ‘The eternal God (in Christ) is our refuge’ (Deut. 33:27). Christ is the refuge for guilty sinners (Psalm 62:6-8; Heb. 6:18).

‘Other refuge have I none: hangs my helpless soul on thee.
Leave, ah, leave me not alone: still support and comfort me.
Hide me, O my Saviour hide, till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last.’

C. Wesley

There are so many ways in which these cities of refuge are a type of Christ, our refuge.

1. The cities of refuge were appointed by God.

By God's decree, will, and word, these cities provided for the safety and security of those who fled to them.

It is by God's appointment and divine will that Jesus Christ, his well beloved and only begotten Son, became our surety (Heb. 7:22), our High Priest (Heb. 5:5), our righteousness (Jer. 23:5-6), our Redeemer (Gal. 4:4-5), and our Saviour (John 3:16-17).

2. The cities of refuge were to be located so that one could flee to a refuge without difficulty.

They were to be easily found, with signs pointing along the way, and the highway to these cities was to be kept clear of obstructions.

Christ, our refuge, is not far from any of us (Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 10:6-10). The guilty have but to look and believe. The word of God is the clear sign which points us to Christ (Rom. 10:17; John 5:24). The preachers of the gospel are to keep the way clear of stumbling-blocks and obstructions by preaching Christ (1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 11:3-4).

3. The man-slayer was to flee immediately to the city of refuge—to delay was foolish.

Even so, those who would find refuge from the curse and condemnation of the law must run to Christ *now* (2 Cor. 6:2).

4. The man-slayer must be within the city to be safe.

Knowing about the city or standing near to the city was not to be saved; he must be in the city. Those who would find refuge in Christ must by faith dwell in Christ (John 15:5-6; Eph. 1:6). To know about Christ, to profess to know Christ, or even to admire Christ is not to be saved. Believers, like the man-slayer of old, leave all behind and gladly lie in the bosom of the Redeemer, casting all their cares upon him and resting in his sufficient grace (1 Cor. 1:30).

5. The man-slayer must remain in the city.

To leave meant death (Num. 35:26-27). Believers will and must continue in faith (Col. 1:21-23). To deny Christ or to depart from Christ is to perish (Heb. 10:38-39).

6. Those who got into the city of refuge before the avenger of blood overtook them were completely safe and delivered from death (Joshua 20:9).

All who come to God by the righteousness, blood, and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, before death and wrath overtake them, are forever saved and freed from all condemnation (Rom. 8:1; John 5:24).

7. There are ways in which the type breaks down as a picture of Christ.

There were six cities of refuge. There is only one Redeemer (John 14:6).

These cities protected only from physical death. Our Lord Jesus delivers us from spiritual and eternal death.

These cities required physical exertion and running to reach them. No physical move, effort, nor deed is necessary to come to Christ—only heart faith. ‘*Look unto me and be ye saved.*’

These cities were only for those who by accident or chance killed someone; but Christ, our Lord, is the refuge and Redeemer of willful murderers, adulterers, thieves, and the chief of sinners. He died for the ungodly and welcomes all sinners to come to him for refuge.

Joshua

Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Joshua 1:1-9

The subject matter of the book of Joshua is Joshua's, taking upon himself, by divine commission, the government of the children of Israel after the death of Moses. In the whole affair, Joshua is a type of the Lord Jesus.

1. His name is Joshua

His name is Joshua—called in the New Testament *Jesus* (Acts 7:45; Heb. 4:8). His name, given by Moses, *Jehoshua* (Num. 13:16), means ‘salvation.’ Joshua is said to mean ‘Jah (short for Jehovah), *his help.*’ Moses received word from God, after the incident involving the striking of the rock (Num. 20:12), that he would not bring the congregation into the land of promise. That responsibility would fall upon Joshua. It is clear that Moses (whose very name is synonymous with *the law*) could never bring Israel into Canaan, anymore than the law can bring us to heaven (John 1:17). This is the work of Joshua (Jesus), our Saviour. Much importance is given to the name of our Redeemer; for his name indicates his character, his work, and his glory (Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:13; Phil. 2:9-11).

2. Joshua was for a time the servant of Moses.

He was under Moses, obeyed Moses, and did the will of Moses, as a good servant. Christ, our Lord, for a time was made of a woman, made under the law (Gal. 4:4). He took upon himself the form of a servant and became obedient in all things as our representative (Phil. 2:6-8; Rom. 5:19). Christ was subject to the law (both moral and ceremonial) in order that he might impute unto his people a perfect standing before the law (Heb. 2:16-18; Heb. 4:14-15).

3. Joshua was the governor and commander of Israel.

Vested with complete power and authority from God, he led Israel to victory and possession of the land. Our Lord Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. He has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18), he has all power over all flesh (John 17:2), and he must reign until he has the full salvation of all of his elect (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

4. Joshua led Israel into Canaan

Not into sight of it, but into it. So Christ effectually redeems all his people and will take them to glory (John 6:37-39; John 10:14-16, 27-30). What the law could not do, being weak through the flesh, Christ, our Joshua, has done (Rom. 8:3). Our inheritance is secured by and in Christ (1 Peter 1:3-5).

5. Joshua was a mighty conqueror.

He overcame and destroyed many kings and mighty men so that Israel could have peaceable possession of the land of Canaan. So our mighty conqueror, the Lord Jesus, overcame and totally destroyed the mighty rulers and enemies of our souls (Eph. 6:12). He defeated *Satan*, the king of evil. He conquered *sin*, which, like a tyrant, rules over the sons of men. He conquered *death*, the king of terrors (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

6. All of the good promises to Israel were fulfilled at the hands of Joshua.

So all the gracious promises of God to his elect are fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus.

Rom. 4:21 - What he has promised, he is able to perform.

Phil. 3:21 - He is able to subdue all things unto himself.

II Tim. 1:12 - He is able to keep that which we have committed to him.

Heb. 7:25 - He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him.

Jude 24 - He is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory.

7. *Joshua was faithful and merciful to save Rahab, the harlot and her house that had the red cord hung out the window.*

So Christ is merciful and faithful to save all sinners who express faith in his blood.

‘Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus, ready, stands to save you,
full of pity, love, and power.
Let not conscience make you linger,
nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
is to feel your need of him.’

The scarlet line in the window

Joshua 2:1-22: Joshua 6:17, 23, 25

My interest in Rahab, the harlot, and her story is enhanced by the number of times she is mentioned in scriptures. Besides the attention given her in the book of Joshua, Matthew identifies her as the wife of Salmon (a prince of the tribe of Judah), mother of Boaz, and great-great grandmother of King David (Matt.1:5-6). Hebrews lists her in faith's hall of fame along with Abraham, Isaac, and Moses (Heb. 11:31). James gives two illustrations of true faith evidenced by obedience—Abraham and Rahab (James 2:20-25).

Israel was camped across Jordan; and their commander, Joshua, sent two men to spy secretly the land. They would be taking, especially, the city of Jericho. Jericho was a large city—the city nearest to them and first in importance, for it must be taken. Judging from information that we have, several things are evident. Rahab's house was upon or in the wall which circled the city (Joshua 2:15). Her house was one where a person could find food and lodging. This was why the spies stopped there (Joshua 2:1). It is mentioned several times that she was a harlot. In those times and countries, women who kept public houses and inns were also prostitutes.

Word got to the king of Jericho that these Israelites were seen at Rahab's house, and the king sent word to her to deliver these men to him. She hid the spies up on the roof of the house and sent word to the king that, although the Israelites had been to her house, they had fled earlier and might be overtaken if the king would send someone after them, which he did. As soon as the king's men left Jericho to pursue after the spies, the gate of the city was closed. Rahab came up on the roof where the spies were hidden and set forth in such a beautiful manner her faith in the living God (Joshua 2:8-11). She then sought the mercy of the Lord to be upon her and her household when the people of God took the city (Joshua 2:12-13). The men promised her that she would be spared provided that she

keep faith in not telling anyone of their business (Joshua 2:14), that she hang outside her window *this scarlet line* by which she let them down the wall (Joshua 2:18), and that she and her family remain inside the house while the battle raged (Joshua 2:18).

Her house was upon the wall with the front toward the city for the entertainment of persons who came there, and the back was on the outside of the wall. She let the spies down the wall by the scarlet cord, and they fled in safety to the mountains. When Israel took the city, Joshua commanded that Rahab be spared (Joshua 6:17, 22-25).

1. Rahab is a picture of God's mercy and grace to sinners

She was a sinner by birth and by practice. All of the explaining by moralists and legalists will not make Rahab anything but what she was—a notorious sinner. But the Lord Jesus came to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Matt. 9:10-13; Rom. 5:6-8). His mercy is to the miserable and his grace for the guilty.

2. Rahab is an example of electing, distinguishing, and efficacious grace.

It was not by accident that the spies stopped at her house. They were led there by the Spirit of God. Her speech to the spies (Joshua 2:8-11) indicates a heart enlightened and taught by God. Faith is not the product of natural thought and logic; it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). She was one of the Lord's own: and her testimony is proof of her knowledge of the true God, her faith in him, and shows her to be a believer (John 6:44-45).

3. The scarlet cord she put out the window was an emblem of the blood of Christ, by which salvation is accomplished.

That scarlet cord which she, by faith, dropped from her window is as decisive and clear a picture of Christ's blood as Abel's lamb, or the Passover blood on the door, or the sin-offering in the tabernacle. It is by his blood and faith in his blood that sinners have redemption, forgiveness, atonement, safety, and protection from the avenging justice and wrath of God. 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.' When they saw the

scarlet cord in the window of the harlot, they passed by her house and destroyed all others.

4. *Rahab and her family were told to come into her house where the scarlet cord was hung, and there only would they be safe.*

As the Israelites were told to stay in their houses where the Passover blood was sprinkled, Rahab and her family were to remain under the protection and safety of the blood of Christ. To venture without was to be destroyed (Joshua 2:18-19).

Under the blood of Jesus, safe in the shepherd's fold;
Under the blood of Jesus, safe while the ages roll:
Safe though the worlds may crumble,
safe though the stars grow dim;
Under the blood of Jesus, I am *secure in him*.

The birth of Samson

Judges 13:1-25

The preacher of the gospel of Christ will find many things about Samson which will enable him to illustrate the person and work of Christ Jesus.

Samson's birth was miraculous, his mother being barren—God sent him.

Samson's birth was foretold by an angel of the Lord.

Samson was sanctified from the womb—a Nazarite.

Samson was a MIGHTY man who destroyed the enemy and delivered Israel.

But a whole chapter in God's word is given to the appearance of the angel of the Lord to Samson's mother and father; and in this chapter we find some strong assurance and confidence in our Samson, the Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 1. 'The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.' This evil was IDOLATRY, a sin they were prone to and of which they were frequently guilty. God delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years as punishment for their idolatry.

vv. 2-5. The angel of the Lord appeared unto the wife of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan. The woman was barren and had never conceived. He told her that she would bear a SPECIAL SON, who would be a Nazarite from the womb and would mightily deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

A Nazarite was a man or woman who, under Hebrew law, bound himself to abstain from wine and all products of the grape, to wear long, uncut hair, and to observe various forms of purification in the service of the Lord. The period of observance of the vow varied but may cover a lifetime. When the period was concluded, offerings were made, the hair

was cut and burned, and the Nazarite was discharged from his vow (Num. 6:1-21). Paul assisted four Christian Jews in this ceremony (Acts 21:20-26).

vv. 6-8. The woman came and told her husband all that she had seen and heard, and Manoah prayed unto the Lord that he would again send the messenger of God and further instruct them concerning the child.

vv. 9-14. The angel of the Lord appeared again unto them. We have no doubt that this was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who often appeared in human form to saints in Old Testament times (Gen. 14:18; Gen. 32:30; Judges 6:22-24). Verses 18 and 22 indicate that this angel of the Lord was Christ. His name is secret or *wonderful* (Isa. 9:6). Other angels did not hesitate to identify themselves (Luke 1:19; Dan. 10:13).

vv. 15-22. Manoah asked the man of God to allow him to offer a lamb before him; but he declined saying, 'If you would offer a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord.' Manoah did not know that this was the angel of the Lord, though his countenance was unusual (v. 6); so he would have been honoring the creature rather than the creator (v. 17). So Manoah offered a kid upon a rock unto the Lord: and as the flame and smoke arose, the man or angel of the Lord ascended to heaven in the flame. Manoah and his wife fell on their faces, realizing that this man was indeed the angel of the Lord! Manoah said to his wife, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God' (Exo. 33:20). His faith wavered in the presence of such miracles and majesty.

v. 23. But Manoah's wife was strong in faith and wisdom, and she encouraged him with a three-fold argument. May we, as believers in the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, be encouraged by the same arguments.

1. *'If the Lord intended to destroy us, he would not have received the burnt offering.'*

We were commanded by the Lord to offer a burnt offering, which we did; and C, the Lord was pleased to show his approval and acceptance by ascending in the very flame of the sacrifice. Our Lamb has been sacrificed on Calvary. By faith we look to Christ, the Lamb of God. 'For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself' (2 Cor. 5:19). It cannot be that Christ loved the church and died for it and the church die also. It cannot be that the Lord laid on him our iniquity and on us also. The Lord Jesus is himself our sacrifice and has not only died but arose and ascended to God's right hand (Heb. 1:3). This is our assurance of grace and mercy.

2. *'If the Lord intended to destroy us, he would not have showed us all these things.'*

He showed himself in two appearances. He showed us his acceptance of the sacrifice by identifying himself with it. Our Lord has revealed himself to the sons of Adam in the person of the Lord Jesus (John 10:30; John 14:9). Our Lord has revealed his justice, holiness, and righteousness in the sacrifice of his own dear Son (Rom. 3:25-26). Our Lord has showed us the way of life in the obedience and death of Christ. If he did not purpose to save a people, why would he reveal to them Christ, the way of life? (John 14:6).

3. *'If the Lord intended to destroy us, would he have told us such wonderful things as these?'*

The word to us is that we will have a son called Samson, who would indeed deliver us from bondage. This is the foundation of our faith—to believe God! (Rom. 4:19-25). When we are depressed or filled with doubt and fear, go to the *word*, the promises of God, and believe! Believe not your feelings nor your human reason, but *believe God!* God has told us the Saviour would come; he has come! The Old Testament says, 'Someone *is* coming;' the New Testament says, 'Someone *has* come and *will* come again' (Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6; John 4:25-26).

The kinsman redeemer

Ruth

A young minister was told by an elder of a Welsh chapel that he had preached a very poor sermon because Christ was not in his sermon. The young man replied, 'Christ was not in the text.' The wise old man said, 'Christ is in every text. In every text of scripture there is a road which leads to Jesus Christ and him crucified. Your business is to find that road and get on it.'

All that most people know about the book of Ruth is what Ruth said to Naomi in Ruth 1:16-17, and they usually come away from that with high thoughts of Ruth and no thoughts of Christ. The real key to the book of Ruth is in the term *kinsman redeemer* found in Ruth 2:20, Ruth 3:9 & 12, and Ruth 4:14. The 'kinsman' is the one who has the right to redeem (Lev. 25:25).

A man called Elimelech, of Bethlehem-Judah, because of a famine in the land, sold all that he had and with his wife and two sons left the land of Israel and moved to pagan Moab. Elimelech died in Moab; and his two sons married Moabite women, lived with them ten years, and then they both died. Naomi, now a very poor widow, determined to return to Judah and told her two daughters-in-law to remain in Moab with their people and their gods. Orpah kissed Naomi and departed, but Ruth clave unto her and uttered those blessed words found in Ruth 1:16-17.

1. Here is a picture of ruin by the fall (Ruth 1:19-21).

When Naomi, now old, poor, and weary, came to Bethlehem, the people gathered about her and exclaimed, 'Is, this Naomi?' Is this the same Naomi who left Bethlehem a few years ago rich and prosperous with her family about her? She replied, 'Don't call me Naomi (sweet and pleasant); call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.' She went out full and came back empty, rich and came back poor, sweet and came back bitter.

We look at Adam after the fall, when he sinned, sold out, and left the presence of God for his own way, and we say, ‘Is this Adam? Are these poor, dying, corrupted creatures sons of Adam, created in the image of God?’ (Rom. 5:12; Rom. 3:10-19.) The king is now a beggar, the prince is now a pauper, and the-blessed are now cursed.

2. *Here is the unmerited, unsought love of Christ for sinners (Ruth 2:1-5, 16).*

Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest season. It was the custom to allow poor people and those without support to follow the reapers in the field and pick up what they had left. Ruth went out to glean in the fields; and by God's providence she gleaned in the field of Boaz, Naomi's near kinsman (2:1). Boaz took notice of Ruth, had compassion on her, instructed her to glean in his field, and told the reapers to let fall some ‘handfuls of purpose’ (2:16) for her.

This world belongs to the Lord Jesus. It is his by design, by decree, and by death (Col. 1:16-17; John 3:35; Rom. 14:9; John 17:2). We live and glean in his field. The Lord Jesus in grace and love has taken notice of some of Adam's race. He knew us though we knew him not: He loved us though we did not love him; and by his handfuls of purpose, we have lived and prospered to this day. God takes care of his own even in their days of unbelief.

3. *Here is the kinsman redeemer (Ruth 2:18-20).*

Ruth returned home with a generous supply of grain. Naomi took note of the abundance and asked Ruth where she gleaned and who was so generous with her. When Naomi heard that Ruth's benefactor was Boaz, she exclaimed, ‘Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness.’ Boaz is one who has the right to redeem, one kinsman-redeemer. If one has sold his inheritance and has a *near kinsman*, who is *able and willing* to stand for him and buy back all that he lost, it shall be done (Lev. 25:25).

Christ Jesus, by God's covenant of mercy and divine grace, is *our kinsman*; for he became a man, numbered with the transgressors, bone of

our bone and flesh of our flesh (John 1:14: Gal. 4:4-5). He *willingly* took upon himself to redeem all that we lost in Adam, and he is *able* to do so because, though a man, he is the strong and mighty God (Heb. 7:25; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24-25). By his perfect obedience he has given us righteousness before the law; and by his death he has satisfied divine justice, enabling God to be both just and justifier of all who believe (Rom.3:25-26).

4. Humility, acceptance, and redemption.

Read in Ruth 3:1-7 how Ruth humbled herself at the feet of Boaz, seeking his mercy, as we lie at the feet of Christ, for he owes us nothing. Read in Ruth 3:10-11 how Boaz accepted her whom he already loved, even as we are accepted in the Beloved upon evidence of humility and faith. Read how Boaz married Ruth and all of his wealth and name became hers, even as we are married to Christ and are joint-heirs with him because we are his and wear his name. The pagan girl became the wife of Boaz, the great-grandmother of King David, and stood in the lineage of Christ—*all of grace!*

The song of Hannah

1 Samuel 2:1-10

A godly man named Elkanah had two wives. One was named *Hannah* and the other was named *Peninnah*. Hannah was much loved by her husband, but the Lord had shut up her womb and she had no children. Peninnah had several children and, being jealous of Hannah, continually provoked and harassed her because she was barren. Peninnah was especially unkind to Hannah when their husband was away, so that Hannah wept and would not eat. The next time Elkanah went to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord, he took Hannah with him. Hannah was in much distress of soul, and she wept and prayed before the Lord that he would give her a son (1 Sam. 1:9-11). She promised to give this son unto the Lord all the days of his life. Eli, the priest, saw Hannah praying and weeping; but because no words came from her mouth, he thought she might be drunk, so he reprimanded her (1 Sam. 1:12-14). Hannah explained her sorrow and her desire to the man of God, who prophesied that God would grant her request (1 Sam. 1: 15-18).

Hannah and Elkanah returned home and a son, Samuel, was born to them (1 Sam. 1:19-20). The men of a household were required to appear before the Lord at the three festivals; the women were not. Therefore, when Elkanah and his household went up to offer unto the Lord, Hannah would not go; for she said, 'I gave him to the Lord to serve before the Lord, so I will not take him until he is old enough to abide there and not return home with me' (1 Sam. 1:21-23). According to reports, there was a three-fold weaning of a child in old times. (1) When he was weaned from the mother's milk at two or three, (2) when he was weaned from a nurse at seven, and (3) when he was twelve and weaned from childish manners. So Samuel was about 12 years old when Hannah took him up to Eli (1 Sam. 1:24-28).

Hannah had prayed for a son, and God heard her prayer. Then, as she fulfilled her vow and brought him before the Lord, she gave thanks and

magnified the Lord. 'O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men' (Psalm 107:8).

v. 1. My Heart *rejoices in the Lord;*' not in my husband, my son, nor even in my happiness and fulfillment, but in the Lord. The Lord Jesus is the fountain of grace and the giver of all (James 1:17-18; Phil. 3:3).

'*my horn (strength) is exalted in the Lord.*' The change in her state and her strength to conceive was by his power and grace (Col. 2:13). Spiritual life is in and by Christ (John 1:12-13; John 5:21). '*I rejoice in thy salvation.*' Hannah probably referred to those who mocked her in her barrenness. But, judging from Verse 10, she also had a wider meaning; for Christ is God's King and his anointed: and it is through Christ that we have the victory over our enemies, Satan, sin, death, hell, and the grave (1 Cor. 15:25-26).

v. 2. '*there is none holy as the Lord.*' Here is a well-taught believer who understands that God's chief attribute is his holiness. God is essentially, originally, perfectly, and unchangeably holy, as others are not! '*There is none beside thee,*' holy, righteous, and just. All that God does is in accordance with and in keeping with his holiness. Christ came, lived, died, and arose that God may be holy, just, and the justifier of sinners (Rom. 3:25-26). '*neither is there any rock like our God.*' Our Lord Jesus is often called the Rock. He is our Rock and our salvation to hide, shelter, and support all who come to him (Psalm 62:6-7; Isa. 28:16; 1 Cor. 10:4).

v. 3. '*talk no more exceeding proudly.*' We have no room to complain if we are barren and no room to boast if we are blessed (1 Cor. 4:7; John 3:27). Arrogant words and thoughts will be judged, for God knows every heart (Dan. 5:20; James 4:6). Actions are weighed before God by the *motive* and *principle* from which they proceed.

vv. 4-5. Hannah, praising God's grace to the humble and weak, illustrates how he exalts the humble and resists the proud. (1) Mighty men, trusting in their strength and arms, are broken to pieces, while God gives strength to those who stumble in weakness. (2) Those who have proudly lived in plenty are forced to toil for bread, while the hungry have been filled by his

grace. (3) Barren Hannah, by his mercy, has born several children, while proud Peninnah (according to tradition) can bear no more and loses those she has (Jer. 9: 23-24). God's grace is a gift to the needy and humble, not a reward for the rich (Matt. 5:3-7).

vv. 6-7. It is true that the Lord sovereignly, according to his purpose, controls all things; and men live and die, succeed or fail, are rich or poor, and rule or serve by the will of God. But it is also true that before God saves a sinner and reveals Christ to his heart, he will strip that sinner of all self righteousness, all self-hope, and all personal merit. God will bring us low before he exalts us, strip us before he clothes us and show us our poverty before he reveals our inheritance in Christ (Matt. 9:10-13; Phil. 3:4-10).

v. 8. Here is a description of our state in sin—poor beggars in the dust and on the dunghill (Eph. 2:12-13). But, because of our Lord's righteous obedience and shed blood, we are seated with him among princes on the throne of glory (Eph. 2:4-10),.

vv. 9-10. His word and his covenant shall not fail. He will keep his saints, his sheep, and not one shall perish (John 6:37-39; John 10:27-30). He shall judge the wicked, and none can stay his hand. The Lord will give power, strength, and victory *to his king, the messiah!* (John 17:23; Psalm 24). Christ came to set the captive free, and he shall not be discouraged (Isa. 61:1-3).

Give us a king

1 Samuel 8:1-22

Samuel, Hannah's son (whose name means 'asked of God'), remained with Eli, the priest and prophet of God, and ministered unto the Lord before Eli (1 Sam. 2:11; 1 Sam. 3:1). Eli was quite old and had failed to discipline his sons; therefore, God slew them (1 Sam. 3:10-14). Samuel became God's prophet and judge in Israel (1 Sam. 3:19-21). Samuel was a faithful prophet of God all the days of his life (1 Sam. 7:15-17). When he was old, Samuel made his sons judges over Israel; but, like Eli's sons, they perverted judgment, took bribes, and displeased the Lord (1 Sam. 8:1-3). The elders of Israel came to Samuel and requested that he establish a KING over Israel, like the nations about them (1 Sam. 8:4-5).

This matter had risen before during the days of Gideon (Judges 8:22-23); and Gideon had wisely replied to their request, 'I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.' The people of God have no king but Jesus Christ, the Lord (Matt. 23:8-11). Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9-10; Phil. 2:9-11).

The request of the elders displeased Samuel, and he knew it to be evil. But he took the matter to the Lord in prayer, and the Lord revealed what was really behind their request. 'They have not rejected you, Samuel, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them' (1 Sam. 8:6-8).

Thomas, the disciple, summed up the faith and submission of all believers when he said, 'My Lord and my God.' Christ is our King by the Father's design and decree; he is our King by his death (He died that he might be Lord of the dead and the living); and he is our King, by our submission. It is his crown rights that men refuse to own. 'We will not have this man to reign over us' (John 19:15). He was delivered to Pilate, charged with saying, 'He himself is Christ a King' (Luke 23:1-2). The soldiers mocked him as 'King of the Jews' (John 19:1-3). Over his head, nailed to the cross, was the charge against him, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King

of the Jews' (John 19:19). And it is as prophet, priest, and KING that believers recognize, receive, and bow to the Lord Jesus, not just as 'personal Saviour.' There are those in modern religion who talk of accepting Jesus as their Saviour but not as their Lord. This is an impossibility! One knows nothing of the saving mercy and merits of Christ who does not bow to Christ, the Lord! Israel was glad to receive God's blessings, but *not his reign!* They never refused his benefits, but they *refused his sceptre!* One noted evangelist often said, 'Christ will be Lord of all or not Lord at all.' Christ said to his disciples, 'Ye call me *master* and *Lord*; and ye say well; for so I am' (John 13:13). Redemption is the enthronement of Christ in the heart. A man cannot serve two masters. Our Lord demands total submission and surrender to his Lordship of those who would be his disciples (Matt. 10: 34-39).

The Lord told Samuel to tell the people what to expect when they reject his reign and make a man to be king over them (1 Sam. 8:9-18). But the blind and foolish people only cried out the more, 'Nay, but we will have a king, over us' (1 Sam. 8:19-20). Samuel heard their words and rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord, and the Lord said, 'Make them a king' (1 Sam. 8:21-22; 1 Sam. 10:18-19).

The first order of business of the new king, Saul, after he had reigned but two years, was to usurp the authority of the priest, reject God's way of atonement, and offer a sacrifice himself to God (1 Sam. 13:1, 8-14). The people reject Christ the King, and then Christ the Priest and sacrifice.

Saul's great sin

1 Samuel 13:1-14

vv. 1-2. Saul had reigned for one full year over Israel and was near the end of his second year when he chose three thousand men of Israel for constant military service and protection. Two thousand were with him and one thousand were with Jonathan, his son. The rest of the men returned to their homes to be summoned if needed.

vv. 3-4. Evidently the Philistines had garrisons and strongholds in the land, and Saul ordered Jonathan to surprise and destroy the garrison of the Philistines near Geba. There must have been some sort of agreement or understanding between Israel and the Philistines; for we are told that, because of this treacherous attack, 'all Israel did stink with the Philistines,' as men void of honesty and trust. Jonathan did it on orders from his father, the king. Knowing that the Philistines would retaliate, Saul sent messengers to call all the people to prepare for war, for his defense and theirs.

vv. 5-7. The Philistines gathered together a great and mighty army 'as the sand on the seashore in multitude' to fight against Israel. When the people heard of the slaughter of the Philistine garrison, of the anger of the Philistines over it, and of the war plans of the enemy, they knew that they and their new king were in deep trouble. Many of them began to hide in caves, rocks, mountains, and pits. Some of them fled across Jordan to the land of Gilead, as far as they could from danger. Those who stayed with Saul in Gilgal 'followed him trembling and afraid.' Saul had not sought the counsel of God's prophet nor the will of God in any of these matters, but all of this trouble was of his own making.

v. 8. When Samuel first anointed Saul (1 Sam. 10:8), he ordered him to tarry seven days in Gilgal, promising that at the end of those seven days,

he would come to him, *offer sacrifices*, and *tell him what God would have him do!* Perhaps this was a general rule to be observed at Gilgal on all occasions, for Saul was waiting for Samuel as the people scattered from him.

v. 9. Wait on the Lord, wait for the prophet of God to speak for God (Heb. 1:1), and wait for the prophet-priest to offer the Lord's sacrifice. This order Saul broke! He offered the burnt offering. Though he was neither prophet nor priest, because he was a king, he thought he could do anything. Uzziah paid dearly for this presumption (2 Chron. 26:16-21). There is no area where the judgment of God is more severe and the wrath of God more certain than when any man presumes to violate the sin-offering, sacrifice, and atonement, for this is the work of Jesus Christ alone (Heb. 1:3). All through the Scriptures men have perished who have sought to approach God apart from the priest and the true blood offering which typifies Christ, our great and only High Priest.

Men who tampered with God's revealed way of acceptance and communion have felt the hand of judgment, for this is a denial of our sin and a disregard for his holiness. Examples: Cain - Gen. 4:3-5; Nadab and Abihu - Num. 3:4; Moses - Num. 20:9-11; Uzzah - II Sam. 6:6-7.

Among all of Saul's rebellions and blunders, this was his greatest error and chief offense—to come before God without the appointed priest and true sacrifice (Heb. 5:1-5; Heb. 8:8-12; Heb. 10:11-14). To attempt to come to God apart from his ordained priest and sacrifice is to deny our sins and to deny God's holiness, righteousness, and judgment against us (Rom. 3:19-26).

v. 10. When Samuel did come, Saul seemed to boast of what he had done rather than to repent of it, and he went out to *bless Samuel*, as if he thought himself a complete priest empowered to bless as well as sacrifice, This is the pride of the human heart. Only Christ can save, sanctify, and bless (Col. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:30).

vv. 11-12) When Samuel asked Saul what he had done, he began to justify his actions.

I was losing the support of the people, for they were leaving.
You came not when we thought you would come.
The armies of the enemy were gathered together.
The enemy planned to attack us, and I had not entreated the
blessings of God; so I forced myself to offer a sacrifice.

He realized NOT that no circumstances, no cause, and no situation can warrant a violation of the sacrifice of Christ and his priesthood. 'No man cometh to the Father but by me' (John 14:6).

vv. 13-14. Saul had acted foolishly and proudly in acting as God's priest and offering a sacrifice. Not only had he broken God's commandment regarding the sacrifice, but he had acted as his own saviour and mediator, denying the absolute necessity of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). The anointed, ordained priest, offering the designated sin-offering and sacrifice before God, at the time and in the way God appointed, is a picture and a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, and his atonement. Any deliberate violation of this sacrifice is a rejection and denial of Christ. This was Saul's sin; and God took the kingdom from him and raised up David, a man after his own heart.

David and Mephibosheth

2 Samuel 9:1-13

Saul; the people's king, had been rejected by God for disobedience and rebellion (1 Sam. 15:26); and David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), now reigned over all Israel. One of David's first acts as king was to inquire of the house of Saul, 'Is there yet any left of the house of Saul, that I might show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?' Ziba, a former servant of the house of Saul, reported to David that Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, yet lived and was a cripple, lame on both feet. David sent and fetched Mephibosheth and gave him the estate of Saul with many servants and a place at the king's table all the days of his life.

This is a beautiful picture of the grace and mercy of God toward unworthy sinners for Christ's sake, which can be told in seven words.

1. 'And the king said...' (v. 3)

Where the word of the king is, there is power, authority, and total sovereignty. There is no council, no conference, and no bargaining here. The king speaks from his sovereign throne, and what he decrees shall be done.

Our God is infinitely sovereign over all his *creation*. He reigns in total authority in heaven and earth (Psalm 115:1-3; Dan. 4:34-35). Our God is sovereign in *providence* (1 Sam. 2:6-8; Isa. 45:5-7; Isa. 46:9-11). There may be second and third causes, but God is the first cause of all things (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1-11). Our God is sovereign in *salvation* (Exo. 33:18-19; Rom. 9:15-18; Jonah 2:9).

2. 'That I might show the kindness of God to him.' (v. 3)

The word kindness is *mercy*. David, the king, was a man of mercy. The house of Saul was David's enemy and deserved no mercy nor pity, but David found it in his heart to show mercy to some.

Our God is holy, righteous, and just; but he is also merciful. He delights to show mercy (Psalm 130:3-7). Adam's race is a fallen, rebellious race and deserves no mercy. God is not indebted to sinners, but he has determined to show mercy to some (Exo. 33:18-19). The language of religion is merit, rewards, and service; but the language of true redemption is *mercy*. 'I obtained mercy' (1 Tim. 1:13-16). 'Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner' (Luke 18:13).

3. *'Which is lame on his feet.'* (v. 3)

Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, reported to David that Jonathan had a son called Mephibosheth, who lived in Lodebar and who was now a poor cripple because of a tragic fall when he was young (2 Sam. 4:4).

The word *lame* through a fall not only describes Mephibosheth, but it is our condition since the fall of our father, Adam (Rom. 5:12, 17-19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Eph. 2:1-3). All of our faculties were affected by this fall, and in our flesh dwelleth no good (Rom. 3:9-19).

4. *'Then David sent and fetched him.'* (v. 5)

King David purposed to show mercy to someone of Saul's house. When he heard that Jonathan had a crippled son in Lodebar, David sent his servant to where Mephibosheth was and fetched him; that is, the servant called and brought him to David.

The Lord of glory is love, and love must be expressed. The Lord of glory in his sovereign mercy determined to show mercy to a fallen race. He set his love and affection on lame sinners and sent his only begotten Son into the world to be our Saviour (John 3:16-17; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 5:6-10). Christ came where we were, became what we are, and by his obedience and death honored the law, satisfied justice, and enabled God to be just and justifier of all who believe (Rom. 3:19-26; 1 Peter 3:18). He then sent his Holy Spirit to fetch us, call us, and make us willing to come to him (Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:13-14; Psalm 110:3).

5. *'And David said fear not.'* (v. 7)

Mephibosheth was afraid in the presence of the king because he was of the house of the king's enemy; therefore, he fell on his face before the king and did reverence. David said, 'You have no cause to be afraid; I will show you kindness.'

Men and women who know something of God's holiness, their own nature and sin, and what the law and justice of the king demand have every reason to be afraid in his presence. God will punish sinners. 'The soul that sinneth shall surely die.' 'The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord' (Luke 18:13).

6. *'I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan's sake.'* (v. 7)

David said, 'I have not fetched you to destroy you; so you need not be afraid. I will surely (certainly) show you mercy for the SAKE of Jonathan, your father, whom I love.' Before Mephibosheth was born, David made a covenant with Jonathan, promising to show mercy to Jonathan's sons because of his love for him (1 Sam. 20:11-17).

Before the foundation of the world, God the Father entered into an everlasting covenant of mercy with the Lord Jesus Christ, giving him a people out of Adam's race and making Christ the surety and redeemer of those people (John 6: 37-45; John 10:24-30; John 17:1-3, 9; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2-13; Heb. 13: 20-21). The mercy and kindness God shows to sinners is because of his love for Christ (Rom. 8:35-39). It is for Christ's sake (Col. 1:14-18).

7. *'For he did eat continually at the king's table.'* (v. 13)

David fulfilled every promise to Mephibosheth, as God will fulfill every promise to his elect in Christ; for none shall ever perish, but shall all be made like Christ and enjoy his presence forever (Rom. 8:33-39).

Why God permitted David to fall

2 Samuel 11 and 12

Two chapters of the word of God are given to the great sin of David in taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and having her husband murdered. Preachers often refer to this sin of David and rightfully condemn it; but few inquire into the reasons why God permitted David to fall when he could have easily prevented it, as he constantly hedges all believers about and keeps them from the Evil One and from great sin.

1. The first thing to acknowledge in David's rise and fall, in his victories and defeats, in his spiritual success and failure, is the sovereign hand of God.

The hand of God, our Father, is never removed from his child; and God is the first cause of all things (whether he directs it or permits it) for his glory and our good (Rom. 8:28-31). Satan could not attack Job without God's permission (Job 1:8-12). Joseph's brethren had no power to sell Joseph into slavery without God's permission (Gen. 45:5-8). Paul's thorn in the flesh, called 'the messenger of Satan,' was ordained of God (2 Cor. 12:7).

2. All of the experiences of God's people in the scriptures, both good and bad, are for our instruction and example (1 Cor 10:1-13).

The word of God is not like the flowery biographies of men. God's word does not conceal the bad and reveal only the good of his saints. Men are portrayed exactly as they are—sinners saved and kept only by the grace of God. As we read the word of God, we are taken directly into the most intimate and personal lives of men like Noah, Abraham, Lot, Aaron, and Simon Peter. Some of God's choice people are seen in very poor character. Some are permitted to sin greatly before meeting Christ, as Saul of Tarsus; and some are permitted to sin greatly after meeting Christ, as David and Simon Peter. But none are permitted to continue in sin! (1 John 1:8-10.)

3. David's sin clearly sets before us the deceitfulness of the human heart and teaches us to put no confidence in the flesh (Jer. 17:9).

David's fall came after he was what we call 'a father in Israel.' He had walked with God many years, he had endured many trials, he had won many victories, he had written many psalms, and he was a man after God's own heart; yet he fell into great sin. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and will remain flesh until God calls us home. Paul mourned over his fleshly nature and inability to walk perfectly before God (Rom. 7:18-25).

We are foolish to put any confidence in the flesh. Our confidence is only in Christ (Phil. 3:3; Psalm 118:8-9). We are often quick to acknowledge a flaw in the character of another and so slow to recognize the potential to sin in ourselves (Matt. 7:1-5; Gal. 6:1-3). Every believer would be wise to recognize and acknowledge that we all partake, stand, and continue in the grace of God by 'his power and not our own.' 'I am what I am by the grace of God.' 'We are kept by the grace of God through faith' (1 Cor. 4:7).

4. David's sin reveals the grace of God in Christ Jesus to the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

David judged himself when Nathan told David the story of the poor man's lamb (2 Sam. 12:1-6). David became quite angry and declared, 'The man that hath done this shall surely die.' David said in effect, 'This man is a son of death and worthy to die.' Is this not what we are by nature and what we deserve from the hand of God? Nathan replied, 'Thou art the man,' which caused David to exclaim, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Some believe that Psalm 51 was written at this time, confessing his sin and justifying God in condemning him.

'The Lord hath put away thy sin' (2 Sam. 12:13). Oh, what good news to the heart of David! He wrote, 'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity' (Psalm 32:1-2). Yet sin is not put away nor forgiven because we confess it, acknowledge it, and grieve over it. Sin can only be put away by a perfect and sufficient sacrifice! Christ put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26; Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

David judged himself. David confessed his sin and justified God (Psalm 51:4). But God cannot overlook sin, pass over sin, nor forgive sin apart from the atonement of Christ. He is a 'just God and a Saviour' (Isa. 45:21-22.). He must be 'just and justifier' (Rom. 3:25-26). God saves and forgives by Christ, our High Priest, sacrifice, and mediator (Heb. 10:12-22).

Comfort from God's covenant

2 Samuel 23:1-5

There is something special about a man's last words! Especially a man 'after God's own heart,' a man greatly used of God, whose words were often spoken and written under divine inspiration. When a man is dying, I'm sure that he must do some serious thinking about three things: his relationship with God, how he will fare in the great judgment, and where he will spend eternity.

David, in this great hour, found his comfort and hope in *God's covenant of mercy and grace*. May I find my hope and comfort where he found his!

'David, the son of Jesse.'

A mere man, a mortal like you and me. He was a son, a father, a husband, and a friend. Real blood flowed through his veins, and his flesh was as earthbound and as frail as ours (James 5:17).

'The man who was raised on high.'

David was an object of God's favor and grace. God took a shepherd-boy and made him a king. In our case, he took a beggar from the dunghill and, through Christ, made him to inherit the throne of glory (1 Sam. 2:8; Eph. 2:1-7). Who can tell the great things God has done for us in Christ? (1 Cor. 2:9-10.)

'The anointed of God.'

David was anointed king of Israel by Samuel on orders from God, even as we have been made kings and priests (Rev. 5:9-10; 1 John 3:2) by and through the person and work of Christ.

'The sweet psalmist of Israel.'

David wrote most of the Psalms for Israel and set them to music. They were sweet and delightful to the ear, for they praised and magnified the Lord God.

'The spirit of the Lord spake by me.'

The Psalms and songs which he wrote were not the fruits of his own clever tongue and pen but were written by him under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'

This character, in all respects, was found in David (2 Sam. 8:15). I believe, though, that David speaks here of Christ, our King of kings and Lord of lords, the Son of David (Isa. 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5-6). He is a just God and a Saviour (Isa. 45:21-22). By his perfect life and death, he enabled God to be just and justifier of all who believe (Rom. 3:25-26). He did not destroy the law but fulfilled and honored it. He did not compromise justice but fully satisfied it (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21).

'He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth.'

No doubt that this is Christ, who is 'the light of the world,' 'the sun of righteousness,' who did away the clouds of law, ceremony, and sacrifice and brought in the clear gospel day of full justification, redemption, and rest. One writer translates this to read, 'And as the light of the morning shall arise Jehovah the sun. 'The tender grass' may refer to his incarnation, as in Isaiah 53:2.

'Although my house be not so with God.'

Here is a great sigh and mournful song. All of my house, my children, my servants, my court, and my nation are not right with God. They do not love God, worship God, nor seek his glory (2 Sam. 18:33). David wept over his house and his people, as Paul wept over Israel (Rom. 9:1-3; Rom. 10:1).

'Yet God hath made with me an everlasting covenant.'

The covenant by which the kingdom was settled on David and his seed, Jesus Christ, forever (Luke 1: 31-33), is but a type of the *eternal covenant of grace*, made with Christ from the beginning, in which Christ is surety, saviour, sanctifier, and mediator of all given him by the Father (John 6:37-39; John 17:2-3; Heb. 1.3:20-21; Heb. 7:22). All that the Father chose, the Son redeems and the Spirit calls (Eph.1:3-14) 'What the Lord does, it shall be forever' (Eccles. 3-14) and is without change (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29).

'Ordained in all things and sure.'

The mercies and grace of God are not left to chance but are decreed, determined, and purposed by him (Isa 46:9-11). The fulfillment of his covenant in establishing a perfect righteousness and effectual atonement is not in the hands of men but given to Christ to accomplish (Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:15) ; therefore, they are called the sure mercies of David (John 10:14-18, 27-30), for he shall not fail nor be discouraged.

'This is all my salvation.'

It would be good for us to listen to David when he says, 'God's love for me in Christ, God's choice of me in Christ, God's righteousness fulfilled in Christ, and God's acceptance of me in Christ is *all my salvation*:' not my feelings, works, nor righteousness, but his grace (Eph. 2:8-10).

'My God, when I approach thy throne and all thy glory see,
This is all my stay and this alone, that Jesus died for me.'

'And all my desire.'

Not only do I find comfort and peace in God's covenant of grace in Christ, but I find *delight and assurance* therein. This is my one great desire—that God's purpose in Christ be fulfilled and Christ have the preeminence (Col. 1:18; Phil 2:9-11).

'Although he make it not to grow.'

At present there are not many signs and evidences of what we are, have, or shall be; but the promise is sure, and we will rejoice in him (Hab. 3:17-18; 1 John 3:2-3).

I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing

2 Samuel 24:10-24

Regardless of the circumstances found in Verse One, a condition which we find hard to explain, David sinned in numbering Israel (v. 10). The Lord gave David a choice of three punishments: seven years of famine, three months of fleeing before his enemies, or three days of pestilence in the land (vv. 12-13). David refused to make a choice but rather said, ‘Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; let me not fall into the hand of man’ (v. 14). The Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel and destroyed 70,000 men (v. 15). When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord said, ‘It is enough’ (v. 16); and David was commanded to build an altar at the threshingfloor of Araunah, the Jebusite (vv. 18-19). When Araunah saw David and his servants coming to him, he bowed himself before the king and asked his mission. David said, ‘I am come to buy your threshingfloor to build an altar unto the Lord, that the plague may be stopped’ (vv. 20-21). Araunah replied, ‘Here is the threshingfloor, the wood, and the oxen; take them all without charge; they are yours’ (vv. 22-23). The king said, ‘No! but I will buy it of thee at a price; I will not offer burnt offerings unto the Lord of that *which cost me nothing.*’

A thankful heart will not come to God bearing a gift which cost him nothing. If it is of no value to you, it will not be received nor blessed of God.

When the Apostle Paul taught the early church the grace of giving (2 Cor. 8:7-9), he referred to the gift of Christ for us—*Christ gave himself.* ‘Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.’ This is the reason our Lord commended the widow's gift (Mark 12:41-44). She gave *sacrificially*, she gave what she needed and was of *great value*, and she gave *all she had!* Like David, her love for God demanded a gift *worthy of him*—her all!

Churches and professed Christians today insult God with many of their so called gifts and efforts to raise money for Christian causes. They give that which costs them nothing. Bakery and candy sales, car washes, rummage sales, used clothing, furniture, and articles which no one needs are given. Bond sales, with high interest to the buyer, are conducted. Worthless hillside land is given as a church site. One thing all of these projects have in common is that they cost the giver nothing. There is not in any of them the element of grace, self-denial, nor sacrifice. Let us look at five lessons learned from David's example.

1. Our example in the old testament is that *the first fruits belonged to God*, the firstling of the flock, the choice lamb, and the firstborn son.

God rebuked the priests of Israel for offering molded bread, lame and sick sheep upon the altar. He said, 'Offer these kinds of gifts to your governor and see if it pleases him (Mal. 1:6-8).

2. *A gift which costs nothing reveals a lack of faith in Christ*, while gifts of true value and sacrifice reveal a genuine faith in the Lord's power to supply our need (Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:31-33).

Abraham was willing to give his well-beloved son because he believed God (Gen. 22:12). Many in the early church were so strong in faith that they sold their possessions and goods and divided them with poor believers (Acts 22: 44-45) . No true gift of faith and sacrifice goes unnoticed by our God (Mark 10:28-30).

3. *A gift which costs nothing reveals a lack of love for Christ*, while true love considers no labor, no cost, no sacrifice too great. 'Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her' (Gen. 29:20). True love is always liberal and open-hearted; and when love is missing, what men give is considered an investment, a charity, or a loss. 'For God so loved He gave his only Son.'

4. *A gift which costs me nothing reveals a lack of regard for the majesty and glory of God*. Dare I offer anything to the Lord of glory which is less

than my best? The quality and value of our gifts depend largely on the esteem and respect we have for the recipient.

If you were selected to provide a gift for the President and one for the paperboy, would there be more thought and sacrifice in one than in the other? A gift given in the *name of God* demands our best.

5. A cheap, part-time, and selfish course of religion, which costs nothing, is an abomination to God and will never be accepted.

The man who found one pearl of great price sold all that he had and bought it (Matt. 13:45-46). Christ said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me' (Matt. 16:24-26).

Read about Elijah's instructions to the widow who only had enough ingredients for one cake of bread. 'Make me a cake first,' he said (1 Kings 17:9-16). She did, and her blessings were multiplied.

The Queen of Sheba comes to Solomon

1 Kings 10:1-9

It is quite evident that the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon is a picture of the sinner coming to Christ, for our Lord himself referred to it in Matthew 12:42! 'The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here!'

v. 1. The queen 'heard of the fame of Solomon.' She heard from others of the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-14; 1 Kings 4:29-30). She heard of the wealth and glory of his kingdom (1 Kings 10:6).

Have we not heard of the person and work of Christ? (Gal. 4:4-5; Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6). Have we not heard of the deity and glory of Christ? (Heb. 1:1-5). Have we not heard of the wisdom and power of Christ? (Col. 1:16-19). Have we not heard of the death and resurrection of Christ? (1 Cor. 15:20-28). As Paul told Festus, 'These things were not done in a corner!' (Acts 26:25-26).

vv. 1-2. The queen, having heard of Solomon, came to him to see and hear for herself. The queen took the right course; she came directly to Solomon.

Is this not the thing for the sinner to do? Come to Christ; come directly to him; do not be satisfied with only hearing of him (Matt. 11:28; John 7:37-39; John 6:37-39). Robert Howie was asked by a man, 'Please write down in black and white what I am to believe. There are so many texts; give me one to read and believe.' Howie replied, 'It is not any one text nor any number of texts that save, anymore than a man-slayer could be saved by reading the sign posts on the road to the city of refuge. He must go to and enter the city. Salvation is in Christ and in coming to him. When a man is thirsty, he is not satisfied by studying the well, but by drinking (John 6:53-57; Col. 1:27; Gal. 4:1-9).

The queen came to prove Solomon with many hard questions. She communed with him all that was in her heart. She asked questions she could not answer and others could not answer, but Solomon could. Christ is the wisdom of God; Christ is the truth. If a man would 'Know God and the mysteries of redemption and life, let him ask of Christ (Luke 10:22; John 1:18) great and hard questions.

How can a man be just with God? How can he be clean that is born of woman? (Rom. 3:19-23.)

How can God be just and justifier? (Rom. 3:24-26.)

How can a man be born when he is old? (John 3:4-8.)

If a man die, shall he live again? (John 11:25-27.)

Who can solve the mystery of the Gentiles? (Eph. 2:11-16.)

How is it that God sees and knows all things, yet he does not see nor remember a believer's sins? (Heb. 10:11-17.)

All Old Testament prophecies, pictures, types, and sacrifices point to someone and to some great event. Who is he? (Luke 24:44-47; Acts 10:43.)

v. 3. 'And Solomon told her all her questions' for, as a type and picture of our blessed Lord, 'there was not anything hid from the king' (John 3:34-35).

vv. 4-7. When the queen had seen Solomon's wisdom, the house he had built, his riches and piety, she was quite astonished, like one in ecstasy who had no power to speak because what she saw and heard so affected her. She said to the king, 'What they told me of you was true, actually, the half was not told me Your wisdom and prosperity exceed anything I thought or heard. It was not until I came and saw that I really believed.'

Though we heard of Christ's love, mercy, grace, and glory, it was not until we came to him in faith that we saw and experienced Christ, the wisdom and power and glory of God (Job 42:1-6; Isa. 6:1-4; 1 John 1:1-4). We stand amazed in the presence of our Lord, realizing that it is impossible to put into words the riches of his grace and glory (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

v. 8. The queen exclaimed, 'Happy are thy men, happy are thy servants, blessed are all who dwell in thy house, in thy presence, and hear thy wisdom.'

We can say with greater emphasis, for a greater than Solomon is here, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth' (Psalm 65:4) 'Blessed is the man whose sin is covered' (Psalm 32:1-2). 'Blessed are the eyes that see and the ears that hear' (Matt. 13:16). 'Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Lord' (Psalm 1:1-3). Blessed are those who know him, love him, and dwell by faith in him.

v. 9. Then the queen blessed the Lord God who delighted in Solomon, who put him on the throne of Israel to do judgment and mercy. The Lord loved Israel forever and made Solomon their king.

The Father loves the Son and has given 'all things' in his hands (John 3:35). The Father delights in the Son and gave him preeminence (Prov. 8:23-30; Matt. 3:17). The Father made Christ the surety, prophet, priest, and king of spiritual Israel because he loved them all in Christ with an everlasting love. Christ came to the earth to honor God's law, satisfy God's justice, to do judgment and justice that God may be just and justifier of all who believe (Rom. 3:25-26).

Three examples of faith

**1 Kings 17:8-16;
1 Kings 18:29-39; 1 Kings 20:31-32**

Long ago, when the Roman Empire flourished, someone said, ‘All roads lead to Rome.’ Those who study the Scriptures with a desire to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent (John 17:1-3), will do well to learn this first: in the Scriptures all roads lead to Christ—his person, glory, and redemptive work (Acts 10:43; John 5:39). From Genesis to Malachi the Old Testament Scriptures declare, ‘Someone is coming;’ the four gospels declare, ‘He has come, behold, the Lamb of God;’ and the epistles declare, ‘He is coming again.’

I want you to consider three examples of faith (recorded in 1 Kings) and how they relate to us; the faith of the elect, the faith of the evangelist, and the faith of the enemy.

1. The faith of the elect

1 Kings 17:8-16. Our Lord Jesus referred to this widow in Luke 4:25-26, when he preached in Nazareth and set forth his sovereign power and mercy as the Messiah (Rom. 9: 14-18).

God sent a famine upon the land for many years. The word of the Lord came to Elijah, God's prophet, to go eastward and hide by the brook Cherith, and there he would be fed by the ravens and drink of the brook (1 Kings 17:1-4). After a time, because there was no rain, the brook dried up (1 Kings 17:7); and the Lord commanded the prophet to go to Sarepta, to a city of Sidon. ‘Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee’ (1 Kings 17:9). Elijah found the woman gathering sticks to build a fire. The prophet told her to fetch him a little water in a vessel, and as she went to get the water, he said, ‘And bring me a morsel of bread.’ The woman replied, ‘All I have left is a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse. I am gathering those sticks to build a fire and cook one last cake for me and my son. It will be our last meal, and then we die.’

Elijah answered, ‘Don't be afraid; go build the fire and prepare the meal; but make me a little cake first and bring it to me; then prepare one for you and your son. For thus saith the Lord, the barrel shall not be empty and the oil shall not cease until God sends rain’ (1 Kings 17:10-14). The widow did as she was commanded, and the promise of God was fulfilled toward her (1 Kings 17:15-16).

How wonderful and sovereign are the ways of our God. He will reject the strength and wisdom of the flesh that he may have all the glory (1 Cor. 1:25-31). In the time of famine, he would send his prophet to a Gentile city, to the poorest of women, a widow, to be fed and cared for.

This woman was one of God's elect; for, though she knew it not, God had already prepared her heart to receive his prophet and his word. ‘I have commanded her’ (Psalm 110:3; Gal. 1:15-16; 2 Thess. 2:13).

The woman heard the words of the prophet and the promise of God to bless and sustain her; and she believed, the evidence of her faith being that she prepared a cake for the prophet first and brought it to him. Like Abraham of old, she believed God against all human reason, logic, and hope and staggered not at his promise (Rom. 4:17-25).

The faith of God's elect might be summed up in this way:

Knowledge - ‘I know whom I have believed.’

Confidence - ‘I am persuaded he is able to keep.’

Committal - ‘That which I have committed unto him.’ (2 Tim. 1:12.)

2. *The faith of the evangelist*

1 Kings 18:29-39. In the third year of the great famine, Elijah called the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves to Mt. Carmel and challenged them to call on their gods, and he would call on the name

of the Lord, and the God that answered by fire, let him be God (1 Kings 18:19-24). After the false prophets had utterly failed, after crying all day, Elijah's confidence and faith in the living God is seen in two things:

(a) His soaking the sacrifice, wood, and altar with twelve barrels of water (1 Kings 18:30-35).

(b) His brief, God-glorifying, sixty-three word prayer (1 Kings 18:36-37). 'The fire of the Lord fell.' 'I believe, Lord, help thou mine unbelief.'

3. The faith of the enemy

1 Kings 20:31-32. Ahab sinned against God in sparing the wicked Benhadad, whom God had appointed to destruction, but the faith of these enemies in the mercy of the king of Israel and the way that they came to him is certainly a lesson for all guilty sinners who seek the mercy of God. Come in the sackcloth of repentance, with a rope about your neck, justifying God's right to destroy you, and owning your just condemnation (Luke 23:39-43). God is plenteous in mercy to those who seek mercy (Psalm 130:2-8), but the proud he will send away empty. Death, the wages of sin, we have justly earned and deserve; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

Where is the Lord God of Elijah?

2 Kings 2:1-15

Our story actually begins back in I Kings 19:15-21. The Lord revealed to Elijah that he had chosen Elisha to take his place as the prophet of God to Israel.

Every believer is in the Lord's body and has a vital part in the Lord's kingdom and the ministry of the gospel (Rom. 12:4-8). We are all witnesses of Christ. But it is certain that some men are chosen of God to be prophets, apostles, evangelists (missionaries), and pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11-14). This is not a work or ministry which a man takes upon himself to be a pastor, overseer, and preacher of the gospel; but it is a work for which God equips, calls, and sends a man (Col. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:11). If God sends a messenger, he will give him the message, the wisdom, and the grace needed; and he will give him a hearing (Ezek. 33:30-33).

Although Elijah knew that God had his hand on Elisha and that Elisha would be a prophet of God, he did not pressure the young man nor encourage him to take upon himself such an awesome task and responsibility. He rather discouraged him and put objections and discouragements in his way (1 Kings 19:20). Elijah cast his mantle over Elisha, and when the young man said, 'I will follow thee,' Elijah told him to 'go home; I have said nothing to you about serving the Lord with me.' Men do not call prophets and preachers; God does! This he said to try him, to get out of his heart what God had done in him. Elijah would not persuade and push this man into the ministry, but rather did all that he could to keep the flesh out of the way and allow the Lord alone to deal with Elisha. But Elisha would not be discouraged and made a feast to express his joy at being called to such a service. He left his employment, his home and parents, his friends and followed God's prophet, became his servant, where he attained knowledge and understanding of divine things

and was trained by Elijah (1 Kings 19-21). It seems evident in the Scriptures that the Lord trains his preachers not in schools and seminaries, but under the eye and hand of those who are his preachers and pastors.

vv. 1-8. The time came when the Lord would take Elijah into heaven, and the old prophet was still trying his young servant. He said to Elisha, ‘The Lord sent me to Bethel; you stay here.’ But Elisha knew his call and replied, ‘I will not leave thee.’ Three times Elijah tried to get the young man to leave him, but he would not. Elisha, out of affection for Elijah, aware that God spoke through Elijah, desiring to see and learn all that he could from Elijah, and knowing that he needed God's spirit and power which was upon Elijah, would not leave and enter a work for which he knew he was insufficient, without taking advantage of every moment of this wonderful occasion. Has a man ever learned enough, seen enough, studied enough, or heard enough to feel that he is ready to speak for God? Elisha did not think so! Elijah smote the waters of the Jordan, and they went over on dry land.

vv. 9-15. Before Elijah was taken away into heaven, he asked the young prophet what he desired more than anything else. Elisha did not ask for fame, riches, long life, nor any of the things that appeal to this flesh. He asked for the presence of the Spirit of God. ‘I pray for a double portion of thy spirit!’ Elisha did not ask to go with Elijah, but that the presence of God might be with him. Elisha did not grieve over God's providence but sought the power of God to fulfill his ministry.

When God took Elijah up into heaven, Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah, smote the waters, and cried, ‘Where is the Lord God of Elijah?’ He was saying, ‘O, God, who was with Elijah, be thou also with me.’ Men are as nothing; it is the Lord we seek, serve, and glorify.

1. The God who blessed and used Elijah must bless and use us.
2. The God who kept Elijah faithful throughout his life on earth must make us stand firm in the faith (Jude 24-25).
3. The God who provided for Elijah in the wilderness must supply our needs (Phil. 4:19).

4. The God who raised the dead by Elijah's word must speak through us to raise dead sinners (Eph. 2:1).

5. The God who gave Elijah courage to face kings and enemies must free us from the fear of men.

6. The God who divided the waters for Elijah to pass over must be with us when we come to that river.

7. The God who took Elijah to glory must take us to himself.

‘Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, send me.

Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me.’

Where is the Lord God of Elijah?

1. He is in the heavens! Psalm 115:2-3.

2. He is in Christ! Matt. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:19.

3. He is in his word! I Peter 1:23-25.

4. He is on a throne of grace! Heb. 4:16.

5. He is in the midst of those who worship! Matt. 18:20.

6. He is in every act of providence! Rom. 8:28. He is in every breeze, every cloud, every moment, every heartache, every tear, and every joy. ‘Lo, I am with you always.’

7. He is in all who believe! John 14:23; John 17:23; Col. 1:27.

Empty vessels filled

2 Kings 4:1-7

The most essential thing in my life is a knowledge of the Scriptures. The greatest blessing God can bestow upon me is to give to me his word and the grace and wisdom to understand and believe its message of redemption in Christ Jesus (John 5:39; Luke 24:44-45; Acts 10:43).

When you look into a mirror, you see three things. You see the mirror, you see yourself, and you see other things that are in the room. When you look by faith into the word of God, you see three things. You see Christ, who is the word. You see yourself as you truly are, for the word reveals the true nature of man. You see others about you and your relationship to them (Isa. 6:5).

Read 2 Kings 4:1-7. A godly man had died and left his wife and family in debt and without support. The widow appealed to Elisha for help. He asked her what she had, and she replied, 'Nothing but a pot of oil.' He told her to gather together all the empty vessels she could find, borrow from neighbors empty vessels, 'not a few,' but many. Then go into your house, shut the door, and you and your sons pour oil from the pot you have into the empty vessels. When all the vessels they had were full, the oil stayed, and she sold the oil and paid her debt.

There are many lessons of grace and mercy in Christ to be learned from this story.

1. The true character of a person cannot be determined by his possessions and position in this world. This man feared and served the Lord, though he lived poor and died poor. If, by God's providence, we are well-off, let us use these means to minister to others (Matt. 25:34-40; James 1:27). If, by God's providence, we are poor, let us trust him to supply our need (Phil. 4:19; Psalm 37:25). The Lord provided for this woman even after the death of her husband.

2. The kind of vessels she was told to bring were empty vessels! Elisha emphasized the fact that all of the vessels she brought were to be empty! Not half-full, not primed with power nor magic liquid, but empty! This is perhaps the most difficult lesson we (who come to God for mercy, grace,, salvation, and provision) have to learn—'In my hands no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.' All who come to Christ must come totally void of merit, works, goodness, or even the beginnings of grace. He makes the dead to live, the blind to see, the lame to walk, and clothes the naked (Eph. 2:1-10).

A man once said to C. H. Spurgeon, 'Don't you think the greatest hindrance to salvation is our sinful self?' Spurgeon replied, 'No! I do not! The greatest hindrance to salvation is our righteous self. No man is too bad to come to Christ, but many are too good. He fills the empty, clothes the naked, and saves the lost.'

Learn this first; if one comes to Christ for his grace, he must come as an empty vessel. It is remarkably plain in the word of God that Christ passed by the so-called righteous and called sinners, publicans, and harlots (Matt. 9: 10-13).

3. The number of vessels to be brought were 'not a few,' but many! 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' (Gen. 18:12-14.) He can save many sinners. Our Lord commanded us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, for he is able to save to the uttermost ALL who come to God by him. Paul wrote, 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Rom. 10:13). These are great and large words.

He is able to save all kinds of sinners. The size of the vessel, the AGE of the vessel, the SHAPE of the vessel, and the condition of the vessel were immaterial. It was only to be brought empty. This is the command of Christ, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden; I will give you rest' (Matt. 11:28).

4. The vessels were completely filled. The word is full. From complete ruin to eternal glory our sufficiency is Christ. From absolute emptiness to the fullness of God, all that we need is met in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10). When an empty sinner by faith receives Christ, he receives

all that God requires, commands, and gives of eternal life (Col. 1: 12-13). All spiritual blessings are in, by, and through the Lord Jesus (Eph.1:3-6). Nothing needs to be, nor can be added to what Christ is, has done, and is doing (Rom. 8:29-34). ‘All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him.’

5. When did the oil stop? When the last empty vessel was full! As long as there was an empty vessel in the house, the oil of God flowed freely and sufficiently; but when the woman called for another empty vessel and there was none, the oil stayed!

It is so today! As long as there is an empty, needy sinner, the grace of God flows full and free. Where you have spiritual need, you have mercy. Where men are lost, Christ saves. Where you have sinners, you have salvation. The well of mercy never runs dry, and the cupboard of grace is never bare (Psalm 130:7). But when men are full, rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing, the oil of grace stops!

When the last stone of his living temple (Eph. 2:19-22) is laid and the last empty vessel is filled, the oil of grace will cease and judgment will fall on the earth. When they were all in the ark, the door was shut and the rain fell!

‘Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lost its power,
‘Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.’

Naaman, the leper

2 Kings 5:1-14

Read the story of Naaman, the leper, and two questions come forth. (1) Could the waters of the Jordan River cure leprosy? The answer is NO! (2) Could Naaman be healed of his leprosy without going down into the waters of the Jordan? The answer is no! Then what have we here? The Lord was humbling a proud sinner. The Lord was pleased to show his sovereign mercy to this Gentile sinner (Luke 4:27), but Naaman (like any son of Adam) must be emptied, humbled, and brought to understand and acknowledge that salvation and mercy is the gift of God, which is neither deserved nor bought. Human thought, human pride, human ways, and human works must be destroyed and the sinner submit to the will and way of God (James 4:6; Matt. 8:1-3).

Consider the following points, and you will see how Naaman typifies sinners whom the Lord is pleased to save.

1. Naaman had many commendable human traits but something was wrong, seriously wrong, which made everything he was and had useless. He was a great man among men, honorable and mighty in valour, but he was a leper! Disease and death flowed through his veins, incurable by human means.

There are fleshly differences among men, making some wiser, stronger, richer, or more honorable than others; but all men have one thing in common which makes all that they are and have useless. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). Sin and death are within us by birth, nature, and choice and are incurable by human means (Eph. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 5:12). Our sinful nature makes even our righteousnesses filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

2. Naaman sought help but he took the wrong things with him. Being conscious of his condition and hearing that there was a possibility of

healing in the land of Israel, he went forth with a letter of recommendation from his employer and gold, silver, and presents for his benefactor. He came to Israel to buy deliverance.

Before we judge Naaman too harshly, let us examine today's religious attempts to find favor with God. Is it not the way of natural man to work, merit, or try to earn salvation? (Matt. 7:21-22; Mark 10: 17) . Instead of coming to the Lord Jesus as guilty sinners with nothing in our hands, we come bearing our morality, our works, our baptism, and our church membership. Men say, 'I'm no worse than others.' Naaman was no more a leper than other lepers; but he was a leper, and we are sinners! God's way of salvation is Christ alone. All that God requires and all that the sinner needs are fulfilled in Christ (Col. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 4:4-5).

3. Naaman went to the wrong place. Instead of going to the prophet of God, as he was told by the little maid (v. 3), he went to the king. This prophet of God represents Christ, who is our prophet, priest, and king (Deut. 18:17-19; Heb, 1:1-2).

Salvation is of the Lord in its origination, execution, application, sustaining power, and ultimate perfection. How foolish it is to turn to the virgin Mary, to the priest, to the preacher, to the law, or to the church when Christ, our Lord, says, 'If any man thirst, let him come to me' (John 7:37-39; John 14:6). Why do men look to those who cannot save instead of looking to the only true God? (Isa. 45:20-22.)

4. When Naaman finally came to the prophet of God, he came with the wrong attitude. See him stand proudly outside the humble dwelling of Elisha. He wanted to be treated as a great man who happened to have leprosy, when in reality he was only a leper who happened to be a great man. Elisha knew his pride and arrogance and would not come out to meet him but instructed him to strip off his earthly garb of glory and wash in the muddy Jordan seven times. How degrading this appeared to Naaman!

Sinners today want special recognition, special attention, and the praise and honor of men, even in their religious professions (John 5:42-44). Pride of face, pride of race, pride of place, and even pride of grace prevail. We, like Naaman, want to be treated as great ones who happen to

be sinners, instead of what we are—sinners who, for a while, have certain status among worms. There is none good nor righteous (Rom. 3:10-11).

5. Naaman had wrong thoughts about mercy. He said, ‘I thought, he will surely come out to me and call on his God.’ Naaman's way (which would preserve his own pride and position) and God's way (which would humble the proud leper and give God all the glory) were opposites.

Salvation by free grace, through the righteousness and cross of the Lord Jesus, is offensive to natural man (1 Cor. 1:18-24). Our thoughts are not God's thoughts and our ways are not God's ways (Isa. 55:6-9). Total depravity offends man's dignity, divine revelation offends man's wisdom, and the blood of the cross offends man's pride. God will humble us before himself or he will destroy us.

6. Naaman finally did something right—he went down. He came down off his high horse and bowed to the way of God. When sinners are ready and made willing (Psalm 110:3) to quit lying, trying, and buying and bow to the Lord Jesus Christ and receive salvation as the free gift of God, they will be saved (Matt. 5:3-6; Matt. 9:10-13).

Open his eyes that he may see

2 Kings 6:8-23

The king of Syria made war against Israel. Calling together a council of his servants, he made plans to camp in a certain place and ambush the king of Israel. Elisha sent word to the king to take another route. Each time that the Syrians secretly planned to attack Israel, Elisha warned them and they escaped. Finally, the king of Syria was convinced that he had a traitor among his servants, who was leaking information to Israel. One of his servants said, 'There is no traitor; but Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel everything, even what you say in your bedroom.' The king of Syria was told that Elisha was in Dothan; so he sent horses, chariots, and a large army to surround the city and capture Elisha. The servant of Elisha arose early and went out of the house. Seeing the great army of the enemy surrounding them, he cried unto Elisha, 'Alas, my master, what shall we do?' Elisha calmly replied, 'Do not be afraid; they that be with us are more than they that be with them.' This is what King Hezekiah told the people of Judah when the king of Assyria came against them (2 Chron. 32:7-8). 'With them is the arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.'

When men truly know the Scriptures and the power of God, there is no reason to fear what men can do (Matt. 22:29; Psalm 56:3-4). We do not underestimate the power of Satan, sin, and the world; but our God is greater than all, and he will deliver us. However, the greatness, grace, and power of God to redeem and deliver sinners, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, from the overwhelming curse of the law, from the power of sin and Satan, and from death, judgment, and hell, is only seen with the eyes of faith (Matt. 13:15-16). Elisha prayed that God would open the young man's eyes that he might see. May God open our eyes that we may see.

1. The natural eye is blind to spiritual truth as the natural ear does not hear and the natural heart does not understand (1 Cor. 2:9-14; Isa. 64:4). Men

read the word of God with a veil over their eyes and minds. Sinners pass, blindfolded by sin, through all the testimonies of redeeming love and grace and see them not nor hear them.

God is everywhere, but the blind see him not.

His great law touches the thoughts and intents of the heart, but men do not see.

Men themselves are guilty, fallen, and far from God; but they do not see their wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores.

Death, judgment, and hell move to meet men at their coming; but they see not. They dance blindly on the edge of hell.

The Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but they saw no beauty about him and knew him not.

Natural blindness keeps a man content in filth, false refuges, and spiritual poverty.

Natural blindness makes men proud, for they see not their ignorance nor his glory.

Only God can open a sinner's eyes, for the hearing ear and the seeing eye are of the Lord (Prov. 20:12). We may put truth before men, but only God can make them to see (Isa. 42:6-8; 2 Cor. 4:6; Psalm 146:8). Once Satan promised to open a man's eyes, but the man saw shame, not glory (Gen. 3:5-7).

2. The Lord does open men's eyes and by his grace gives them spiritual sight and understanding. (v. 17.) 'And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw.'

The eye of faith sees what others do not see! Noah saw the flood coming (Heb. 11:7). The disciples saw the deity of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:13-17). Isaiah complained about the blindness of men, but the Ethiopian saw the glory of Christ when Philip preached Christ from Isaiah's account of his sufferings (Isa. 53:1-6).

The eye of faith produces a calm spirit of assurance. The servant in our story was afraid and cried, 'Alas, master, what shall we do?' But Elisha was not afraid, for he saw the army of the Lord and was confident of

deliverance. Job was confident of God's care even in the deepest trial (Job 1:20-22).

The eye of faith does not grow dim with the passing of years but sees better. The young man saw the enemy but no Redeemer; he saw danger and no deliverance. The old prophet had seen the glory and grace of God often; and, like Abraham, he knew 'the Lord will provide.' With age and maturity come better sight and understanding (1 Peter 3:18).

The eye of faith desires to see more (1 John 5:20).

More of the wonders of his word (Psalm 119:18).

More of Christ, the Lord (Phil. 3:8-10).

More of his righteousness revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17).

More of his redemptive glory (Exo. 33:18-19).

And the blessed hope of saving faith is to see him and to awake with his likeness (1 John 3:23; Psalm 27:4).

One important thing to remember is that, like Hagar's well in the desert (Gen. 21:19), deliverance is there in Christ all the time; we only need spiritual eyes to see.

Four lepers teach us a lesson

2 Kings 6:24 - 7:8

The city of Samaria had been surrounded by the Syrian army for a long time, and there was a great famine in the city so that an ass's head sold for four pieces of silver (vv. 24-25). Food was so scarce that people were eating human flesh (vv. 26-29). The king of Israel was so upset that he threatened to kill Elisha, God's prophet (v. 31). He came, leaning on the hand of one of his lords, to see Elisha; and Elisha told the king that food would be so plentiful in Samaria by tomorrow that flour and barley would be sold very cheaply (v. 1) . The lord, upon whose hand the king leaned, told Elisha that this was impossible and that he did not believe it, to which Elisha replied, 'Oh yes, you shall see it all; but you will not eat thereof' (2 Kings 7:2, 16-20).

On the day that the king came to Elisha, there were four leprous men sitting at the gate of the city; and they said one to another, 'Why do we sit here and starve to death? If we sit here, we will die; if we go into the city, we will die; for there is no food there. The thing for us to do is to go to our enemies, the Syrians, and seek mercy. If they show mercy and spare us, we will live; but if they kill us, we shall but die' (vv. 3-4). So they arose that evening and entered the camp of the Syrians; but, to their surprise, they found no one there. They found abundant food, drink, clothes, silver, and gold: but all of the Syrians had fled (vv. 5-8). That evening the Lord had made all the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots, horses, and a mighty army advancing; and the Syrians, thinking that the king of Israel had persuaded the Egyptians and Hittites to come against them, fled, leaving all of their supplies behind.

Why is this story in the word of God, and how does it teach us redemption in Jesus Christ?

1. These diseased, dying, starving lepers represent the whole human race under the judgment and curse of sin. Spiritually we are wretched,

miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17). We are without Christ, without hope, and without God in this world (Eph. 2:11-12).

There is no way to adequately describe the total ruin, utter poverty, and spiritual helplessness and hopelessness of Adam's sons (Rom. 3:10-19; Rom. 5:12). These starving, helpless lepers do give us a dim picture of our spiritual condition. Only the Spirit of God can reveal to sinners what happened in the Garden of Eden and the terrible consequences upon us all and cause us to cry with Isaiah, 'I am undone; I am cut off' (Isa. 1:4-6; Isa. 64:6).

2. The lepers, knowing their helpless state, considered three alternatives. If we stay here, we will die; if we go into the city, we will die, for they have no food; or the Syrians are our enemies, but they have plenty of food. We can go to them and seek *mercy* and help. If they choose to show mercy to us, we will live; but if not, we have lost nothing; for we will die anyway. Wisely they chose to cast themselves on the mercy of the Syrians, and they were delivered by the providence of God.

Considering our hopeless, sinful state (Jer. 13:23; Gal. 3:10) what is there for us to do?

If we stay where we are, we shall perish under the wrath of God (Heb. 9:27). Salvation is impossible with men. Our condition only worsens as we become hardened in sin.

If we go into the city, we shall die there. What can the city represent but organized religion—man's organized efforts to help himself (Rom. 10:1-4). The city had people, activity, buildings, and organizations; but they had no food for themselves nor for anyone else (Amos 8:11-12). When the Master asked the disciples, 'Will you also go away?' they replied, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' Men have nothing to offer; the law has nothing to offer; religion has nothing to offer except a refuge of lies (Isa. 28:14-15).

We can cast ourselves on the mercy of God! Even though we have sinned against God and our sins have brought his wrath and judgment, God is merciful (Isa. 59:2; Psalm 130:3-4). While it is true that all are children of wrath, even as others, and God is angry with the wicked, the Lord delights to show mercy (Micah 7:18-19; Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 2:2-7).

When the leper decided to turn to the only possible source of relief, they reasoned, 'It may be that they will save us alive.' Men of wisdom have used this reasoning before in reference to God's mercy—Jonathan (1 Sam. 14:6), David (2 Sam. 16:11-12), the king of Nineveh (Jonah 3:8-9). God is certainly not obligated to save anyone, but those who know their sin in the light of his holiness and are persuaded to look to him and cast themselves on his mercy in Christ Jesus always find plenteous redemption.

There are several reasons to have a good hope for mercy when one comes to the Lord God in repentance and faith.

1. It is the gracious nature of God to show mercy (Exo. 34:6-7; Micah 7:18-19).

2. The Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners (Gal. 4:4-5; Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15).

3. By his righteousness and sacrifice, Christ enables God to be both a just God and a Saviour (Rom. 3:25-26).

4. It is the chief glory of God to save (Exo. 33:18-19).

5. It is the command of God for us to come to him, and with the command comes the warrant to believe (Isa. 45:21-22; 1 John 3:23).

How long will a beggar sit by the road and wait for a handout? How long will a fisherman cast his hook into the water? How long will a father seek a lost son? And how long should sinners seek mercy when the outlook is so bright? (Jer. 29:13-14.)

Nehushtan – a piece of brass

2 Kings 18:1-8

King Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign over Judah. He reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. Compared to that of his father, Ahaz, and others, his was a good reign.

v. 3. ‘He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his ancestor David did.’

v. 5. ‘He trusted in the Lord God of Israel.’ None of the kings of Judah, before nor after him, reigned so well.

vv. 6-7. ‘He clave to the Lord and kept his commandments, and the Lord was with him and prospered him.’

In this account of the good reign of Hezekiah, one verse stands out above all the rest and demands our special attention. Verse 4 declares that ‘Hezekiah removed the high places, and brake the statues, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made.’ The Jews say that he ground the brazen serpent to powder and scattered it to every wind, that there might be no remains of it!

In those days ‘the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, married heathens, and worshipped their gods, serving Balaam and the groves’ (Judges 3:7). The high places were temples and shrines built on mountains for idol worship. The statues were, like the golden calf, idol gods. The groves were wooded areas dedicated to idolatry, where altars were erected to gods. Jupiter was worshipped in a grove of oaks and Apollo in a grove of laurels. Hezekiah destroyed all of these high places, groves, and statues, something his father and other kings of Judah had not dared to do. But he also utterly destroyed the brazen serpent which Moses had made in the wilderness (Num. 21: 5-8). The Israelites had brought this serpent into the land of Canaan; and, being made by Moses, they imagined it might be of some service to them toward God. Some say they did not

worship it but only burned incense to it and used it in religious activities. Hezekiah knew they were ensnared by this memorial and even drawn into idolatry by it- so he destroyed the serpent, calling it ‘nehushtan, a worthless piece of brass.’

I can understand a person's interest in that brazen serpent. It would be extremely interesting to see the serpent which Moses made and lifted up. Our God used that serpent as a type of the crucified Redeemer (the Lord Jesus, himself, referred to it) and on that occasion healed all who looked to it. It would be interesting to see the rod of Moses, the tables of the law, the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, and the smitten rock. But interesting is all—certainly not inspirational, nor edifying, nor of any spiritual value, nor of any consequence where our relationship with God is concerned. In the worship of God, Christ is all (John 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:12-20; Col. 2:9-10). Believers believe, love, and worship God in spirit, not in form, rituals, nor with visual aids. They rejoice only in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). True believers have no superstitions regarding days, hallowed places, religious relics, symbols and signs, nor ancestors (Phil. 3: 4-10) . Christ is our sabbath, our sin offering, our High Priest, our altar, our mediator, our prophet, priest, and king. By his blood we ourselves are made kings and priests to our God. We bow before no man, make pilgrimages to no place on earth (our God is everywhere) , carry no religious symbols, and place no merit whatsoever in religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter. The Lord had given his church two ordinances to observe until he returns—baptism and the Lord's table. In baptism believers confess faith in Christ alone and identify publicly with him in his death, burial, and resurrection. In observing the Lord's table with the simple elements of bread and wine, we show forth his death until he comes.

I am confident that the religious, superstitious Israelites were shocked when King Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent which Moses had made, called it a ‘piece of brass,’ and declared it to be of no value in the worship of God. But if we could find the actual cross on which Christ died, it would serve no purpose and must be called a ‘piece of wood.’ The grave in which Christ lay is but a ‘hole in the ground,’ and the winding sheet in which he was wrapped is but a ‘piece of cloth.’ Idolatry is such a

subtle thing of Satan and must be avoided at all cost. God is a jealous God and will not share his glory nor the worship and affection of his people. We trust, rest in, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and abhor any effort to rob him of his preeminence. The lands around Jerusalem may be called 'Bible lands' or whatever, but certainly not 'Holy Land.' Let us be done with crosses, religious-pictures of our Lord, shrines, and uniforms of religion; and let us worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in this flesh. Christ, by his perfect obedience, has imputed unto us a perfect righteousness; and by his death we have the atonement. We are accepted in the Beloved. Nothing needs to be added to his person and work to bring us to God!

Bringing back the ark

1 Chronicles 13:1-14;

1 Chronicles 15:11-29

The ark of the covenant was an oblong chest of acacia wood, 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches deep. It contained the tables of the law, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod (Heb. 9:4). It was kept in the Holy of Holies, denoting the presence of God on the mercy seat, which was on the lid of the ark. During the days of Samuel, the superstitious Israelites took the ark from Shiloh into battle and lost it to the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:3-4; 10-11) . It finally was brought to Kirjath-Baal, a city in the tribe of Judah, where it remained for fifty years.

vv. 1-3. David wanted the ark back in Jerusalem. He felt that the ark was an assurance of the presence of the Lord among his people; and where the ark was, there was the glory of God. So he consulted with the leaders and the people. Strange that David did not seek the mind of the Lord in this matter!

vv. 4-6. This seemed like a good idea to all the people; so David gathered together 30,000 chosen men with instruments, singers, and all of Israel; and they journeyed to Baalah or Kirjath-Baal to bring up the ark.

vv. 7-8. This is an astonishing event. David was well versed in the law of God, as were the priests who were with him. They all knew that the ark was only to be carried by staves on the shoulders of the Levites. But David prepared a new cart with oxen, driven by Uzza and Ahio, to carry the ark of the covenant. After putting the ark on the cart, they began their journey to Jerusalem, rejoicing, singing, playing upon the instruments, confident that God was pleased with them.

vv. 9-10. When the procession came to the threshingfloor of Chidon, the oxen, pulling the cart, stumbled; and Uzza put his hand out to steady the ark; and God smote him dead because he put his hand on the ark.

vv. 11-14. The people were all stunned, and David was displeased because the Lord had smitten Uzza, but all of them (including David) realized, at last, that God was angry and displeased with the whole affair. So David put the ark in the house of Obededom, where it remained for three months.

What was wrong with this whole affair? Why was the Lord displeased with David and Israel? It would seem that David was doing the right thing in returning the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and should be commended. David gives us the answer, three months later, when he determined again to bring up the ark (1 Chron. 15:12-13). Instead of going to the captains and the congregation (as he did the first time), David consulted with the priests of God! He said to them, ‘You and your brethren sanctify yourselves that you may carry the ark into the place I have prepared for it. Because I ignored God’s priests and put the ark on a cart, the Lord was angry with us. We sought him not after the due order.’ In ignoring God’s priests, it was as if David ignored the mediator. The High Priest (who offered the atonement) and the other priests (who offered the sacrifices and ministered about the tabernacle) are types and pictures of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The priests were taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God (Heb. 5:1). So Christ was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, to be our mediator.

2. The priests were chosen of God, and no man took this honor unto himself (Heb. 5:4). So Christ glorified not himself to be our priest; the Father ordained him.

3. The priests offered sacrifices and the High Priest offered the atonement once a year (Heb. 9:6-7). No man dared to assume this office nor this duty; those who did perished. Even King Uzziah was slain by the Lord when he attempted to offer a sacrifice without God’s priest (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

Christ, our Lord, is our High Priest, our atonement, and our mediator. No man comes to the Father but by him (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). Without question, this was David's error; and the Lord dealt severely with him and his friends. Knowing God's commandment in regard to the priests' carrying the ark (for that matter, moving it at all), David and the people sought to approach God, move and set up the ark, and establish worship of the Lord without God's priest. This is a serious error. It does not matter how sincere we may be in desiring to worship God, know God, serve God, or approach God. He is only worshipped, known, and approached in the Lord Jesus Christ! Cain built an altar and tried to worship God, but he ignored Christ and was rejected. King Saul ignored the prophet-priest and offered a sacrifice and was rejected of God.

vv. 14-15. Now David came to God the right way; the priests carried the ark.

vv. 25-26. God was pleased and helped the priests who bore the ark. They offered the blood sacrifice before the Lord. When David sought the first time to return the ark to Jerusalem, these two things were missing—the priests and the blood sacrifice (Heb. 10:19-22; Heb. 9:22).

vv. 27-29. We also have a humble King David, who took the place of a servant and danced before the ark borne on the shoulders of the priests (2 Sam.6:14-16, 20-22).

Uzziah's great transgression

2 Chronicles 26; Isaiah 6:1-5

Our lesson begins with Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 6:1-5.

v. 1. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord (God the Son) sitting upon a throne, in the posture of a judge, to hear causes and execute judgment. His train, or the borders of his judicial robes, spread abroad and filled the temple.

v. 2. The seraphims (ministers and messengers of the Lord, bright and glorious, fervent in zeal for God's service and glory) covered their faces out of profound reverence, covered their feet, owning their own imperfections, and did fly to execute God's commands.

v. 3. Here is the essence of the vision: 'One cried unto another and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.' God is infinitely, eternally, and immutably holy in all his ways. It is repeated for the greater assurance and establishment of the fact. If there is one attribute used most frequently or one word to emphasize the nature of our God, it is '*God is holy*' (1 Tim. 6:15-16), unapproachable by sinful creatures.

v. 5. Isaiah's response to the vision was to declare, 'Woe is me, I am cut off from God. I am an unclean branch of an unclean tree. I am a great sinner, especially by my lips, which reveal my heart. There is no hope for me nor those about me, before God's awful holy presence.'

Was there a connection between the death of King Uzziah and Isaiah's vision? Who was King Uzziah? What relationship did he have with Isaiah? How did he die? Read II Chronicles 26.

v. 22.. Isaiah was the prophet of God during the reign of Uzziah (Isa. 1:1). Isaiah wrote of the acts and rule of Uzziah from first to last.

vv. 1-4. Uzziah was a good king, who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord God. He sought the Lord, and God made him to prosper. God helped him in battle (vv. 7-8). He served the people, building towers in the desert to protect herds, digging many wells, and planting vineyards (v. 10). He had a great army (vv. 12-13), was a brilliant leader (v. 15), and his name was known far and wide.

v. 16. But Uzziah made a serious and fatal mistake which led to his utter destruction and death. ‘When he was strong,’ he was mighty, he was proud of his accomplishments, he was free from the fear of the enemy; and his heart was so overcome by his importance that he went into the temple, into the holy place, where the altar of incense stood, and into which none but the priest might enter, to offer incense himself upon the altar.

v. 17-18. Azariah, the priest, and eighty priests of the Lord withstood King Uzziah, declaring unto him the seriousness of his act. Only the priests of God, the sons of Aaron, were consecrated by God to burn incense to the Lord. No man, not even a king, was permitted to offer sacrifices for sin (Heb. 5:1-5). They told him that such an act could not honor him before God. No matter how sincere nor how great a man may be, it is folly to violate the holiness of God.

vv. 19-21. Instead of listening to the priest and leaving the temple, Uzziah became angry and held to the censer to burn incense. God smote the proud king with leprosy, took away his office, and he died in disgrace as a common leper. When they buried him, they said, ‘He is a leper.’

Isaiah evidently learned much from the death of King Uzziah. He said, ‘In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord; I saw myself and I saw the condition of the people.’

God is holy! Our God is infinitely, indescribably holy in all his ways, acts, and nature. He will in no wise clear the guilty nor receive any man apart from perfect holiness. He will not speak to, nor be spoken to by, any sinful creature. He is unapproachable except through the Mediator.

Men are sinners! 'There is none that doeth good, no not one.' There is none righteous. 'Your sins have separated you and your God.' 'Every imagination of the heart of man is evil continually.'

There is a way to God! Our God in mercy and grace has determined to redeem, sanctify, and receive a people out of every tribe, kindred, and tongue, but only in the way consistent with his holiness, righteousness, and truth. He will be both just and justifier; he will be both merciful and righteous; he will be a just God and a Saviour (Isa. 45:20-25).

Christ is the way! Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, came to earth made of woman, made under the law to redeem. He is our surety by divine decree; he is our righteousness by perfect obedience; he is our sacrifice, sin-offering, and atonement by death; he is our risen justifier and our great High Priest who intercedes at God's right hand. No man cometh to God but by, in, and through Christ Jesus (John 14:6).

The Old Testament priests, appointed and consecrated by God, were pictures and types of Christ, our great High Priest. They entered the holy place as Christ entered heaven; the incense they burned is the prayers of Christ, the atonement they offered is the blood of Christ; and the fact that only the priest with a suitable sacrifice was accepted reveals that only Christ can effectually bring a sinner to God! When King Uzziah proceeded to usurp the authority of the priest and burn incense to God in the holy place, he was ignoring the Lord Jesus Christ and coming to God in his own person and works. For this great sin God destroyed him, as he will all who reject the Redeemer. Would you approach God for mercy, forgiveness, and acceptance? Then receive, bow to, and confess Christ Jesus. Do not come any other way (Heb. 10:11-22).

Four things learned in trouble

Job 1:1-22

A. Job was greatly troubled, perhaps as few men in this world have been troubled. He had literally lost everything!

1. He was a man of *great wealth* (v. 3). Suddenly he was a man of complete poverty. Everything he owned was swept away (vv. 14-17).

2. He was a *family man* with ten children (v. 2). All of his children were killed in a storm (vv. 18-19). Even his wife turned against him (Job 2:9-10).

3. He was a man of *great influence*, with servants and many friends. Suddenly he was the laughing-stock of the city (Job 19:13-19).

4. He was a man of *strength and good health*. Now he was so frail and covered with boils that even his friends could scarcely recognize him (Job 2:7-8, 12).

Job did not try to hide his sorrow. He wept before God. God's people are people with tender feelings; and when they are called upon to bear the rod, they feel it! God takes away our heart of stone: He does not turn the heart to stone. We sorrow, indeed, but not as those who have no hope.

Job's sorrow was sanctified by worship (vv. 20-22). Sorrow and trouble should always lead to worship and praise. In all of this trouble, trial, and sorrow, Job did not speak in an unworthy manner against God. He did not dishonor the name of God nor compare his lot with the lot of others. He fell down and worshipped God (Job 2:10; 13:15). If grief presses you to the ground, worship there. If trials lay you low, worship there (Psalm 62:8).

Times of trial should not only be times of worship, but also a time for teaching and consideration. Listen to David talk to himself in the time of

trouble (Psalm 42:5-11). Job, by his words, reveals to us that he was a man of faith, well taught in the things of God. Four things are seen.

1. He knew the brevity of life

‘Naked I came into the world and naked I shall return.’ This was Job's idea of life and a very true one. ‘I came and I shall return’ (Job 14:1-5). Our life on earth is in the scripture compared to a flower (Job 14:2), a VAPOR (James 4:14), a weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6), a POST (Job 9:25—a post is an outpost on a mail delivery where the rider changes horses). Not only in time of sorrow, but at all times we need to consider the brevity of life on earth and the length of life to come and find our joy and hope in our Redeemer (Job 19:23-27; Phil. 1:20-24).

2. He knew the frailty of earthly possessions

The word is ‘naked.’ When a baby is born into this world, what does he possess? He possesses nothing; he comes into the world naked! When a man dies, what does he possess? What does he take with him? He leaves the world naked! The Lord teaches Job (and those who will learn by his example) the frailty and vanity of all that we have in our hands and all that we call our own. Actually, we brought nothing into this world and we will carry nothing out (1 Tim. 6:7). However, we can leave this world differently from the way we came. We were born sinners (Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3). By God's grace and mercy, through faith in Christ Jesus, we can leave justified, redeemed, and free from sin (Acts 13:38-39; John 3:14-16). Without Christ we shall die as we were born—lost sinners!

3. He saw the hand of God in all things

‘The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.’ Many people reading this portion of scripture would say that Satan afflicted Job and took away all that he possessed, but Job (like every true believer) knew that the Lord is the first cause of all things. Satan and other second causes can only do what God is pleased to permit them to do (1 Sam. 2:6-8; Acts 4:27-28; Isa. 46:9-11).

‘*The Lord gave.*’ Job did not say, ‘I earned these things; I deserve them, for they are the products of my hard work.’ No! He said all that I have is the gift of God. ‘A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven’ (John 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7). All that I have physically, mentally, materially, and spiritually are the gifts of God. Even repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are the gifts of God (Rom. 2:4; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29).

‘*The Lord hath taken a way.*’ Job saw the hand of God in all that was taken. He did not curse the Sabeans, the wicked Chaldeans, and blame the wind. He knew that the Lord God controlled all these things and that the Lord God had willed it or it would not have happened (Rom. 8:28). Aaron held his peace when his sons were killed, for he knew the Lord had done it (Lev. 10:1-3; 1 Sam. 3:18; Psalm 39:9).

4. He declared that in all things, at all times, God is to be praised

‘Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ To be able to praise God equally in the valley of trial as on the mountain of joy ought to be the desire of every believer (1 Cor. 16:13-14). Paul sounds this note in I Thess. 5:18. ‘In everything, loss or gain, sickness or health, success or failure, summer or winter, life or death, *give thanks!* For this (whatever it be if you are in Christ) is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.’

How can man be just with God?

Job 9:2; 15:14-16; 25:4-6

This question is asked over and over by Job and his friends. ‘How should man be just with God?’ (Job 9:2). ‘What is man that he should be clean and righteous?’ (Job 15:14). ‘How then can man be justified with God?’ (Job 25:4).

This question of questions arises from an understanding of three things. The holiness of God, the sinfulness of men, and what it means to be justified.

1. God's chief attribute is his holiness!

If there is one word used to describe our God, it is *holy* (Isa. 6:1-5). ‘Holy and reverend is his name’ (Hab. 2:20; Psalm 99:1; Zeph. 1:7). ‘The Lord is in his holy temple.’ Everything about God and having to do with our God is said to be holy—his holy angels, his Holy Spirit, his presence was manifested in the holy of holies, on the mitre of the High Priest were the words *holiness to the Lord*, and ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’ When God manifests his grace, mercy, and love, it must be in keeping with his holiness. God is holy!

How holy is God? So holy that a fallen Adam must be separated from his presence; so holy that Moses could not look upon him and live; so holy that Uzza was smitten dead for touching the ark; so holy that the seraphims covered their faces before him; so holy that Isaiah, upon discovering God's holiness, cried, ‘I am cut off;’ so holy that he deserted his beloved Son, bearing our sins on the cross.

2. The word that most accurately describes man is sinner.

Man was not created a sinner. He was created holy and upright, but he became a sinner through the fall (Rom. 5:12, 19). He is ‘born in sin’ (Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3) and incapable of any good in the flesh (Jer. 13:23; Rom. 8:8).

How sinful is man? ‘Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually’ (Gen. 6:5). ‘They are all together become filthy’ (Psalm 14:1-3). ‘None good, none righteous’ (Rom. 3:10-19). The Scriptures declare that men are dead, having no hope and without God in this world (Eph. 2:1, 12). Men may seek to justify themselves (Luke 16:15) and compare themselves with themselves (2 Cor. 10:12), but in God's sight ‘every mouth must be stopped and all the world become guilty.’ ‘Therefore, by the deeds of the law and works of the flesh shall no flesh be justified’ (Rom. 3:19-20).

3. What does it mean to be justified before God?

To be justified is to be without sin, guilt, or blame. ‘Just as if I had never sinned!’ ‘Holy, unblameable, and unproveable in his sight’ (Col. 1:22).

To be justified is to have perfect peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

To be justified is to be free from the curse of the law and free from all charges (Rom. 8:33).

To be justified is to have eternal life and glory (Rom. 8:30).

To be justified is to be totally reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10).

Therefore, knowing the holiness of God, the sinfulness and inability of men, and what it means to be justified, clean, and righteous before God, the question is asked again and again, ‘How can man be justified in God's sight?’ How can God be just and justify sinners? A man cannot be justified by *words* (Job 9:20). He cannot be justified by *law* (Gal. 3:10-11). He cannot be justified by *works* (Titus 3:5). Then how can man be just with God?

4. The answer is found in Romans 3:21-26.

v. 21. ‘The righteousness of God’ is not God's own personal holiness, but that righteousness he has (by his grace) provided for and imputed to guilty sinners through his Son (Rom. 10:1-4). The righteousness of God signifies both the precept of the law and the penalty of the law, Christ having honored every precept in his perfect life and satisfied every debt in his

death. 'Without the law' simply means without the sinner's obeying the law, for this Christ certainly did for us. 'It is manifested' in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Why is the gospel the power of God unto salvation? Because in, through, and by Christ, this righteousness of God is revealed. All we need is accomplished and set forth in the gospel.

vv. 22-23. This righteousness of God is accomplished by the faithfulness of Christ and imputed to those who believe. As the representative man (Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 47), God was made of woman, made under the law, and perfectly obeyed it in order that all whom he represented might have a perfect holiness and standing before God (Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 4:17-25). There is no difference between Jew, Gentile, male, or female; all have sinned.

vv. 24-25. Those who believe are made righteous in Christ and are freely and fully justified by his obedience and death, even believers of Old Testament times; for Christ is also the propitiation for their sins.

v. 26. Christ came to the earth in the flesh as the surety of God's eternal covenant, obeyed the law, and died for all our sins in order that the holy God might be just and justifier of all who believe. He is 'a just God and a Saviour' (Isa. 45:21-22). This, dear friends, is the very heart of the gospel of God's glory; for it manifests and magnifies every attribute of our holy God. In Christ, our substitute, 'mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other' (Psalm 85:10).

Three vital questions

Job 14:1-14

This lesson will consider chiefly three questions asked by Job which are answered only in our Lord Jesus Christ. The questions are:

- v. 4. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?'
- v. 10. 'Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?'
- v. 14. 'If a man die, shall he live again?'

1. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean

v. 1. 'Man that is born of a woman.' This is the cause of all our misery. We are the product, the offspring of natural, sinful parents. The first man (and the only man not born of woman) was created in the image of God. That man fell and became a sinful creature (Rom. 5:12, 19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). All who are born of woman are born in sin, frail, weak, and of an evil nature (Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3). Sinful parents produce sinful offspring.

'Is of few days and full of trouble.' Before the flood some men lived as long as nine hundred years, but now and since the days of Moses, the years of men are but threescore and ten (Psalm 90:10). Those who live the longest live only a few days compared to eternity. Man is born to trouble because he is born in sin; sin and trouble go together! Sin, uncleanness, death, and trouble live in and with this man born of woman.

v. 2. 'He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.' As the flower comes from the earth, so does man; as the flower flourishes for a while and looks beautiful, so does man; as the flower soon withers and dies, so does man. 'He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.' A shadow is an empty thing, dark and without substance, uncertain and quickly passes away, and so fitly resembles the life of a man (James 4:14).

v. 3. Job has described all men in the preceding verses; but here he refers mainly to himself and asks, 'Lord, do you open your eyes upon such an unclean, worthless, temporary piece of clay?' Do you take thought or care about him? Do you observe all his ways when it is below you to contend with him? David considered this question (Psalm 8:3-4). 'Lord, do you bring me into judgment with thee?' No man can contend with God upon the basis of strict justice (Psalm 143:2). Men do not even deserve to be considered by God in the matter of righteousness and judgment.

v. 4. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. 'We are born unclean, live unclean, and die unclean in God's sight. How can he be clean that is born of woman? (Job 15:14-16; Job 25:4-6). The answer is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour.

Our Lord Jesus is the surety of a better covenant (Heb. 7:22; Heb. 13:20-21).

Our Lord Jesus was born of woman as our representative (Gal. 4:4-5). He had no human father, so was without the sin of Adam (1 Cor. 15:47-48).

Our Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience in the flesh, imputed to us a perfect holiness, sanctification, and righteousness (Rom. 5:19; 3:19-24).

Our Lord Jesus died for all our sins, cleansing us, perfecting us, and presenting us holy in God's sight (1 John 1:7; Heb. 10:14; Col. 1:21-23).

2. Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he

vv. 7-9. If a tree is cut down, it falls to earth, the root withers, and the branches and stock die in the ground. But if it rains on the remains of that tree and the sun shines upon it, it will bud and grow again.

v. 10. 'But a man dieth and wasteth away.' We die, are buried in the ground, and go back to the dust from whence we came. There will be no

revival of life because ‘man giveth up the spirit.’ Life is utterly gone! Where is he? The answer is found in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord said to the believing thief, ‘Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.’ The believer who dies goes to be with the Lord Jesus. His body returns to the dust but his soul to God who gave it (Phil. 1:20-23; 2 Cor. 5:8).

Paul writes of our dwelling after death. He does not describe it but says, ‘even we put off this tent we have a building of God’ (2 Cor. 5:1-3). Moses and Elijah appeared in a certain form and talked with Christ (Luke 9:30-31).

3. If a man die, shall he live again

v. 12. ‘So man lieth down’ in the grave when he dies, ‘and riseth not;’ or he will never come forth from that grave into the world, to the place where he was and as he was. The sense is that a man who dies will never live again as to this natural life, but he shall live again.

v. 14. ‘If a man die, shall he live again?’ Oh, yes! Those who are in Christ have the promise of the glorious resurrection unto eternal life. ‘Because I live, ye shall live,’ saith our Lord.

Our Lord Jesus died and rose again; so shall we (1 Cor.15:12-22).

We shall have a glorified body like his (1 John 3:1-3; 1 Cor. 15: 42-49).

(c) How are the dead raised? (1 Cor. 15:35-38; Luke 24:36-43). Christ is the resurrection and the life. If we believe in him, we shall never die. We died when he died, arose in him, and are seated with him in the heavenlies. We shall sleep but never die!

I know that my Redeemer liveth

Job 19:21-27

Suppose I took you to a fine home in the suburbs, beautifully landscaped, the mother in the kitchen preparing the evening meal, healthy children playing in the yard, and the father returns home with the news that he has been promoted and given a raise. As they all gather about the table that evening to give thanks and the father says, ‘The hand of God hath touched me,’ you would probably agree with him. But here in Job is a true believer whom God called, ‘my servant, one that feareth God and shuns evil,’ who was once wealthy but is now poor, once healthy but now sick, once powerful and influential but now alone and deserted (Job 19:9-20), and he says, ‘The hand of God hath touched me.’ He did not say Satan hath touched me, but he declared, ‘*God hath touched me.*’

This is a mystery that natural men do not understand, only those who have been touched first in regeneration by God (1 Cor. 2:7-14). In the natural world the way up is up, but in the spiritual world the way up is *down*. ‘He that humbleth himself shall be exalted’ (Luke 14:11). In the natural world, to live is to live; but in the spiritual world the way to live is to DIE (Matt. 10:39). In the natural world men find satisfaction in their own strength; but Paul declared, ‘When I am weak then am I strong’ (2 Cor. 12:10). The greatest thing God can do for a person (whatever the cost) is to show him in heart and soul the vanity of all things in this world (Eccles. 1:2, 14) and to turn his interest, affection, love, and concern from the world to Christ (Matt. 5:3-12). To be full is to be emptied of self, to be wise is to become a fool for Christ's sake, to be clothed is to be stripped, to receive is to give, to reign is to serve, and to be rich is to become poor.

This was Job's experience. He knew what it was to possess all that the world can afford, then he felt the full impact of watching it all fade away and being reduced to ashes! With everything gone, in the dust, at the bottom, with no place to hide and no arm to lean upon, he rejoices in the

sinner's only hope—his redeemer! (Psalm 73:25). Several things stand out in Job's testimony concerning Christ, our Redeemer.

1. Job had absolute certainty in an uncertain world

He could say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' Like Abraham, Job believed God's word. 'All flesh is grass and all the glory thereof is as the flower of the field, but the word of our God shall stand forever' (Isa. 40:6-8). There is nothing certain in this world but its destruction; but we know that God is, that God is in Christ, and that God is in Christ reconciling us to himself (1 John 5:20).

2. Job had a true friend among false friends

'I know that my Redeemer liveth. This is the word that stands out from all the rest. There is no name of the Messiah which is more significant, more comprehensive, nor more endearing than Redeemer. The word signifies 'a near kinsman who has the right to redeem.' This is what the book of Ruth is all about—the kinsman Redeemer! He has the right to redeem, being a near kinsman; he has the will to redeem because he loves; he has the price to redeem.

This is what Job is saying about our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He has the right to redeem in that he took our flesh and was numbered with the transgressors.

2. He has the will to redeem, for he loves us with an everlasting love.

3. He paid the full price with his own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19).

3. Job had the promise of life eternal even in a land of death

'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'

Our Redeemer was then living: for he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 'He was in the beginning with God' (John 1:1).

Our Redeemer liveth because he is the life (John 1:4; John 14:6).

Our Redeemer died and rose again and lives forever (Rev. 1:17-18). Because he lives we shall live also, for he is ‘the resurrection and the life.’

4. Job had the promise of victory over the grave and a real inheritance on the real earth

v. 25. He shall stand on the earth. He once walked this earth as our representative and sin-offering. He will come again and stand upon the new earth, and we shall stand with him (John 14:1-3).

v. 26. ‘Though I shall die,’ Job declared, and this body shall go back to dust, yet I shall rise from the grave and I shall see him in his glory as one of his redeemed ones’ (1 John 3:1-3).

v. 27. Job expected to be raised from the grave himself and with a glorified body live forever with his Redeemer (1 Cor. 15:50-57).

Now mine eye seeth thee

Job 42:1-6

At the beginning of this lesson let us establish some things that we know. Job was a man of integrity and uprightness, and one who feared the Lord (Job 1:8). Job was a man of great patience, reverence, and dedication (Job 1: 20-22). Job was a man of faith and perseverance (Job 1 3-15-16). Job was a man of sound theology (Job 19: 3-27).

God in his divine wisdom and good providence had permitted all these trials to come upon Job—the loss of property and wealth, the loss of children and health, and the loss of influence and standing. Job's three friends had come from afar to enquire of him concerning the evil he had done to deserve such tribulation (Job 2:11-13, 4:7, 8:2-6). Job defended himself rather strongly to his friends. They insisted that these tragedies would not have occurred if he were not guilty of some great sin. Job strongly denied their charges and claimed to be righteous (Job 31:6; 32:1-2). Then came Elihu and rebuked both Job and his three friends: Job, because he justified himself rather than God, and his friends because they condemned Job without cause (Job 32:1-3).

After all these things, God spoke to Job (Chapters 38-41). The Lord had been silent during the trials, during the days of discussion and argument between Job and his friends, and even as Elihu corrected them all. But now the Lord speaks to Job and declares, ‘Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?’ (Job 38:2, 42:3). ‘Gird up your loins like a real man, for I have some thing to show you and to inquire of you’ (Job 38:3). If one reads these chapters, he will see God (revealing himself to Job) in his absolute sovereignty, infinite wisdom, infinite holiness, unchanging purpose, and his total rule and reign over everything from the greatest planet to the invisible atom, over all creatures and all their actions, and who giveth no account to anyone.

Then comes forth this tremendous confession from the lips of Job (Job 42:1-6).

'I know that thou canst do everything'

I'm sure that Job had always believed in the power of God to do all things; but now it was not the sovereignty of God that Job saw, but the God who is sovereign. The power of God was now an experience, not a doctrine.

'No thought can be withholden from thee'

When will men cease to call him Lord with their lips while their hearts are far from him? Only when they see the Lord and learn that he looks on and knows the heart and thoughts of all. No doubt Job's doctrinal position admitted the omniscience of God before this revelation, but now he has experienced it. It is doubtful that a person really believes anything until he experiences it. God revealed himself to Job; Job truly saw the Lord and was now able to understand that 'God is not worshipped with hands,' holy days, outward form and righteousness, but from the heart in spirit and truth: for the living God knows the thoughts and motives of men. 'My son, give me thine heart' (Rom. 10:9-10).

'Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge'

Who is it who darkens the understanding, confuses everyone by talking about these great mysteries of God in human ignorance?' Job says, 'I'm guilty.' I have been talking all this time about things I did not understand. I have been speaking dogmatically and yet foolishly about things too wonderful for me. I thought I knew, but I didn't (Rom. 11:33). Is not this the case today with the many religious voices heard in the land? Oh, that men would put their hands on their mouths (Job 40:4-5; Eccles. 5:1-2), until they have seen the Lord. Isaiah saw him and had something worthwhile to say (John 12:41).

'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear'

There are few in our land who cannot say, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear.'

1. God speaks in *creation* (Psalm 19:1-3).

2. God speaks in his *law*, written on heart and conscience (Rom. 2:14-15) .

3. God speaks by his *prophets* and by *that prophet*—his Son (Heb. 1:2).

4. God speaks through his *written word* (John 20:31) so that all men are without excuse. Like Job, we can say that we have certainly heard of God.

‘But now mine eye seeth thee’

This is not a vision, nor a dream, nor only an emotional spell. It is to see by faith the living God revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is to understand something of the majesty and sovereignty of God. It is to understand something of the righteousness and holiness of God. It is to see him in his chief glory—his redemptive mercy and grace in Christ (Exo. 33:18-19).

1. When did Job see the Lord? When the Lord was pleased to reveal himself to Job (John 6:44-45; 1 Cor. 2:9-10). ‘Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father.’

2. What was Job's reaction when he saw the Lord? He was filled with awe and reverence in the presence of the Lord. He put his hand on his mouth and stood in silence. He saw his evil nature in the only light in which it can be truly see—the holiness of God. He confessed his sin and repented before God.

The Psalm of Messiah the King

Psalm 2:1-12

The subject of this Psalm is the establishment of David upon the throne of Israel, notwithstanding the opposition by his enemies. But the eye of faith shall clearly see that this is 'The Psalm of Messiah the King;' and it sets forth the rage of the wicked against the Lord's anointed, the purpose of God to exalt his own Son, and the ultimate reign of Christ over all his enemies. The Psalm, is best understood under these four heads.

1. An evil conspiracy of demons and men to reject the rule of God.

vv. 1-3. 'We will be our own god! We will rid ourselves of all restraint and be free to commit all manner of abomination.' What a vain and foolish thing!

Yet *Satan* tried it (Isa. 14:12-15). 'O son of the morning, O day star how has mischief entered thine heart,' to rid thyself of God. What a vain and empty scheme!

And *Adam* tried it (Gen. 3:5-6). This was the first man's sin. 'We will be gods ourselves,' thereby rejecting the reign and rule of the Lord God.

Men tried it at Calvary (Acts 4:25-28). 'We will not have this man reign over us. We have no king but Caesar. Crucify him!'

The conspiracy, led by the antichrist Satan, continues today from pulpit and pew to deny and destroy the sovereign Christ (2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15) and enthrone the human will. 'The will of God must wait upon the will of the creature. 'God wills to save,' they say, 'and wants to enthrone and exalt Christ; but he has done all that he can do and must depend on the cooperation of man to realize his purpose.' How vain and foolish this is, in the light of the Holy Scriptures (Exo. 33:18-19; Psalm 135:5-6; Isa. 46:9-11; Eph. 1:5,11). Salvation and eternal life depend solely on the will of God, not the will of men (John 1:11-13; Rom. 9:15-16; James 1:18; John 5:40; Psalm 110:3). Our God is God and King over creation, providence,

and salvation; and all of the organized efforts of foolish, religious men will not alter that fact (John 6: 37-39; Rom. 8:28-31).

2. The Lord God shall mock his enemies.

vv. 4-6. 'He that sitteth in the heavens.' The Lord God is not alarmed over the tumult and mutiny of the earth. He *sitteth* (his purpose and work completed through his own obedience and death) in the *heavens* (on a throne of absolute sovereignty) and *laughs*. Mark the quiet dignity of the omnipotent God. He does not take the trouble to rise up and do battle with the raging people. *He laughs!* How absurd, how irrational, how futile are the claims and boastings of weak and frail creatures against him!

'Then (in his own good time) shall he speak.' He doesn't have to lift his hand nor move from his throne. He only has to speak. He does not speak in compromise nor cooperation but in wrath. Despite your ambitions, despite the wisdom of your counsels, despite the malice of your hearts, and despite the unanimous opinion of all earth and hell, 'I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.' Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. All things are delivered into his hands. All power over all flesh is his. All authority is given unto him in heaven and earth. The Son quickeneth whom he will. He shall not fail, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. God's appointed is appointed and shall not be disappointed! (Phil. 2:9-11). You may rage, you may resolve, you may take counsel, and you may boast of the power of your will; but Jesus Christ is King by decree, by design, and by death. God's will shall be done (Dan. 4:34-35).

3. The Son himself proclaims the decree.

vv. 7-9. We have looked at the counsel of the wicked and heard their raving and boasting. We have looked to the throne of God and observed his infinite power, wisdom, and unperturbed counsel and decree. 'I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.' Now Christ, the anointed, risen Redeemer, himself, comes forward and says, 'I will declare the decree.'

'The Lord said unto me, thou art my son: this day have I begotten thee.' He is the true, proper, eternal, and only begotten Son of God,

declared, owned, and acknowledged by Jehovah, the Father (Heb. 1:3-5). 'This day,' refers to eternity, which is one continuous day, an everlasting now (Isa. 43:11-13).

'Ask of me and I shall give thee.' It was the custom of great kings to give to favored ones whatever they might ask, so the Lord Jesus has but to ask and have. God, the Father, has promised to uphold our blessed Surety and Substitute in all his conflicts (Isa. 42:1); yet he prayed for his own (John 17). A seed is promised to him and victory over his enemies; yet, for both he prayed.

'I will give thee the heathen (God's elect among the Gentiles) for thy kingdom,' and thy kingdom shall be to the uttermost parts of the earth (Rev. 5:9-10). The stubborn and rebellious, who will not have Christ to reign nor bow to his crown rights, shall he crush and destroy.

4. Advice is given to all to yield worship and obedience to the Lord's anointed.

vv. 10-12. 'Be wise, be instructed.' It is always wise to be willing to be taught, especially when the Lord speaks and his instructions relate to his glory and the salvation of our very souls. 'Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.' Let reverence and humility be mingled with your service that you be not presumptuous, for Christ is a great God and we are puny creatures. But God mingles rejoicing with fear that obedience may not be slavish. 'Kiss the Son,' in love, faith, and submission. Put aside all doubt, resistance, and rebellion and embrace him as Lord and King. They are blessed who put their trust in him.

God's two great books

Psalm 19:1-14

David devoted himself to the study of God's two great books—the book of *nature* (v. 1), ‘the heavens declare the glory of God;’ and the book of *holy scripture* (v. 7), ‘the law (the word or doctrine) of the Lord is perfect.’ How foolish are those who spend their time and wits trying to resolve discrepancies and contradictions instead of accepting these two sacred volumes and coming to know the author (Rom. 1:18-20; John 20:31). I appreciate the man who is a student of the *world-book* and the *word-book* and can say, ‘My Father wrote them both.’ Creation and the Scriptures have one author, the living God, and one objective, the glory of God! Creation is the outer court where we look, admire, and adore our God (Psalm 8:3-4) ; and the word of God is the inner court where we kneel, worship, and praise him (Psalm 119:9-12).

This Psalm may be divided into three parts:

The creation shows God's glory. (vv. 1-6)

The word reveals God's grace. (vv. 7-11)

The prayer of the man who understands both. (vv. 12-14)

1. *The heavens declare the glory of God* (vv. 1-6)

v. 1. The heavens are three. There is the third heaven spoken of by Paul in II Cor. 12:2-4. There is the heaven of stars, sun, and planets; and there is the heaven above the earth with clouds. All are constantly declaring the glory of God and showing his handiwork. If every preacher on earth were silent and every tongue still, the heavens above would never cease to declare the wisdom, power, and majesty of our God.

v. 2. ‘Day unto day pours forth speech.’ Where one day leaves off, the next day takes up the sermon. The day speaks of ‘Christ, the light of the world.’ The rising sun declares. ‘The *sun* of Righteousness arises with

healing in his wings' (Mal. 4:4). While the night speaks of *his rest*, it also declares, 'I must walk and work while there is light, for the night cometh when no man can work.' There will come an eternal day and eternal darkness. The passing of day and night speaks of the brevity of life. 'Teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart to wisdom' (Psalm 90:12).

vv. 3. Many are the languages of men on earth; but there is no speech nor language on earth where the voice of God's heavens is not heard, for the teaching of creation is not directed to the ear but to the eye and heart. 'God hath showed it unto them' (Rom. 1:19).

v. 4. The teaching and instructions of God's creation is gone out through all the earth. No man living beneath the heavens is beyond the reach of God's outer court preacher. 'In the heavens God has made a tabernacle for the *sun*.' Like a mighty king, the sun continues on its way, attended by the moon and the stars.

vv. 5-6. Who is this sun? It is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ—*the sun of righteousness!*

Jesus Christ, like the sun, is the center, light, and life of God's new creation (Rev. 21:23).

Jesus Christ, like the sun, dwells in the midst of revelation. He tabernacled among men in all his brightness. All that was made was made by him, for him, and by him it is held together (Col. 1:16-17).

Jesus Christ comes forth as the bridegroom of his elect church.

Jesus Christ rejoices as the strong man who wins the battle over the forces of evil and death (Isa. 53:10-12).

His going forth is from everlasting to everlasting (Micah 5:2). His circuit of mercies blesses the farthest ends and remotest corners of the earth (Rev. 5:9).

There are none who believe who shall be denied the warmth and comfort of his love, and none who don't believe who shall escape the heat of his wrath.

2. The word of God reveals his grace (vv. 7-11)

v. 7. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' This is not the law of Moses but the whole text of holy scripture. The great means of conversion is the word of God (Rom. 10:13-17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 1:16-17). 'The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.' What God has to say in his word about himself, his dear Son, our sin, and salvation is sure, certain, and infallible (1 John 5:10-13). Humble, teachable minds receive the word of God and are made wise unto salvation (1 Cor. 2:8-10).

v. 8. 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.' The statutes of the Lord are his counsel and decrees. his covenant of mercy and grace and these statutes are founded in righteousness. God will be just and justifier! God will be righteous and merciful! (Psalm 85:10; Isa. 45:21; Rom. 3:25-26). These righteous decrees rejoice the heart of those taught of God. There is a reason for rejoicing when one understands how that in Christ, God can redeem us and still be God! 'The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the understanding.' The pure, holy word of God (Who will by no means clear the guilty) is revealed to us in Christ Jesus; and our eyes are opened to his glory (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

v. 9) 'The (reverent) fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.' Still the word of God is intended, which teaches men an awe, reverent fear, and worship of God. The word of God directs us to the blood of Christ, which cleanses us from all sin and fear of the curse and leaves us only to love and worship our God. While the ceremonial law is done away, the gospel is forever.

vv. 10-11. 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' His decrees, his covenant, his mercies, and his condemnations are founded

on truth and righteousness. They shall stand and shall bring both riches and pleasure to all who believe. By hearing them a man is warned, and by obeying them a man is greatly rewarded.

3. The prayer of the man who can read the two books (vv. 12-14)

The man who knows God and his word knows himself. 'Cleanse me from sins which even I do not see. Keep me from presuming on the mercy of God. Let not the flesh have dominion over me, and deliver me from apostasy and departing from the living God. Let my words praise God, speak peace to my brother, be free from malice and murmuring. Let the meditations of my heart be sincere, submissive to thy will, and dwell much on Christ.'

The Psalm of the cross

Psalm 22

Mr. Spurgeon said, 'This Psalm may have been actually repeated word by word by our Lord when hanging on the tree. It begins with 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and ends, according to some, in the original with, 'It is finished.' David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense; but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun. He who sees the Lord Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David. Before us, in this Psalm, we have a description both of the darkness and of the glory of the cross—the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow.'

v. 1. What is the one great cause of such a thing as for God to forsake his Son at such a time? There was no cause in him: why then was he forsaken? Christ was our substitute, who was numbered with the transgressors and who bore our sins in his own body. He endured our death, judgment, and hell, being separated from God for a time.

v. 2. Our Lord prayed in the daytime of life and in the night season of death. Our Lord prayed when he was heard and even in this dark hour of desertion, when he was not heard. He believed perfectly for us, his elect.

v. 3. Our Lord seems to marvel (as do all who know that the Father and Son are One) how the holy God could forsake him and be silent to his cries. But the argument is, 'thou art holy.' His mercy, love, and grace are seen in God's giving his Son to die for us; and the holiness of God is seen in the forsaking of Christ. God must be just and holy, even in the expression of his love.

vv. 4-5. Our Lord pleads the past dealings of God with his people. Three times he says, 'They trusted,' and never left off trusting and were not put

to shame. They trusted Jehovah (God our Saviour), Who in Christ will always hear. The plural pronoun 'our Father' shows Christ's oneness with them and us.

v. 6. 'I am a worm.' What abasement! What a miracle! What a contrast between 'I AM' and 'I am a worm.' He was made lower than the angels (Psalm 8: 4-5), in the form of a servant, identified with Jacob, the worm (Mal. 3:6). He was forsaken that we might be accepted (Eph. 1:6).

vv. 7-8. Our Lord endured every cruelty, scorn, and insult. Not only did he bear the wrath of God but the contempt of men. Read the account in Matthew 27:39-44. Find the five forms of taunts hurled at Christ in these verses.

vv. 9-10. The Son of Man was marvelously begotten of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:34-35). God prepared a body for him (Heb. 10:5-7). From the womb he was God incarnate, the sinner's hope: and he knew from that day his mission was sure and secure (John 6:37-39).

v. 11. Our Lord's great woe was that God had forsaken him. His great prayer was that God would sustain him even in this hour. 'There is none to help.' He must tread the winepress alone ('by himself purge our sins') and, being a man, must have Divine help. Our Lord is the Lamb slain from the beginning, but he must die! Our Lord has a people, but he must pray for them! Our Lord has all power, but as our substitute he prays for Divine presence.

vv. 12-13. The mighty ones in the crowd are meant. The priests, Pharisees, rulers, and captains all surrounded the cross of this naked, rejected one, mocking him.

vv. 14-17. Our Lord describes his condition and suffering. his greatest agony and suffering were soul miseries (Isa. 53:10-11), but the death of the cross was indescribable agony. He was utterly spent, like water poured out on the ground. The intense pain made his heart to feel like wax melted

in the heat. His strength and moisture were dried up and his tongue swollen with thirst. They drove nails in his hands and feet; and he was so stretched upon the cross that one could see all his bones against the skin, pulled out of joint.

v. 18. Every act of the wicked men at Calvary was prophesied in scripture (Acts 4:26-28: Acts 13:29-30.).

vv. 19-21. O what a perfect Saviour! ‘Having loved his own, he loved them to the end;’ and even in his lowest hour of suffering, he wants nothing but his God. ‘O Lord, my strength, deliver my soul from the sword (Zech. 13:7), my darling from the power of the dog.’ Was not this prayer for us, his own? (John 11).

vv. 22-31. Here in these verses is the foretaste of deliverance and victory! Our Redeemer beholds the glory of his triumph and the results of his suffering and rejoices (Isa. 53:11-12).

‘I will declare thy name unto my brethren.’ He speaks here of his church. He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb. 2:10-12).

‘The seed of Israel’ is all believers (Gal. 3:7, 29).

‘All the ends of the world and nations shall worship thee.’ Our Lord has a people of every nation (Rev. 5:9).

They shall come from all parts and declare his righteousness, those who are born of God; and it shall be said, ‘the Lord hath done this!’

The Lord is my shepherd

Psalm 23

Many have tried to determine when David wrote this Psalm. Was it when he was a shepherd? or when he fled from Saul? or when he was peacefully settled on Israel's throne? or when he was in the sunset years and contemplated the eternal house of the Lord? No one knows; but in the Scriptures it follows the 22nd Psalm, which is 'The Psalm of the cross.' It is only after we have read and understood, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' that we can truthfully say, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' The Lord must purchase the sheep of whom he is the shepherd (John 10:14-18).

v. 1. '*The Lord* (Jesus Christ) is my shepherd.' He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. His Lordship is based on his ownership (John 3:35; Col. 1:16-18). He is Lord by divine decree (Psalm 2:6; Heb. 1:2; Phil. 2:9-11). He is Lord by death (Rom. 14:9). He is my Lord now by faith (Rom. 10:9-10).

'The Lord (Jesus Christ) *is my shepherd.*' He is (no if, maybe, or perhaps about it) MY shepherd. He owns me, for the Father gave me to him from all eternity (John. 6:37-39). He loves me and bought me by his blood (1 Cor. 6:20). He is the great shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13:20). He is the chief shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). He is the good shepherd (John 10:11).

'*I shall not want.*' I may be the weakest of the sheep, but I shall not want! I may be the dumbest, I may wander and stray, I may grow old and feeble; but I shall not want! I may not have all that I wish, but I shall not want! I may endure sickness and sorrow, walk the valley of death, and stand before God's awful throne; but I shall not want, for the Lord is my shepherd! I shall not want for any good thing, for he is able to save (Heb. 7:25). He is able to keep that which I have committed to him (2 Tim. 1:12). He is able to present me faultless before the throne (Jude 24-25), and he is able to raise my vile body in that day (Phil. 3:20-21).

v. 2. I shall not want for rest, for ‘he maketh me to lie down in green pastures.’ I have no reason to be fearful nor afraid of my enemies, of the curse of the law, nor of death and judgment. I need not stand ready to flee, but can lie down in the green pastures of his word and rest (Matt. 11:28-29).

I shall not want for *peace*, for ‘He leadeth me beside the still waters.’ Our lives are made up of two parts—thoughts and deeds, or meditation and activity. Blessed is the person who can say in both areas, ‘The Lord is my shepherd.’ I rest in my mind and soul, fed by his word and assured by his promises; and I walk beside calm waters. Trials of life are pictured as deep water, troubled waters, and waves of the sea; but my shepherd has calmed the troubled sea, and even trials are for my good (Rom. 8:28).

v. 3. I shall not want for *redemption* and *forgiveness*, for ‘He restoreth my soul.’ He restored it to life, for in Adam I died (1 Cor. 15:21-22). He restored it to purity (Rom. 5:19). He restored it to God (2 Cor. 5:19). He restored my soul and body to power and glory to reign with him (1 Cor. 15: 51-57)

‘He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.’ It is not my nature to know the path of righteousness, nor to FIND it, nor to recognize it, nor to walk therein. But he leads me there, for it is his path. He made me righteous before God and leads me in that path both to love it and to walk in it (Rom. 3:21-26; Rom. 10:1-4). He leads me in paths of righteousness for ‘his name's sake;’ that is, for his glory and the praise of his grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). I shall not want for *holiness*.

v. 4. I shall not want for *companionship nor comfort*, for ‘Thou art with me,’ and, ‘thy rod and staff they comfort me.’ Most everyone applies ‘the valley of the shadow of death’ to the time of physical death, but I believe this valley of death through which we walk is our entire journey through this world. It is called a valley of death because the fall of Adam put the stamp of death on everything here. We are walking through this world; it is not our dwelling place; and it is called the shadow of death because

Christ has removed the substance of death and only a shadow remains. A shadow is there but cannot hurt nor destroy.

‘I fear no evil.’ He did not say the evil is not there; it is, but we do not fear because Christ is with us! Where the sheep are, the shepherd is! ‘Lo, I am with you always.’

Some say ‘the rod and staff’ are correction and chastisement, which is surely a comfort; for ‘Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth’ (Heb. 12:6-7). Some say the rod and staff are for numbering the sheep as they pass under it. Others say the rod and staff are symbols of his sovereignty, direction, and defense. He rules the flock, defends the flock, and directs the flock where he would have them go. Perhaps all are meant, for all are comforting.

v. 5. I shall not want for provisions *even in the presence of my enemies*, for my shepherd shall supply all my needs (Phil. 4:19). The believer is not without enemies (Eph. 6:12). He would not be like his Lord if he did not have enemies (John 15:17-20). Our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil; but he fully sets the table (nothing lacking). There is no hurry, no confusion; we sit down with our Lord and feast as though the enemy did not even exist (Isa. 26:3-4).

v. 6. I shall not want for *anything in this life nor in the life to come*, for ‘his goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.’ This is neither presumption nor a claim to personal worth or merit. It is faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus, Who is the *great* shepherd, the *chief* shepherd, and the *good* shepherd.

True God - true Israel - true Redeemer

Psalm 24

The Psalm is more appreciated and best understood if it is divided into three sections:

1. The true God. (vv. 1-2)
2. The true Israel. (vv. 3-6)
3. The true redeemer. (vv. 7-10)

1. The true God (vv. 1-2).

v. 1. 'The earth is the Lord's.' The earth is not man's; it is the Lord's! Men may live on earth and boast of their possessions and power. They may divide the earth into countries, fly their flags, and elect their kings and rulers. They may divide these countries into states and territories and give them names. They may divide these territories into farms, ranches, and lots and issue title-deeds of ownership. But the earth is not man's; the earth is the Lord's (Job 41:11). 'Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.' We are but tenants, subject to eviction at any moment. The great land-owner sits in the heavens and laughs at the title-deeds of worms in the dust.

'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.' The 'fullness' of the earth may mean its entirety—its wealth, its life, its past, present, and future. The Lord has made the earth to be full, and he keeps it full. The air is full, notwithstanding all who breathe it. The soil is full, though billions of plants, trees, and flowers derive their nourishment from it. The rivers, forests, and fields remain full to feed, clothe, and house generations of people. They are all full and held together by his sovereign hand (Col. 1:16-17).

'The world and they that dwell therein.' All that dwell upon the earth and live in his world belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

They are his by *creation* (John 1:1-3; Rev. 4:11).

They are his by *decree*; the Father hath given him all things (John 17:2; John 3:35; Heb. 1:2).

They are his by *purchase* (Rom. 14:9).

They are his, by *administration*; he reigns (Matt. 28:18; Isa. 9:6).

All creatures are his—either his sons or his servants, his sheep or his goats, his vessels of mercy or his vessels of wrath; but they are his!

v. 2. ‘He hath founded it upon the seas.’ Here is the chief reason all this is his—he created it all (Gen. 1:1-11). It was God who said, ‘Let the dry land appear.’ ‘Let us make man.’

‘He established it upon the floods’—the waters above and beneath the earth. What an insecure foundation! Surely God is saying that the earth shall not remain. We look forward to a new heaven and a new earth founded on the ‘Rock of Ages,’ where there will be ‘no more sea’ (Rev. 21:1) Oh, the power, glory, majesty, and greatness of our God! (Psalm 50:10-12.)

2. *The true Israel* (vv. 3-6).

‘Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?’ O how high above us is our God! He dwelleth in the heavens (Eccles. 5:1-2; Job 11:7-8). God dwells in the light which no man can approach (1 Tim. 6:16).

‘Who shall stand in his holy place?’ If one could ascend to where God dwells, who could stand or abide in his presence? The answer is four-fold:

‘He that hath clean hands’—one who has never sinned.

‘And a pure heart’—one who has not even imagined or thought any evil thought.

‘Who has not lifted up his soul to vanity’—one who Has loved God perfectly and done nothing contrary to God.

‘Nor sworn deceitfully’—one who is and has spoken perfect truth.

These conditions suit none but Jesus Christ! Therefore, no man hath ascended to heaven nor will ascend to heaven nor stand in his holy place except he that came down from heaven---the son of man which is in heaven (John 3:13). Christ, the God-man, met every condition as our representative; and we shall ascend, and we shall stand, and we shall dwell in the presence of the Lord, accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:21-22; Jude 24-25). As Christ has been raised from the dead and blessed, so in him we shall 'receive the blessing of the presence of the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation' (v. 5).

'This is the generation of them that seek him (Christ), that seek thy face, O God of Jacob' (v. 6). Heaven is populated by 'seekers and finders.' By his grace they seek the Lord, his presence, his mercy, his righteousness in Christ; and they find in him all they need. This is the true Israel (Phil. 3:3) from every nation.

3. The true redeemer (vv. 7-10).

Jesus Christ, our Lord, answered to the full character laid down for those who would ascend to the hill of the Lord and stand in his presence! By his own right and righteousness, he has entered in and sat down at the Father's right hand (Heb. 1:3). His hands are clean, his heart is pure, his soul loves God perfectly, and he is the truth! Therefore, 'lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.' The gates and doors of eternal glory have always been closed to men; too many things prevent men from entering. But the Son of man has come to earth; his perfect work of redemption is done. 'It is finished,' he cried. Now open ye gates and doors to the King of glory and his church.

Who is this King of glory?' 'He is the Lord strong and mighty,' able to do all that he undertakes (Heb. 7:25). He is 'the Lord mighty in battle,' for he alone conquered every enemy. He is 'the Lord of hosts,' he came alone to redeem, but he is not alone when he ascends; he has with him a number which no man can number. He is 'the King of glory.' All glory is his, in him, and of him.

Eight great precepts

Psalm 37

The author of this Psalm is David, the time of its writing is in his old age (v. 25), and the subject has to do with the prosperity of the wicked while the people of God suffer affliction and trial. This has troubled and perplexed many, as indicated in Psalm 73. This has a Psalm in which the Lord sweetly hushes the complaints of his people and calms their minds concerning his present dealings with them. Briefly, here are some of the questions raised and answered:

vv. 1-2. Evil doers flourish and prosper like the green grass and the green herb, but they shall soon be cut down and wither like the grass (Isa. 40:6-8).

vv. 12-13. The wicked hate believers and persecute them; yet the Lord laughs at their opposition (Psalm 2:4), for their day of judgment is coming (Deut. 32:35).

vv. 14-15. The wicked take advantage of believers and draw their swords to hurt them, but their swords shall enter their own hearts.

vv. 16-17. Believers seem to have so little, while great are the riches of wicked men; but their riches are temporary and shall fade, while our inheritance is forever.

v. 20. The enemies of the Lord seem to get fatter and fatter, but it is the fat of 'lambs for the slaughter.' Who envies the pig or the turkey, which is well-fed while being prepared for the slaughter?

vv. 35-37. The wicked on earth have great power and proudly flaunt that power and greatness like a great tree, but they shall soon pass away and no

remembrance of them can be found. Mark the believer in Christ; his end is eternal peace.

vv. 38-40. What is the bottom line? Where is all this settled? How are we to be comforted in our trials, while we watch the wicked prosper, flourish, and live in ease? Look at their destruction and final condemnation (Psalm 73:12-17), then look at the grace of God to believers in Christ!

1. *Grace is described*—'The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.'
2. *Grace is summarized*—'The Lord is our strength and shall deliver us.'
3. *Grace is characterized*—'They trust in him.'

In the light of all that has been said, David lays down eight great precepts or directions for God's people.

1. 'Fret not thyself because of evildoers' (v. 1). Do not burn with jealousy, envy, nor anger over the prosperity of wicked men: they have all now that they shall ever have. They spend their brief days upon earth in ease and riches, but they shall be soon cut down like the weeds. A sight of their terrible end ought to deliver us from envying them; and were it not for God's grace and our Lord's redemption, we would be one of them.

2. 'Trust in the Lord' (v. 3). Faith in Christ will cure fretting. Our outward conduct depends on our inward attitude and confidence in our God. Trust not men nor riches; they will come to naught (Psalms 146:3-5). Trust in the Lord for pardon, protection, provision, and his wise providence. 'Thou shalt be fed all that is needed (Psalm 37:25; Matt. 6:30-33; Phil. 4:19).

3. 'Delight thyself in the Lord' (v. 4). He who is commanded not to fret, he who is commanded to trust, is also exhorted to delight in the Lord. In giving up the world we have given up nothing. In Christ Jesus we have all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). Like Moses, we know that the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of the world (Heb. 11:26).

Therefore, we delight in our Lord, we rejoice in him, and we are glad to go into the house of the Lord. We delight in the law of the Lord (Psalm 1:2). We delight to do his will Psalm 40:8). His mercy and comfort delight our souls (Psalm 94:19). We sit down under his shadow with great delight (Song of Sol. 2-3). ‘Godliness with contentment is great gain.’

4. ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord’ (v. 5). Cast away anxiety, worry, and fear. ‘Cast your care upon him for he careth for you’ (1 Peter 5:7). Roll the whole burden of life and eternity upon the Lord, like the farmer who plows the field, plants the seed, and leaves the harvest to the Lord; for what else can he do? Trust him, for he will bring it to pass.

5. ‘Rest in the Lord’ (v. 7). When God completed the creation of the world, it is said that he rested. This is not a rest from weariness, but simply declaring that there was no more to do—creation was finished! Our Lord Jesus entered into his rest having finished the work of redemption (Heb. 4:10). Let us strive to enter into his rest. Cease from fretting, laboring, and doubting and rest in him (Matt. 11:28-30). The more one learns of his sufficiency, the greater the rest!

6. ‘Cease from anger’ (v. 8). Knowing the good providence of the Lord and his eternal purpose to accomplish our good (Rom. 8:28), we entertain no anger toward his ways. Knowing the ignorance and blindness of natural men and that God is the first cause of all things, we hold no anger nor hate for them (Gen. 50:19-20). Getting even or getting revenge against men is not for us but is in God's hands (Heb. 10:30). Anger does not work God's righteousness (James 1:19-20).

7. ‘Depart from evil’ (v. 27). Here is a double precept: ‘Depart from evil,’ from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and ‘do good.’ Work the works of righteousness and honesty and adorn the gospel of the Lord Jesus with good works that men may glorify our Father in heaven.

8. ‘Wait on the Lord’ (v. 34). He who truly trusts in the Lord and delights in the Lord will rest in the Lord and wait on God's time for all things. Do

not bind God to a day or a way. Spurgeon said, 'Wait on the Lord in obedience as a servant, wait in hope as an heir, and wait in expectation as a believer.' 'He shall exalt thee to inherit the land.'

My hope is in thee

Psalm 39

This is a Psalm of David.

1. *A man after God's own heart* (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

2. *A man of activity and affliction.* David was totally committed to God. He was totally involved in God's kingdom with its warfare, conflicts, and glory. You won't find David indifferent to the purpose and providence of God. He was a participant (1 Sam. 17:26-29; Psalm 119-71).

3. *A man of strong passions and feelings.* He loved people, as evidenced by his love for Jonathan and Mephibosheth. He was a humble man, as evidenced by his dancing before the ark (2 Sam. 6:20-23). He praised God (Psalm 150).

4. *A man of strong faith* (Psalm 116:10; Psalm 27:13). He never ceased to believe God, whatever the circumstances. God allowed David to write the Messianic Psalms, speaking the very words of Christ as though they were his own (Psalm 22).

This Psalm was written in a time of great conflict, sorrow, and trial, indicated by 'My sorrow was stirred' (v. 2), 'How frail I am' (v. 4), 'Deliver me from all my transgressions' (v. 8), 'Every man is vanity' (v. 11), 'Hold not thy peace at my tears' (v. 11), and 'O spare me, that I may recover strength' (v. 13). Let us listen and learn from this man so strong in faith, so strong in his passions, and yet so tempted and tried.

v. 1. 'I said;' it was to himself that he spoke. Wise is the man who spends much time meditating and communing with his own heart (Psalm 4:4; Psalm 77:6-12; 2 Cor. 13:5). David was evidently under a strong burden and trial and was afflicted by God. Some of it he did not understand, and God had not seen fit to reveal his purpose in it. So David said to himself,

‘I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue.’ Like Job of old, he was careful not to charge God foolishly (Job 1:22). The tongue is a small member but capable of great evil, especially when speaking in reference to God and spiritual matters. He continued, ‘I will especially put a bridle on my mouth while the unbeliever is before me.’ How careful must our words be chosen at all times, but especially in the presence of those who misuse and misunderstand even the purist of speech. O Lord, for the grace and wisdom to learn this one verse and practice it—to muzzle my mouth and subdue my tongue.

v. 2. ‘I held my silence even from speaking good.’ He is saying, ‘I determined, in my affliction, not to speak in complaint nor instruction, lest if I begin to talk, I should say things I should not say.’ Our world is a world of talkers; no one hesitates to express an opinion, even about the mysteries of God. But David was concerned, not only about murmuring against God, but about speaking carelessly and uninspired of the good things of God (Eccles. 5:1-2; Job 40:4-5; Job 42:3); so he resolved to be silent.

v. 3. But while he meditated on these things and was resolved neither to speak evil nor good, his heart burned within him and would not let him keep silent. The believing, regenerated heart will not keep still before God but must cry to God, must praise God, must speak in prayer and communion. ‘As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.’ It is with the heart that men believe God (Rom. 10:9-10). It is in the heart that the love of God is shed abroad (Rom. 5:5). Newton said, ‘Sooner expect a man to live without breathing as to expect a believer to live without praying.’ ‘Christ is our life’ and ‘in everything give thanks.’

v. 4. There is a three-fold request made to God.

(1) ‘Make me to know my end,’ the end and perfection of all my desires (Psalm 27:4; Psalm 23:6). ‘I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness’ (Psalm 17:15). All things should be

judged by their end (Psalm 73:17). In Christ our end and goal is to be like him (1 John 3:2-3).

(2) 'Make me to know the measure of my days.' How short they are upon the earth!

(3) 'Make me to know how frail I am.' An understanding of my frailty and flesh will make me HUMBLE, will make me more diligent about my relationship with Christ Jesus, will make me more patient with others, and will wean me from this world of flesh and cause me to trust and rest in Christ.

v. 5. 'My days are a handbreadth.' This is one of the shortest measures. A man doesn't need a long line to measure a short life. We carry the measure of our days with us. Hold it out and look at it often. 'My age is as nothing before thee.' My age is short compared to Methuselah's 900 years, but my age before the eternal God is nothing (Psalm 90:12). 'Every man at his best state is altogether vanity.' The word is empty, unprofitable, and unsatisfactory. Men are good only at that which is bad; men are wise only in foolishness; men are consistent only in their inconsistency; at his best moment man is only emptiness. Selah means pause, say it again, this is the end of the matter, Amen!

v. 6. The vanity of man at his best state is illustrated in three things.

(1) The vanity of our joys and honors. 'Walketh in a vain show.' The allusion is to a parade where men dress up and act out a borrowed part. We die and someone else acts the part.

(2) The vanity of our griefs and sorrows. 'They are disquieted in vain.' Even our turmoil and distress is for nothing, for time will erase even that.

(3) The vanity of our possessions. 'He heapeth up riches.' He builds a house and a stranger lives in it. He saves money and his sons spend it. He accumulates the chaff of the world and God will burn it. The world consists of fruitless honor, needless cares, and useless riches.

v. 7. David thought on all these things of natural life and the world and said, 'What wait I for?' What is there to enchant me? What is there to enthrall me? What is there to interest me? 'My hope is in thee.' My hope is in thy grace and mercy; my hope is in my Redeemer; my hope is in the atonement on the mercy-seat. In Christ I will live when all else dies, I will be full when all else is empty, and I will stand in him when all else falls!

vv. 8-10. 'Deliver me from my sins' (Psalm 51:1-5). 'Suffer me not to show impatience in affliction and give the wicked room to reproach.' 'I kept silent in suffering because you gave it to me.' 'Now deliver me.' Afflictions in the lives of his people are sent by God and removed by God.

vv. 11-13. God's dealings with us cause us to know our sins and weep over them and cause our beauty and righteousness to become filthy rags, that we may seek his righteousness in Christ (Rom. 10:1-4).

Many, O Lord, are thy wonderful works

Psalm 40:1-10

These are the words of David, for this is a Psalm of David, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The words reveal David's faith and experience which he lived, felt, and expressed in a song.

These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:5-9 tells us they are the words of Christ.

Are these words not also the experience of every believer? So complete is our union with Christ that it is impossible to speak of Christ and not speak of them in the same words (John 17:21-22).

v. 1. The Psalm begins with a word that is so difficult for us, 'I waited patiently for the Lord,' or 'waiting, I waited.' David expected wisdom, direction, provision, and strength from the Lord, which he gives in his own time; therefore, he was willing to patiently wait on God (Psalm 27:13-14).

'He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.' He bent over to me and heard my cry. In the Lord's own time, when the trial had accomplished his design, when I could understand his instructions, when he could get all the glory and praise, when I was sufficiently shut up to his grace, he heard my cry. It is a marvel that God would condescend to hear us at all. Then why should we ever grow impatient and weary with waiting for him!

vv. 2-3) There are three powerful statements here that accurately describe the work of Christ in redeeming his people.

'He brought me up out of an horrible pit.' Some of these prison pits in the Bible were deep, with mud and corruption at the bottom, and with no possible way out except through a hole at the top. We were in the pit of sin, under the curse of the law, with no way out; and he, according to his own will, by his mercy and grace, came to where we were (John 1:14),

paid our debt, restored our souls, and lifted us up to light, life, and freedom (1 Sam. 2:6-8; Luke 4:18).

‘He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.’ That rock is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). My steps are set, settled, and established on the unchangeable, immovable Rock of absolutes in Christ—God’s word of promise and God’s atonement in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

‘He put a new song in my mouth,’ which is a song of praise to our God. That new song is the song of a new creature in Christ, the song of the new covenant, the song of the new and living way, the song of a new heart, and the song of a new heaven and a new earth. This new song is the gospel of Christ by which the Holy Spirit shall enable many ‘to see, fear, and trust the Lord.’

v. 4. ‘Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust.’ Who can say with Job, ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust him;’ with Peter, ‘Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God;’ and with John, ‘We know we have passed from death to life.’ A believer may be as persecuted as Job, as poor as Lazarus, as lonely as Elijah, as bowed down as David; but if the Lord is his trust and refuge, none of these outward afflictions shall move him. He does not bow to money nor power nor cringe before worldlings, he is not swayed by the multitudes who run after a lie. God is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

v. 5. The wonderful works of God are his works of creation, providence, redemption, and glorification. George Rogers gave this outline:

1. The works of God are planned by God, wrought by his spirit, through the merits of his Son.

2. They are wonderful works in their variety, their fullness, and their unchangeable glory.

3. They are innumerable, all in perfect order, and beyond comprehension.

vv. 6-8. Here David goes beyond himself and speaks the very words of Christ. When one thinks of 'the wonderful works of God,' it is of Christ that he must speak (Col. 1:16-19).

The sacrifices and offerings not desired nor required are the sacrifices offered under the law. These sacrifices could never put away sin, could never please God's justice or righteousness. They were offered from Adam to Moses only as types and shadows of Christ (Heb. 10:1-4). They no longer exist, because Christ has come. 'In the volume of the book of God it is written of me, that I should come to fulfill all righteousness, honor every attribute, and satisfy justice,' says Christ. 'My ear was bored,' for he is a willing servant. 'I delight to do thy will,' for he is one with the Father. 'The volume of the book' may be both that book of God's eternal counsel and designs (Rev. 5:1-5) or the book of scripture (Luke 24:44-46).

vv. 9-10. The Son has fully and ably declared these five things (Heb. 1:1-3).

1. God's *righteousness*; both his essential righteousness and his righteousness imputed to believers through faith (Rom. 10:1-4; 3:19-26; 4:20-25).

2. God's *faithfulness*. Our God is faithful to his covenant, to his word, to his Son, and to his people (Isa. 46:9-11). 'I am the Lord, I change not.' The gifts and calling of God are without change (Rom. 11:29). 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning,' and they shall be done (John 6:37-39; Rom. 8:29-31).

3. God's *salvation*. Salvation is of the Lord in its *origination*. Christ is our Surety, Saviour, and Lamb slain from the beginning. Salvation is of the Lord in its *execution*. 'It pleased God to bruise him.' Salvation is of the Lord in its *application*. 'It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.' Salvation is of the Lord in its *sustaining power*. 'We are kept by the power of God through faith.' Salvation is of the Lord in its *ultimate glory*. 'He hath made us kings and priests' (Phil. 3:20-21).

4. God's *lovingkindness*. When the Bible speaks of God's wrath, it is always against sin; and when the Bible speaks of God's

love for sinners, it is always in Christ (Rom. 8:38-39; John 3:36; John 14:21; John 17:23).

5. God's *truth*. Christ is the truth. There is no knowing God except as we learn and know Christ. While God's power, glory, and majesty are seen in the creation, the attributes and character of God are only revealed in Christ. His chief glory is his goodness and grace in Christ (Exo. 33:18-19; 2 Cor. 4:3-6).

A song of love

Psalm 45

v. 1. From the very first words, the Psalmist leaves no doubt as to the subject of this Psalm. 'I speak of things pertaining to the king.' This song has 'the King,' the Lord Jesus Christ, for its only subject. Therefore, it is indeed a 'good matter;' good because 'only God is good,' and he speaks of Christ, who is the chief good; good for us because the gospel of Christ is good news to sinners (Luke 2:10-11). He says, 'My heart is bubbling up,' full and running over with his glory; therefore, My tongue is ready to put in words my love for him, his love for me, and the truth concerning his person and work.

v. 2. As though the king himself had appeared before him, the Psalmist, full of admiration and devotion, addresses his Lord. 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.' We are born; Thou art the only begotten Son. We are children of dust; Thou art the Lord from heaven. We are darkness; Thou art light. We are empty; in thee dwelleth all fullness. 'Grace is poured into thy lips.' Grace is treasured up in him, and he is the fountain of all grace (Col. 2:9-10). Outside of Christ, there is no grace. Also, it can be said, 'Grace is poured from thy lips' (Heb. 1:1-2). When Christ, the *Word* of God, opens his lips as our surety, prophet, priest, and king, grace is poured into our souls, living, saving, abundant grace. One word from him turned Saul of Tarsus into an apostle, a harlot into a repentant believer, and a publican into a prince. 'Therefore God hath blessed thee forever.' Calvin writes, 'Because God hath blessed thee.' It is true that God has blessed our Mediator as a reward for his love and labor, and he deserves the recompense; but the great reason for his beauty, his grace, and his salvation is that he is blessed forever of the Father, Who put all things in him (John 3:35; Eph. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:30).

vv. 3-4. What is 'thy sword'? It is his word (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). By his word the worlds were created and are governed. By his word sinners are slain and conquered. By his word his enemies are defeated. 'O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.' Thou art almighty and so, able to make good on all that thou speakest, and to make your word of precept, promise, and condemnation effectual in all that it is sent to do (Isa. 46:10-11; Num. 23:19). The holy war in which he is engaged is the cause of 'truth, meekness, and righteousness;' and his gospel (his sword) will turn our error to truth, our pride to meekness, and our sinfulness to his righteousness! Are these not 'terrible,' or a better word, 'tremendous' things? (Psalm 65:1-5.)

v. 5. 'Thine arrows are sharp.' Our Lord uses no blunted sword nor pointless darts. His word is always effectual and can strike those near or far with equal success. He aims for the heart of his enemies, not just their heads, so they are brought to fall at his feet in worship and love (Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:21). The arrows of his judicial wrath are sharp, but the arrows of subduing grace are the sharpest of all (John 6:37; John 10:16).

vv. 6-7. The Apostle Paul chose these words to identify and magnify our great prophet and priest. To the Son, Jesus Christ, the Father says, 'thy throne, O God, is forever.' Christ is God (John 1:1; John 10:30; Acts 20:28). The reason why his throne is forever and the sceptre of his kingdom is righteousness, justice, and truth is because he is God. 'Thou lovest righteousness.' He showed this in casting Adam from the garden, in all his dealings with Israel and the Old Testament people, and in working out a perfect righteousness for his people (Rom. 3:19-26); and he will show it at the last day in wrath. Because of who Christ is and what he has done, he is anointed above all (Col. 1:14-18; Phil. 2:9-11).

v. 8. 'The garments' are Christ's offices, his honors, his righteousness. He is clothed with righteousness, honor, and majesty (Isa. 59:17; Psalm 104:1) and his garments smell not of blood and battle but of sweet perfume 'in them that are saved,' but that holy odor is offensive to those

who perish (2 Cor. 2:14-16). The 'ivory palaces' are his heavenly abode, where he is made glad in the presence of the Father and by the faith of his saints (Isa. 53:11; Luke 15:7).

vv. 9-12. The church of the Lord Jesus shares his honor and happiness. He sets her in the place of dignity 'upon thy right hand' and clothes her with the best, the priceless, and the beautiful. Though some may have been paupers or princesses, yet all are in his bride at his right hand. They 'forget their own people and houses' and look not back to Sodom or Jerusalem because 'he is their Lord and they worship him.' Her beauty is his comeliness (Ezek. 16:11-14).

vv. 13-15.

(1) The bride's new name is 'the king's daughter' because she is born of God and she is espoused to the Son of God.

(2) The bride's character is 'all glorious within' because of Christ who dwells in her.

(3) The bride's 'clothing and raiment' is wrought of gold of holiness and the needlework of his perfect righteousness, his atoning death and perfect obedience.

(4) The bride's 'companions' are all the redeemed of all ages.

(5) The bride's home going is 'to be brought into the king's palace' (John 14:1-3).

(6) The bride's reception shall be 'with gladness and rejoicing,' no secret entrance but a triumphant and joyful acclaim (Psalm 24:7-10).

vv. 16-17. The ancient fathers, such as Moses, Abraham, and Isaac, are all gone; but their children and grandchildren are made kings and priests. And the name of Christ is remembered, exalted, and magnified in all generations and among all nations. 'Therefore, shall thy people praise thee forever and ever.'

'Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head in death,
And be his honors sounded forth

By all things that have breath.’

The sinner's prayer

Psalm 51

William Plumer said, 'This Psalm is fitly called the sinner's guide.' Luther said, 'No other Psalm is oftener sung nor prayed in the church.' Thomas Chalmers said, 'This is the most deeply affecting of all the psalms, and I am sure the one most applicable to me.' There are many ways to consider the Psalm; but its being the sinner's prayer, let us look at ten pleas or petitions made in this prayer.

1. 'Have mercy upon me, O God' (v. 1). Even before David mentions his sins, he appeals to the mercy of God. We do not deserve to be pardoned nor forgiven; we deserve to be damned, so David does not ask for justice, but mercy. Pardon of sin must ever be an act of sovereign mercy (Exo. 33:18-19). Mercy is born of God's lovingkindness (1 John 4:10). Grace is God giving us what we *do not* deserve, and mercy is God NOT giving us what we *do* deserve.

2. 'Blot out my transgressions, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies' (v. 1), the multitude of our transgressions from the womb to the grave. But here is comfort—our God is plenteous in redemption and has multitudes of mercies. David pleads guilty of many sins but asks that the record be obliterated, erased, blotted out, so that nothing remains. He desires not only pardon, but that there shall not be any remembrance of sin forever (Isa. 43:25; Isa. 44:21-22; Heb. 10:17).

3. 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from MY sin' (v. 2). Sin defiles soul and body, makes us foul and filthy, separates us from God, and corrupts even our good works (Isa. 64:6). Laws, works, and legal washings will not help; God himself must wash us in his own blood (Acts 20:28). David pleads to be washed and cleansed. Richard Baker says, 'Washing has to do with the work a-doing, and cleansing with the work

done. Washing is done by the Lord; cleansing is the result.’ Most people are concerned about the punishment of sin; David is concerned about the guilt of it. In Verse 4 David acknowledges that his sins are against God, justifies God in condemning him, and clears the name of God of any injustice when he is judged. This is true conviction and repentance.

4. ‘Make me to know wisdom’ (v. 6). True wisdom and understanding of the righteousness of God, the nature of sin, and the necessity of regeneration and the new birth are essential to faith, forgiveness, and salvation.

Our sins are against God, and he must be just and punish sin. ‘He is a just God and a Saviour’ (Isa. 45:21-22). Christ's life and death in our stead enable God to be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:25-26).

We were born in sin (v. 5); sin is our nature. Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked; therefore, only the Spirit of God can teach us this truth and bring us to own it by giving us life and a new heart (v. 6). The wisdom of God in the inward part is Christ, Who is made unto us wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30; John 6:44-45). We see the wisdom and power of God in the cross of substitution (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

5. ‘Purge me with hyssop’ (v. 7). This is what the publican prayed, ‘Let thy blood be propitiation for me on the mercy-seat.’ Let the sin-offering purge my sin, and I shall be whiter than the snow (Heb. 10:11-14). All blood sacrifices sprinkled and offered in the Old Testament point to Christ, the Lamb of God (Heb. 1:3). Here is faith in Christ's atonement, its power and efficacy.

6. ‘Make me to hear joy and gladness’ (vv. 8-9). There is no greater misery than the guilt and fear of sin before God, and there is no greater joy than the joy of forgiveness and acceptance in Christ. He says, ‘Lord, you speak peace, joy, and gladness to my heart;’ for faith, assurance, and joy spring only from God. Set the bones which you have broken in revealing my iniquities by blotting them out and being reconciled to me. Then I shall know joy and gladness.

7. 'Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me' (v. 10). Sin has so destroyed us that the Creator must come and, out of the death, darkness, and ashes, create a new heart, a new nature, and a right spirit (Eph. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). David did not pray, 'Make my old heart clean;' he was too experienced in the helplessness and hopelessness of the old nature (Jer. 13:23). None but God can create a new heart or a new earth. 'Salvation is of the Lord' (Jonah 2:9). What a complete prayer in two sentences! 'Create' what was not there and 'renew' what is there but in constant need of renewing.

8. 'Cast me not away from thy presence' (v. 11). Do not throw me away as unprofitable and worthless; banish me not from thy presence like Cain. Don't give me over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:24-28). Thy Spirit is the spirit of life, light, and truth. 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.' Permit me to be among those who share thy love, if only I keep the door (Psalm 84:10). 'Lord, if you will, you can make me whole' (Matt. 8:1-2).

9. 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation' (v. 12). This sinner had known the joy of the Lord, but through sin he had lost that joy and longed for its return. Joy always follows pardon; it is presumption to think otherwise. None but God can forgive, give joy, or restore it. 'Then I will teach others thy ways' (v. 13). Huntingdon said, 'The degree S.S., or sinner saved, is more needful to teach others than an M.A. or a D.D.' A man cannot tell what he does not know anymore than he can come back from where he has not been.

10. 'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God' (v. 14). He had been the means of the death of Uriah, a faithful friend. Honest penitents do not cover their sins but own them before God as they are. David's sins, whatever they were, are no more heinous than ours, committed in the heart. 'Open my lips to show forth thy praise. The formality of sacrifices and burnt offerings do not please thee' (v. 16).

'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit . . . and a contrite heart' (because of sin), and a heart of faith in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God which taketh away our sins (Acts 20:20-21). Can you pray 'the sinner's

prayer,' which may be (as some say), 'Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner,' but contains all that David has set forth in this Psalm? (Rom. 10:13).

My rock and my salvation

Psalm 62

If (by the grace of God) I can learn a two-fold lesson, my attitude will so totally change that I can never be the same again. That lesson is found in verse one of this Psalm—‘My soul waiteth upon God’ and ‘From him cometh my salvation.’

1. *What* do I do? I wait as a disciple on my Lord's command. I wait as a bondsman at my master's feet. I wait as clay, submissive and surrendered in the potter's hand (Rom. 9:20-23).

2. On *whom* do I wait? I wait on the sovereign, all-wise Lord, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:9-12), on my heavenly Father, who loves me and works all things together for my good (Rom. 8:28).

3. *How* do I wait? I wait ‘truly,’ or sincerely and silently. I wait only upon him. Note the repeated use of the word ‘only’ in Verses 2, 5, and 6.

4. *What are the results* of my seeking, looking, and waiting upon God? ‘From him cometh my salvation’ from the law's curse, from the judgment of sin, from the sting of death, and from all condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

vv. 2 and 6. ‘He only is my rock and my salvation.’ This is the sum and substance of the Bible. I can find in the scripture no other doctrine than ‘salvation is of the Lord.’ The ‘salvation of the righteous is of the Lord’ (Jonah 2:9; Psalm 3:8; Psalm 37:39; 2 Thess. 2:13). Moses exhorted the people to ‘stand still (wait) and see the salvation of the Lord.’ It pleased the Lord to make us his people (1 Sam. 12:22); it pleased the Lord to bruise Christ in our stead (Isa. 53:10); it pleased the Lord to reveal Christ in us (Gal. 1:15); it pleased the Lord by the gospel to save those who believe (1 Cor. 1:21). He only is our rock and refuge! That, rock (typically

and literally) is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4; Isa. 28:16). Christ is our defense against all charges and condemnation (Rom. 8:33-34), for he of God is made unto us all we need (1 Cor. 1:30).

‘I shall not be greatly moved;’ moved maybe, but not removed! We are like anchored ships that often swing with the tides and winds but are never swept away because we are anchored on the rock, Christ Jesus (Heb. 6:19-20).

vv. 3-4. The believer is never without enemies (Eph. 6:11-13; 1 Peter 5:8-9) . It will be well to remember this. But, like David, it is best to begin with God, our rock and defense, and then to confront the enemy. Make sure of your relationship with the Lord before dealing with the enemy. These enemies are real, but they are defeated and marked for destruction, as a bowing wall and a tottering fence which shall collapse in due time.

What is the *goal* of the enemy? To bring the believer down from his excellency, which is his standing in Christ—his love for, dependence upon, and total rest in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3-6; Eph. 2:4-9). This is the error of Rome, the error of Arminianism, and the error of the modern cults, to mix works with grace, man's merit with the perfect righteousness of Christ, and to preach salvation conditional on the will and works of man rather than on the will and work of our Lord (John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:15-16; Titus 3:5-6).

What are *the weapons* of the enemy? ‘They delight in lies.’ They say, ‘God has done all that he can do and now it is up to you. Take the first step and God will meet you. God helps those who help themselves.’ Flattery and sentiment fall from their lips. They pretend to bless, while they totally destroy a man's hope for life. They cry, ‘Peace, peace, when there is no peace.’

vv. 5-8. Amid all these trials, conflicts, and attacks from the enemies of his soul, the Psalmist returns to his original hope as the dove returned to the ark. ‘My soul, wait thou only upon God.’ The battle is his, and he only can justify me. ‘My expectation is from him.’ In him dwelleth all fullness and all blessings; he will exalt me in due time (Psalm 27:14). ‘He only is my rock and my salvation.’ My righteousnesses are filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). ‘He

only is my defense.’ ‘If God be for me, WHO can be against me?’ (Rom. 8:31-32). What does it matter who is against me? I am complete in him. ‘Trust in him at all times.’ In times of prosperity or poverty I know how to abound and to be abased (Phil. 4:12-13). In times of fellowship or loneliness he will never leave me. In times of health, sickness, or death he is my refuge. ‘I will pour out [my] heart before him.’ His heart is set upon us; let us set our hearts on him. Turn your vessel upside down and let your inmost desires, thoughts, sorrows, and joys be poured out like water before the Lord. Hide nothing from him, because nothing can be hid from him. We will learn to pray when we learn to be open and honest before our Lord.

v. 9. Men of low degree and men of high degree are alike; they are all vanity and lies! The masses and majority are not to be trusted nor followed. The elite, educated, and intelligent only promise what they cannot produce and condemn what they do not understand. Wretched is the man who puts his trust in either the multitude or the leaders. They are all lighter than vanity. Have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3).

v. 10. Trust not in oppression, poverty, nor persecution. A man is not a child of God because he is poor and in need, nor is he a Christian because he has to work hard and eke out a living for his family the hard way. If your riches increase and life becomes easy, don't mistake this prosperity for the favor of God; it may be Satan's way of putting you at ease. Set not your heart upon worldly gain, for many evils are there—idolatry, covetousness, forgetfulness of God, and neglect of worship (Jer. 9:23-24).

vv. 11-12. God needs to speak but once; but I have heard this twice (with my ear and with my heart, in the letter and in the spirit) that power, salvation, and spiritual blessings come only from God in Christ. Also unto our God belongs mercy (Psalm 130:7), and he will render to every man what that man deserves. Those out of Christ shall be judged according to their works. Those in Christ shall be judged according to his works, which are theirs by imputation (Rom. 4:21-25).

Our Lord's sufferings for our sins

Psalm 69

C. H. Spurgeon said, 'This is a Psalm of David, but if any inquire of whom speaketh the Psalmist this? of himself or some other man? I would reply, of himself and some other man—the Lord Jesus Christ.' This is indeed a Messianic psalm! No portion of the Old Testament Scriptures is more often quoted in the New Testament, with the exception of Psalm 22.

v. 1. 'Save me, O God.' His enemies mocked him, crying, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save' (Matt. 27:42). As our substitute, bearing our sins, he could not save himself, but rather offered up himself (Heb. 7:27; Heb. 9:14) ; and he was heard (Heb. 5:7-9). 'The waters are come into my soul.' Our Lord's chief sufferings were his soul agony (Isa. 53:9-10).

v. 2. Our Lord calls his state under our sins 'deep mire' and 'deep waters.' Sin is as mire (Jer. 38:6) for its filthiness and its hold on men. In deep water there is no place to stand, and the waters go over the head. The judgment of God is described as waters that overflow (Isa. 28:17). Our Lord is not a faint-hearted weakling; his sufferings were real and terrible.

v. 3. He wept as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He prayed until he sweat great drops of blood. His throat was dry and parched under the fires of God's wrath against our sins, and he cried, 'I thirst.' He looked and waited for his God; but he was left alone, crying, 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

v. 4. 'They hated me without a cause' (John 15:25). From the cradle to the cross his enemies were without number. They were very many and very mighty. All earth and all hell despised him (Isa. 53:3; Acts 4:27), all without cause, for there was no sin nor fault in him. 'I restored that which

I took not away.' Though innocent, he was treated as guilty. The sheep went astray, but the shepherd was smitten; and on their behalf he restored the honor of God's justice and law and their happiness (Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Psalm 23:3).

v. 5. David might truly say this but not our Lord, unless he refers to our sins imputed and laid to his charge. He was made to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

v. 6. It seems to some that he prays that true believers will not be ashamed, confounded, and confused by his crucifixion and death; but it may be better understood, 'because I, for their sakes, do bear their shame, let them, for my sake, never be ashamed nor confounded' (1 Peter 2:6; Rom. 9:33).

vv. 7-8. Christ died for our sake, to redeem us to God; but he was set forth to be a mercy-seat, to declare God's righteousness, and to enable God to be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:25-26). Even his brothers did not believe him (John 7:5).

vv. 9-10. Some men are eaten up with pride, covetousness, and hatred; but the master-passion of Christ was his Father's glory, will, and truth (John 2:13-17). The hatred of men for God fell upon Christ, and everything he did or said only increased their reproach.

vv. 11-12. Being identified with us in our poverty, laying aside his eternal glory and clothing himself in flesh, humbling himself and being found in fashion as a man should have won him acclaim and pity; but it only increased their mockings and revilings (Matt. 27:27-30). From the judges and leaders who sat in the gate to the drunkards on the street, all men by nature hated the living God (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7).

vv. 13-18. While they mocked and scoffed, our Lord prayed to the Father. Here in these verses is his prayer for victory and deliverance according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, according to thy lovingkindness, and

according to the truth and promises of thy salvation! He speaks as our representative, and as such his deliverance and redemption are ours!

v. 19. Here are three words that describe our Lord's sufferings for us and the contempt poured upon him because of our sins—reproach, shame, and dishonor. We deserve all three, but he bore them in our place (Isa. 53:4-6).

vv. 20-21. Our Lord died with a broken heart (John 19:34-35). Reproach, loneliness, and heaviness broke his heart. There is no suffering quite like it. In his thirst, they gave him gall and vinegar (Matt. 27:34, 48). Someone wrote, 'Whatever he sought for, there was none; our Captain fought the field alone. As soon as the Chief to battle led, that moment every soldier fled.'

vv. 22-28. The Lord calls for judgment upon rebels and a judicial curse upon the despisers of the Lord's Christ. Their ceremonies, tables, and types, which should reveal his redemptive work, only serve as a stumbling-block and a trap (Rom. 11:9-10). A veil is upon their eyes (2 Cor. 3:15). They persecute him whom the Lord hath smitten (Isa. 53:4, 10). Iniquity is added to their iniquity; for they are now guilty of the blood of his Son, and they are blotted out of the book of God (Exo. 32:33).

vv. 29-30. Our Lord returns to prayer and praise. 'I am poor now but shall be exalted' (Phil. 2:8-11). Even in the depths of agony I will praise and magnify him.

vv. 31-32. God never found pleasure nor satisfaction in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, but he is fully pleased and reconciled through Christ's sufferings (Heb. 10:5-7). Those who are taught of God rejoice in him; and they live, who seek God in Christ.

vv. 33-35. Believers, in their own eyes, are poor and needy prisoners; but because of our Lord's redemptive work, they are in God's sight sons of God, complete in Christ (Col. 2:9-10). He will hear, despise not, save, and build them on that Rock.

v. 36. They are the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). They are heirs of God (Rom. 8:17). They love his name (1 John 5:1-2). They dwell in God (1 John 4:15).

Mercy and truth are met together

Psalm 85

Our Lord told the disciples, ‘All things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the *Psalms*, concerning me.’(Luke 24:44). In preparing these lessons on ‘Preaching Christ From the Old Testament,’ it would be impossible to omit this Psalm, if only for Verse 10. God's mercy and truth, righteousness and peace meet only in Christ.

v. 1. The author of this Psalm speaks of the past mercy and favor of God to the land of Israel and the people of Israel. The Lord brought them out of bondage and captivity. But all believers are the true sons of Jacob and seed of Abraham (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:7, 28-29). The land of the Lord is the kingdom of Christ, the church of Christ is true Israel and sons of Jacob (Mal. 3:6), and the captivity out of which he has brought us is the bondage of sin (Gal. 3:10, 13). This is a Psalm of victory and rejoicing of all believers of all ages and nations.

vv. 2-3. In these verses four things stand out prominently.

1. The author of all spiritual blessings. ‘Thou hast. . .;’ ‘*Thou* hast been favorable;’ ‘*Thou* hast brought back the captivity. . .;’ ‘*Thou* hast forgiven. . .;’ ‘*Thou* hast covered. . .;’ ‘*Thou* hast taken away. . .’ Salvation is of the Lord in its entirety, from its origination in eternity past to its consummation in glory (Rom. 8:29-30).

2. The people who are so blessed are his people. ‘Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated’ (Rom. 9:11-16). They are his people by divine choice (John 6:37-39), his people by divine purchase (Acts 20:28; John 10:11), and his people by a divine call (1 Cor. 1:26-30).

3. The blessing of his covenant. 'Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people;' not without price, for he was bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53: 4-6), and our iniquity was laid on him. The reference here is to the scapegoat of Leviticus 16:20-22. 'Thou hast covered all their sin.' God set forth Christ to be a mercy-seat and a covering for sin, as the blood was sprinkled upon the mercy-seat of old (Lev. 16:15-16; Rom. 3:25).

4. The extent of these blessings. 'Thou hast forgiven all their sin (1 John 1:7; Heb. 10:17) and thou hast taken away all thy wrath (Rom. 5:1, 8:1).

v. 4-5. In salvation there is the removal of God's wrath upon us (2 Cor. 5:19), and there is the removal of our enmity toward him. 'Be ye reconciled to God' (2 Cor. 5:20). Both are accomplished by the power of God (Psalm 110:3). The wrath of God is turned from us by the obedience and death of Christ, and our enmity is turned away in regeneration by the Holy Spirit giving us a new heart to love God (Rom. 5:5).

v. 6. When we were dead men, like Ezekiel's bones, God did revive us and give us life in Christ. 'Wilt thou not revive us again?' and again? for we are in constant need of refreshing and renewal by his Spirit. 'That thy people may rejoice in thee;' never in themselves nor their doings (Phil. 3:3). We can find at all times ten thousand reasons to rejoice in the Lord and in his mercy.

v. 7. 'Show us thy mercy, O Lord.' It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed (Lam. 3:22-26). All is mercy from first to last. Mercy passed by us in our blood and said, 'Live.' Mercy covered our nakedness with his robe of righteousness. Mercy washed away our sins and gave us repentance and faith. Mercy keeps us in the way and will not let us go until mercy has wrought its perfect work, conforming us to his image. 'Grant us thy salvation.' It is thy salvation. The plan is his, the provision is his, the application is his, the sustaining power is his, and the consummation is his. It is all of grace! The work whereby a dead, defiled

sinner is lifted from the dunghill, washed, and made ready for the presence of the Lord is of God and of him only. Grant to us that perfect salvation!

v. 8. I will hear thy word, O Lord! O, how vital is the word of God to his people! By his word he speaks peace in Christ. His word is the foundation of faith (Rom. 10:17), the source of comfort, the means of growth (1 Peter 2:2), and the children's bread. Let us not turn again to sin nor to the beggarly elements, but find rest and all we need in him. There is no provision, protection against sin and apostasy nor daily peace to be found anywhere except in his word!

v. 9. Our Lord is always near and with them that fear him, no matter the circumstances. He will never leave nor forsake us (Phil. 1:6), that he may be glorified and his glory may dwell in his kingdom.

v. 10. O, what a declaration! What good news! These four divine attributes parted, as far as we are concerned, at the fall of Adam. Mercy was inclined to save men and peace could not be his enemy; but truth must order the death of the rebel, for 'God will by no means clear the guilty,' and righteousness demands perfect obedience to every jot and tittle of God's holy law. All of the divine attributes are in Christ, for he is very God of very God; but mercy and truth met in Christ on our behalf, and righteousness and peace kissed each other at Calvary. God is a just God *and* a Saviour! In the obedience and death of Christ for sinners, God is enabled to be both just and justifier (Rom. 3: 25-26).

v. 11. Promises which lie unfulfilled like buried seeds shall spring up in full view (Heb. 11:13), and God's righteousness shall rest upon his people like an open window in heaven. The person of Christ explains this verse most sweetly. In him truth is found in our humanity (Isa. 53:1), and his deity brings righteousness to us from heaven (2 Cor. 5:21).

vv. 12-13. Every good and perfect gift is from him, and nothing good will he withhold from his people. He has willed our eternal good and is working all things together to accomplish it (Rom. 8:28). The

righteousness by which we are justified and accepted in Christ has gone before, and he has set us in the steps our Lord already walked.

The victory of the Messiah

Psalm 91

Many believe this Psalm was written by Moses because the Psalm preceding it is credited to him. Others believe that David is the author and the person spoken of is Solomon, his son. But this Psalm certainly speaks of the Messiah and contains promises of protection and safety to him, as man, from diseases, evil spirits, and wicked men, under the care of angels. Satan referred to this Psalm on the mount of temptation (Matt. 4:6). This is truly the victory of the Messiah and of everyone that is in him, represented by him, and perfected by him. Every believer is always under Divine care and protection (1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 37:5; Heb. 1:14).

1. The believer's dwelling place

vv. 1-2. 'The secret place of the most High' is within the veil (Heb. 6:19-20) in the very presence of God, seated with Christ (Eph. 2:5-6). By the righteousness and blood of Christ, we not only come in to God's presence but we dwell there, never to leave (Heb. 10:19-22). We abide under the shadow or protection of the Almighty God, like small chicks under the wings of the mother hen (Psalm 17:8-9). No harm can come to us because the Lord is 'our refuge and fortress.' Even the gates of hell shall not prevail (John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35-39). Our assurance and confidence is only in him as described by four names!

We come reverently only through the blood of Christ for 'He is the Most High' and 'holy.'

We rest in him because 'He is the Almighty and sovereign.'

We rejoice in his salvation because 'He is the Lord, Jehovah.'

We trust him as 'my God;' everything is here because he is my God (Col. 2:9-10).

2. The believer's confidence

vv. 3-8. Someone said, 'I love the shalls and wills of God's word.' There is no maybe, perhaps, nor uncertainty connected with the purpose and promises of God in Christ Jesus (Psalm 23:6; John 10:16).

v. 3. The Lord Jesus shall deliver us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), from the penalty of sin (Rom. 8:1), from the wrath of God (Rom. 8:33-34), and from all enemies, even invisible enemies (6-12).

v. 4. The Lord Jesus shall cover us with his spotless Robe of Righteousness, his glorious wedding garment (2 Cor. 5:3). His WINGS are both for healing and hiding, and his truth (his word of promise and faithfulness) will turn to flight every enemy (Luke 4:1-13).

vv. 5-6. Because Christ is our redeemer, we shall not fear the terrors of the night—neither men nor devils; we shall not fear the arrows of the day-wars, floods, accidents, nor earthquakes; we shall not fear the pestilence that walketh in darkness—diseases, plagues, and demons; we shall not fear the destruction that wasteth at noonday—the final judgment of God upon the earth. He hath hedged about his children (Job 1:10); and neither devils, men, nor death can touch one without his permission.

vv. 7-8. Evil may be near the child of God, but not upon him. The plague that killed the firstborn in Egypt was near the Israelites, but it entered not into them. God's people shall have trials, tribulations, and infirmities in the flesh, but only by the will of the Father. They shall die, but only when he decrees, never as the result of any other will or reason. With our eyes we shall see the judgments of God upon an evil race and shall agree with his judgments and praise him for our deliverance.

3. *The believer's redeemer and refuge*

vv. 9-13. Here is the only reason that we dwell within the veil, that we are delivered from all condemnation and judgment, that we are covered with his righteousness, hidden under his protective wings, and have no fear of terror here or hereafter—‘because thou, Lord, art my refuge and my dwelling place.’ There is no safety nor security anywhere nor in anyone but Christ Jesus—not in religion, law, works, nor morality—only in Christ (Gal. 2:21; Gal. 3:11-13; Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 5:1-2). It is true ‘thou hast made the Lord thy refuge and habitation,’ willingly and sincerely; but we love him because he loved us; we come to him because he came to us; we have made him our Lord and refuge because he made us his people and called us to faith (John 15:16; John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:15-16). To God be the glory!

The angels (created spirits, made by the Lord, and are at his command) are ministering spirits to his people. They encamp about them and are committed to their care by him who is Lord of heaven and earth.

4. *The believer's promises*

vv. 14-16. Here is the Lord God himself speaking of his chosen ones. ‘Because he hath set his love upon me;’ not because they deserve mercy; but with all their imperfections, they do love the Lord (John 21:17). There is first his love for us without our love, then there is our love for his love, which is genuine and sincere. ‘Therefore;’ there is always a ‘because’ and a ‘therefore’ in law and grace. Because we sinned, therefore we die! Because Christ died, therefore we live! Because we believe and love Christ, therefore—

‘[I will] *deliver him*’ from sin, Satan, and wrath.

‘I will *set him on high*’ in Christ.

‘I will *answer him*,’ when he prays and when he seeks mercy.

‘I will *deliver him in time of trouble*’ (Rom. 8:28).

‘I will *honor him*’ (John 12:26).

‘I will *satisfy him* with long life,’ not here necessarily, but with eternal life.

‘[I will] *show him my salvation*’ (Exo. 33:18-19; 2 Cor. 4:6).

Bless the Lord, O my soul

Psalm 103

A few things that are worthy of notice at the beginning of our study are:

1. Most agree that this is a Psalm of David's latter years, for there is a clear sense of the frailty of this life, there is a keener awareness of sin, and there is a high priority placed on mercy and forgiveness.

2. Not one petition nor request occurs throughout the entire Psalm. This is another sign of spiritual maturity—more praise and less petition, more gratitude and less ‘give me.’ As we grow in grace our prayers change.

3. The name Jehovah is mentioned eleven times in 22 verses. The Psalmist kneels in adoration and praises the Lord himself. It is possible to be taken up with blessings, gifts, and benefits and fail to praise the Lord himself!

v. 1. ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul.’ This is the highest form of praise. Not just with the lips but my heart, my innermost being, my soul loves and praises the Lord. Blessed is the man who has learned to converse with himself concerning spiritual truth (Psalm 4:4; Psalm 77:6). ‘All that is within me, bless his holy name.’ Let my judgment bless him by submitting to his word. Let my imagination bless him by holy meditation. Let my affections bless him by loving what he loves. Let my desires bless him by seeking his will. Let my hope bless him by restful assurance and peace. ‘Bless his holy name.’ His name signifies his nature and attributes. I bless and rejoice in him as he is revealed in his word written and in his word incarnate. ‘Let God be God!’ The holiness of God is his chief attribute and glory. The holiness of his name is that which beautifies all that he is and does. He is a just God and a Saviour (Isa. 45:21). He is righteous and merciful (Psalm 85:10; Rom. 3:26).

v. 2. The Psalmist's praise and gratitude has four attributes.

1. It is *personal* 'my soul.'
2. It is *sincere* 'all that is within me.'
3. It is *constant* 'forget not.'
4. It is *specific* 'all his benefits.' My all praise his all!

vv. 3-5. David begins a list of his benefits.

'*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*' Forgiveness is of God, who delights to show mercy. It is *from* God, who only can forgive. It is *in* Christ, who is our ransom, redemption, and righteousness. And it is complete *with* God, who forgives *all* our iniquities (Eph. 1:7; 1 John 1:7).

'*Who healeth all thy diseases.*' The diseases of this body are the results of sin, and God will heal them when it is according to his will and when it serves his purpose; but the diseases referred to here are spiritual diseases which, like our sins, are all healed in Christ. He bore ALL our spiritual sicknesses and diseases in his body on the tree, and by his stripes we are healed forever (Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:17).

'*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*' We must die—all men do; we may die violently or in great pain—many have; but we shall never perish! Christ, our righteousness, redeems us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). Christ, our sin-offering, has redeemed us from the judgment of sin (Rom. 8:1, 33-34). Christ, our risen Lord, has redeemed us from the grave (John 11:25-26).

'*Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*' Earthly kings are crowned with material crowns of gold, silver, and diamonds, symbols of their material kingdoms which shall all pass away. We are kings and priests, crowned, dignified, and beautified with the love, mercy, and grace of God, which is his kingdom of righteousness and peace and shall never pass away. Our crowns are not of gold but glory, and our robes are royal robes of his righteousness.

'*Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things.*' No natural man is ever satisfied or at peace, for the things of this world can never satisfy the soul. But the 'good things' of Christ (John 16:15; John 3:35; Rom. 8:31, 37; 1

Cor. 3:21) are ours, and all these good things satisfy our appetites and needs so that our ‘youth is renewed.’ The youth and strength of grace are constantly renewed; and while the outward man may decay, the inward man is renewed day by day until we are carried into his presence (Psalm 17:15). God's people, even in old age, have a keen spiritual eye, an open ear to his word, and they run and are not weary (Isa. 40:31).

v. 6. Going from personal blessing to the general righteous justice and judgment of God, David declares that all injustice and oppression shall receive just retribution at the hand of God (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35).

v. 7. God made known unto Moses his way of mercy and grace in Christ (John 5:46). He did not leave Moses to discover truth for himself. God alone can reveal himself (Luke 10:22; 1 Cor. 2:9-14). The people of Israel saw less than Moses, for they beheld the ACTS of God without understanding or seeing the glory of his grace in Christ.

vv. 8-14. In these verses David rejoices in the Lord's feelings for and dealings with his chosen people in Christ. We are sinners and are always in need of his compassion and grace. His mercy forgives sin, his grace bestows favor, his longsuffering and patience give space for repentance and faith, and his abundant compassion will never fail. Why ‘hath he not dealt with us after our sin’? Is it not because he has dealt with Christ for our sins and iniquities? (1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:24). Our minds cannot comprehend his great mercy to us in Christ. It is higher than the heavens. Our sins are covered, blotted out, and removed as far from us as the east is from the west—infinity! They are remembered no more. The guilt of sin can no more return than east can become west. ‘Such pity and love as a father has to his children dear, like pity shows the Lord to all who worship him in fear.’ Our Lord also knows how and of what we are made, for he made us! He knows our weaknesses, infirmities, and flesh. He knows we are made of dust, are dust still, and will return to dust (Heb. 4:15).

vv. 15-18. Men are like the grass and the flower, which live but for a season and are soon gone; but the mercy of the Lord in his covenant of

grace in Christ Jesus is everlasting, and his righteousness shall endure forever upon those who believe (Rom. 8:16-23). Forever in glory with him is our inheritance!

v. 19-22. David closes with a grand chorus which springs from his knowledge of the boundless power and glorious sovereignty of God. His throne is fixed in the heavens; his government is over all and knows no alarm, disorder, nor surprises. He will accomplish his purpose and be glorified. Therefore, let everything that hath breath praise and bless the Lord—especially *my soul!*

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so

Psalm 107

The theme of this Psalm is thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for his goodness and his wonderful works of redemption and deliverance to the children of men (vv. 1, 8, 15, 21, 31).

Men in general do not see nor own the goodness of the Lord to sinful men, but the 'redeemed of the Lord' rejoice in his mercy and they say so! (vv. 1-2.) They have actually experienced, under Holy Spirit conviction, all that is written in this Psalm and rejoice in his special grace and mercy in delivering them (Psalm 103:1-5).

This Psalm is a vivid picture of the sinner's bondage, his troubles and sorrows in sin, his inability to find a way out, his cry unto the Lord for mercy, and God's sovereign mercy to the sinner in Christ. Each section ends with, 'He saved them out of their distresses.'

The last verse reveals the importance of the Psalm, 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord' (v. 43; 1 John 5:20.)

v. 1. 'The Lord is good.' His goodness and mercy are especially magnified in the unworthiness of their objects. His mercy is both forever and endures forever. His mercy to us in Christ preceded our call and cry and will endure despite our failures. He is good when he takes away as well as when he gives, when he wounds and when he heals, when he frowns and when he smiles. 'The Lord is good,' for there is none good but the Lord.

v. 2. Particular redemption leads to special praise. Salvation is of the Lord from its origination to its consummation; and the redeemed of the Lord acknowledge that they are what they are by the grace of God!

v. 3. We were in bondage to the law, captives of sin, under the curse, condemnation, and sentence of divine justice; and he, by his obedience

and death, redeemed us (1 Peter 1:18-21). A full atonement has been made, the price is paid, and there is no charge nor condemnation that can be laid to us (Rom. 8:31-34). He has gathered in Christ all whom he purposed to save and all whom he purchased by his blood from every nation under heaven (Rev. 5:9; Eph. 1:10-12).

vii. 4-9. Here is our fall and the lost state of men by nature: our misery and inability to find any peace or rest. We are brought to a right sense of our condition and cry to the Lord Jesus for deliverance. He hears us and delivers us out of all our distresses.

We wander '*in the wilderness*,' lost in sin; lonely, for like sheep, we have gone astray to our own way (Isa. 53:6). We 'find no place to dwell,' for there is none! God only is our dwelling-place.

'*Hungry and thirsty*;' this is Holy Spirit conviction, for God must make us willing in the day of his power (Psalm 110:3). Holy Spirit conviction of sin leads to spiritual hunger and thirst, which can only find its satisfaction in Christ,

'*Their soul fainted in them*;' there is no one to help. Like the woman with the issue of blood, we can find no help on this earth.

'*Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble*.' Not until a man really becomes lost, not until he thirsts for forgiveness and realizes that no one but God can deliver him from this lost, helpless condition will he cry unto the Lord Jesus. Peter cried, 'Lord, save me or perish.' The helpless leper (Matt. 8:1-3) cried, 'Lord, if you will you can make me clean.' The THIEF ON THE CROSS acknowledged his sin, his just condemnation, and cried for mercy.

'*He delivered them out of their distresses*.' Do you see why they give thanks? Do you see why they praise him? Do you see why they cry, 'Unto him who hath loved us and washed us from sin, unto him be the glory forever, amen'?

He delivered us out of our trouble and distresses, and also '*He led them forth by the right way*.' This is the way of righteousness in Christ Jesus (Psalm 23:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 10:1-4). He has made us righteous, holy, and unblamable that we might 'go to a city of habitation'—his

presence, his glory, his heaven! Abraham looked for that city (Heb. 11:10).

'O that men would praise the Lord,' give him the glory, own and declare that the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5-6).

'He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness.' Our Lord saves us out of our sin, and he gives us a righteousness which assures us of eternal glory: but he also, here and now, satisfies our souls with his presence, peace, rest, and joy. His daily grace is sufficient and his presence a delight. Our ultimate satisfaction will be to awake in his likeness (Isa. 26:3-4; Phil. 4:6-7; Psalm 17:15).

vv. 10-16, 17-21, 23-31. All these illustrations and pictures tell the story of God's sovereign grace to sinners in Christ. Holy Spirit conviction of sin leads to a realization of our state of misery and condemnation. In the light of God's holiness and God's word, we see our inability and the impossibility of human help, which causes us to cry in our troubles unto him 'who is able to save to the uttermost' (Heb. 7:25). He is not only willing but ABLE to save, for he has somewhat to offer (Heb. 8:1-3).

v. 32. Those who know who he is, what he has done, and where our great Lord is now will certainly exalt him, magnify his name, and give him all glory in the congregation.

vv. 33-41. God is the first cause of all things (1 Sam. 2:3-10; Job 1:21). Especially in redemption will God glorify his grace by humbling the proud and exalting the humble (James 4:6). 'He turns the rivers of the proud into a wilderness and the wilderness of the humble into standing water.'

v. 42. The righteous know this and rejoice; all others shall stop their mouths.

The King-Priest

Psalm 110

No study of Christ in the Old Testament can ignore this Psalm. Note how many times vv. 1 & 4 are referred to in the New Testament (Matt. 22:44; Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13; 5:6; 6:20; 7:17). The Old Testament reveals Jesus Christ in promise, picture, and pattern; and in the New Testament Christ comes to earth in person (Matt. 1:21-23). This Psalm is a clear revelation of the person and office of the Lord Jesus.

v. 1. 'The Lord' (the Father) 'said to my Lord' (the Son, Jesus Christ). O that we might understand just a little of the power of the word of God! 'And God said'—this is enough! All of the great works of grace are brought into being by the WORD OF GOD. Had he not spoken, there would be no manifestation of deity to us (John 1:1-4). When he speaks, nothing can change it. 'I have spoken it; I will bring it to pass' (Isa. 46:11).

David knew that the Lord our God is one God, yet he discerns between the Father and 'my Lord'—his shepherd and redeemer. Thomas uses the same term, 'My Lord and my God.' The Father sent the Son into the world as our Lord and Saviour (John 3:14-16; Gal. 4:4-5); yet, 'I and my Father are one.'

'Sit thou at my right hand,' This is an oft-quoted passage because it declares that Jesus Christ has successfully finished what he undertook to accomplish on earth—the full and complete redemption of his people (John 17:4; Heb. 10:11-14). No earthly priest ever sat down in the tabernacle, for his work was never done! Christ sits as our representative and intercessor. He sits because all is safe and there is no cause for alarm. He sits at Jehovah's right hand because omnipotence waits to accomplish his will (John 6:37-39). Every enemy will be subdued and all the elect will come to him.

v. 2. Zion is the church or true Israel. What, then, is that rod of his strength? It is the gospel illustrated by Moses' rod. It was by his rod that Moses wrought wonders, smote the Egyptians, divided the sea, and brought water from the rock. The Lord sends his gospel out of the church to call his elect. Salvation is the result of the preaching of the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 2:14-16). The Lord Jesus reigns over the willing and the unwilling (John 17:1-2), but his gospel of truth is the rod of strength that awakens dead sinners (Eph. 1: 13; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:1-3)

v. 3. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power' (1 Thess. 1:4-5). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16); and when the rod of his strength (the gospel) is preached in the power of his Spirit, his people willingly believe and embrace Christ.

The *promise* is made to Christ—'Thy people,' which were given by the Father, purchased by his blood, and called by the Spirit.

The *disposition* of his people—'shall be willing.' They are willing to turn from all idols; they are willing to forsake their own thoughts; they are willing to bow to Christ as prophet, priest, and king; they are extremely willing to receive Christ and rest only in him to redeem them.

The *character* of his people—'in the beauty of holiness.' They are arrayed in the beautiful garment of Christ's righteousness and holiness.

The *number* of his people are as the dew from the womb of the morning.

v. 4. 'Here is the heart of the Psalm and the very center and soul of our faith,' said C. H. Spurgeon; 'Our Lord Jesus is the Priest-King by the eternal oath of Jehovah.'

'The Lord has sworn.' It must be the most solemn and sure matter which leads the eternal God to swear (Heb. 6:16-20) and to add, 'and will

not change.’ It is done and done forever: Jesus Christ is the surety, priest-king, and only mediator of his people (1 Tim. 2:5; John 14:6).

Aaron and his sons were types of Christ, but with limitations (Heb. 10: 11-12). They were many; he ONE. They were men; he is the God-Man. They were only Priests; he is King-Priest. They died; he lives. Their priesthood had a beginning and an end; his is forever. They offered many sacrifices; he one. They offered animal blood; he gave his own blood. They ministered in an earthly sanctuary; he in heaven. Their sacrifices could never take away sin; his perfected forever!

Read of the appearance of Melchizedek in Gen. 14:17-20 and Heb. 7:1-4. Melchizedek's office was exceptional; none preceded nor succeeded him. He comes upon the page of history mysteriously and goes away—no birth, no pedigree, no death, and he blessed Abraham. He is called the Priest of the Most High God and the King of peace! He was seen but once, and that once was enough.

Our Lord was made a priest by the Father; no one was before him nor after him; his order begins and ends in himself. He came once into the world and left his blessings upon the believing seed, and now he sits in glory exercising that merit and power on our behalf (Heb. 10:12-14).

v. 5-7. These last three verses show the future victory and judgments of Christ over and upon his enemies. He shall not sit forever, but shall descend from heaven and destroy the works of evil.

‘The day of his wrath.’ As there is a time of grace and patience, so there is an appointed day of wrath and vengeance of our God. The wicked shall not go unpunished. ‘Their foot shall slide in due time.’

‘He shall strike through kings ... judge among the heathen (or nations) ... wound the heads of great countries.’ What are the kings of the earth when they oppose the King of kings? All nations shall yield to his power or be crushed before it. He shall wound the heads of nations, heads of movements, and Satan's head. All who will not have Christ to be their head shall be destroyed (Rom. 10:9-10; Phil. 2:9-11).

Drinking from the brook in the way pictures a confident warrior who is sure of victory, a patient warrior who, without hurry, pursues the foe, and a victorious warrior who lifts up his head triumphantly in an easy victory.

The chief cornerstone

Psalm 118:1-24

One reason why I have chosen for us to study this Psalm is because of what Martin Luther said: ‘This is my Psalm, my chosen Psalm. I love them all; I love all holy scripture, which is my consolation and my life. But this Psalm is nearest my heart and I have a particular right to call it my own. It has saved me from many a pressing danger. It is my friend, dearer to me than all the honors and powers of the earth. Would to God that all men would claim the Psalm as especially theirs.’

Another reason is because of the number of times the New Testament refers to Verse 22 (Matt.21:42; Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 2:20). If the Lord Jesus and the apostles select an Old Testament scripture and apply it to our Redeemer, it would be wise for us to consider it in our study of Old Testament pictures of Christ. This Psalm, indeed, belongs to the Messiah; and though David is the author, we hear Christ, the son of David, speak.

v. 1. ‘O give thanks unto the Lord’ for all of his mercies, temporal and spiritual, in the name of Christ (Eph. 1:3). ‘For he is good;’ goodness is his nature and essence. He is the fountain of all goodness and the author of all good things (James 1:17). ‘His mercy endureth forever.’ All of his goodness to us is mercy, for we are undeserving sinners (Exo. 33:18-19). He told Moses that his chief glory is his goodness and eternal mercies (Rom. 9:15-16).

vv. 2-4. ‘Let Israel now say that his mercy is forever;’ not only those he led from Egypt but all true Israel, both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 2:28-29). The Israel that God has chosen and redeemed in Christ rejoices in his eternal covenant mercies.

‘Let the house of Aaron now say that his mercy is forever;’ not just those priests who went into the Holy of holies with the sacrifice, but all

believers; for we are all priests of God and offer spiritual sacrifices unto him, especially praise (Heb. 10:19).

‘Let them now that fear the Lord say that his mercy is forever.’ A truly God-fearing man, conscious of his sin and need, is deeply conscious of God’s mercy! ‘There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared’ (Psalm 130:4).

v. 5. The Lord heard David in his distress and exalted him to a large place, the throne of Israel. And so he did our Messiah when he raised him from the dead and exalted him to his own right hand. He has brought all believers out of the pit into large places, such as the liberty of Christ, green pastures, still water, and ultimately God’s heaven. ‘If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.’

vv. 6-7. ‘The Lord is for me’ (Rom. 8:31). Who can be against me? Man can do nothing more than God permits. Our Messiah had no fear of all the faces of evil against him on earth or in the universe. The Messiah shall reign until the last enemy, which is death, shall be destroyed. No enemy shall succeed against his church (Rom. 8:35-39).

vv. 8-9. It is good, wise, and safe to trust only in the Lord. He is willing, able, faithful to his word, and unchanging in his promises. Man is none of these things (Phil. 3:3), not even princes nor the chief among them.

vv. 10-12. All of the neighboring nations about Judea were enemies of Israel. David fought against them and in the name and power of the Lord defeated them as he did Goliath. But these verses especially seem to refer to the Messiah (Acts 4:26-28; Isa. 53:1-3; Psalm 22:11-16). They are like bees in the number and wrath of them or like thorns which are useless and fit only to be burned, yet they cause great pain. But in the name of the Lord, in the majesty of his name, calling upon God to glorify him, for the accomplishment of his purpose, Christ shall defeat and destroy sin, Satan, the world, death, and hell (Isa. 53:10-12).

vv. 13-14. It being in the name and power of the Lord that his enemies were destroyed when they came upon him, David gives all the glory to God. ‘God helped me.’ God is my strength, my song, and my salvation. Apply this to the Messiah (Acts 2:22-24; Acts 13:28-30; Phil. 2:8-11). The Father raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand.

vv. 15-16. All Israel rejoiced when David was raised to the throne, as throughout the heavens and earth the voice of rejoicing is heard on account of the victory of Christ, our Lord (Psalm 24:7-10). ‘The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly and is exalted.’ Is this not Christ who sitteth at God’s right hand? (Psalm 110:1; Heb. 1:3.)

vv. 17-18. David knew that he must die physically as all men die, but ‘I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever’ and ‘declare the works of the Lord.’ Christ said, ‘He that believeth on me shall never die.’ Over them the second death has no power. Again this refers to the Messiah who was chastened severely for our sins (Isa. 53:4-6); but he saw no corruption and ever lives. He died but forever lives, and because he lives we shall live.

vv. 19-21. Who but Christ can require the gates of righteousness to be opened to him? By his obedience and blood the gates of the holiest are opened to him and his people (Psalm 24:3-10). Our glorious Redeemer is our sanctification, righteousness, and the author and finisher of our salvation. We are righteous in him (2 Cor. 5:21) and enter glory by him.

v. 22. No doubt who this is! Read Matt. 21:42-44 and Acts 4:10-12. He is the tried stone, the precious cornerstone, the sure foundation (Isa. 28:16), which the Jews refused. He is the fulfillment of all their tabernacle, types, and sacrifices; but they could not see (Rom. 11:7-10) and would not see!

v. 23. This stone is from the Lord God. Christ is of his appointment, and his will, and the laying, and even the rejection of that cornerstone is through his permission and will (Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27-28). His death, resurrection, and exaltation are of the Lord, and our understanding of, and

faith in him, are the Lord's doings. He is precious, marvelous and so is his grace!

v. 24. This day of redemption reigned over by the Sun of Righteousness is the day God hath made from all eternity! Those who have eyes to see and hearts to believe rejoice and are glad in it (2 Cor. 6:2).

The observer and the observed

Psalm 139

There is nothing more dishonoring to God nor a greater denial of the very character of God than for us, in his name, to pretend to be what we are not, to use words that are not sincere and which do not come from the heart, and to do works of religion for the admiration and applause of men (1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 16:15). The Lord Jehovah knows us, understands us, and is intimately acquainted with our persons, nature, and character. It is so important that we know the God who knows us! (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20; 2 Tim. 1:12.) There is nothing in us that God does not know.

v. 1. I am a very small part of this universe; yet the Lord knows me as thoroughly as if he had examined me minutely, as if he had searched me individually with his sovereign eye. This infallible knowledge has always existed, for he has searched me. It is ‘Jehovah and me.’ With him I have to do (Heb. 4:13).

vv. 2-4.

1. He knows all *my movements*—‘downsitting and uprising,’ whether I sit down to read, watch television, write, or rise up to walk, work, or play.

2. He knows all *my thoughts*—what they have been, what they are now, and what they will be.

3. He knows *my actions*—he encircles me whether awake or asleep and is acquainted with my ways, my motives, my purposes.

4. He knows *my words*—Yea, there has never been a word of my tongue that is not registered in the mind of God. He knows these words ‘altogether’—the source of them, the reason for them, and the results of them.

v. 5. God not only beholds us but he besets us. He surrounds us and hems us in. There is no escape, for he is before and behind us; and lest one thinks that his surrounding presence is distant, he adds, 'And laid thy hand upon me' (John 17:2) to deal with in mercy or judgment. (e.g. Pharaoh, Rom. 9:17; Paul, Acts 9:15.)

v. 6. The omnipotence, the omniscience, and the omnipresence of God are too wonderful for me to understand. The wisdom, the glory, the holiness of God are far too high for me. At my most enlightened height his every attribute is higher than the heavens above me (Rom. 11:33-36).

1. The attributes of God make sure his promises, yet they are too high for me.

2. The incarnation of Christ is the most complete manifestation of God, yet unexplainable.

3. Redemption by the death of Christ is the highest guarantee of our salvation, but who can explain it?

4. The resurrection will satisfy the highest hope of sinners, but no one knows the mystery of it.

5. How do you account for his inspired word? the power of his gospel? 'O, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.'

vv. 7-12. Notice how the Psalmist makes this matter personal to himself. If aware of my sin, full of fear at the presence of the most high God, desiring to escape that confrontation with his holiness, where shall I go? Where shall I flee? The highest, the deepest, the remotest are all his dwelling places. Darkness and light are both alike to God!

v. 13. God owns me! He not only observes me and knows me, but he is the owner and Lord of my innermost parts. Even hidden in my mother's womb he covered me. In my most secret parts (my reins) and in my most secret condition (yet unborn) I am under the ownership and control of my God.

vv. 14-16. I would not be dogmatic here, but it appears that David turns from the observer to the observed, from marveling at the mysteries of God to rejoicing in the mercies of God. ‘I will praise thee.’

1. ‘I am fearfully and wonderfully made,’ and this is true of me in my fourfold state: (a) created in Adam, (b) fallen in Adam and born in sin, (c) regenerated in Christ, and (d) glorified forever. Marvelous are the works of our God.

2. ‘My substance (my being, my frame, my life) was known to you when I was conceived and formed in my mother's womb’ (Jer. 1:5).

3. You saw me, loved me, knew me, and in your book of life and purpose my name was written; and my life and days were recorded even when there were none! (John 10:14-16, 27-29; Eph. 1:3-7.) God has predestinated all whom he has foreknown to be perfectly conformed to the image of his Son, before they were born or even the world began (Rom. 8:28-31). How shall a Jewish boy ever sit upon the throne in Egypt? God knows!

vv. 17-18. ‘How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!’ God knows our thoughts of ourselves and of him, and they are by nature only evil continually. But his thoughts toward us are love and grace. What can I say?

1. It is marvelous that God should even think upon us.

2. It is marvelous that his thoughts are not evil toward us.

3. It is more marvelous and precious that his thoughts toward us are more than the sand in the desert and on the ocean floor.

I go to my bed rejoicing in thy mercies to me, and when I awake ‘I am still with thee.’ Soon we shall lie down to sleep for the last time; and when we awake, we shall awake in his likeness (Psalm 17:15).

vv. 19-22. Just as surely as God will redeem his elect, he will slay the wicked! Eternal death out of Christ is as sure as eternal life in Christ.

These wicked men have two great offenses: (1) they speak against God, and (2) they carelessly use his name in vain. This is done in religion as much as in the dens of iniquity. David adds, 'God's enemies are my enemies' (Rev. 19:1-3).

vv. 23-24. I do not want to be among his enemies. I want to think reverently and thankfully of my God. I want to own, revere, and praise his name. Lord, search me, try me, redeem me, and lead me in the way of Christ, which is the way everlasting. I must be led in that way, for by nature I neither know it nor desire it.

Praise the Lord O my soul

Psalm 146

I am troubled that these great and meaningful words, ‘Praise the Lord,’ ‘Hallelujah,’ and ‘Blessed Jesus,’ have become mere flippant and meaningless, religious by-words. Men ought to exercise great care in the use of the name of our great God, lest we be guilty of taking his name in vain (Eccles. 5:1-2; Exo. 20:7).

v. 1. ‘Praise the Lord, O my soul.’ True praise is not lip service, but it is from the heart and soul (Matt. 15:7-8). Let us be certain that our lips speak the true feelings of our hearts, or let us not speak at all before the Lord. The Lord, can be (and is) praised in heart without a word being uttered. Hannah demonstrated this (1 Sam. 1:9-15; Rom. 8:26).

v. 2. ‘While I live, I will praise the Lord.’ I have good reason to praise the Lord while I live; for if I live, I live by his will and pleasure. He gives life and he sustains life (Acts 17:28; Job 14:5). I have greater reason to praise the Lord if I live spiritually. It is by his will in Christ Jesus that I am born again (John 1:12-13; Eph. 2:1). I will be able in glory to praise him as he ought to be praised, for I shall awake with his likeness (Rev. 5:9-12). ‘I will sing praises to my God while I have my being,’ which is forever!

v. 3. ‘Put not your trust in men,’ no matter how high they are in politics, economics, or religion. In man there is no help, hope, nor salvation. David discourages the people from putting any trust or confidence in him, in their nobles, in any man, or in themselves. There is no good in this flesh, and it has been proven under every circumstance. For a man to put spiritual confidence in another man is like a beggar looking to another beggar for food, or a blind man reaching for the hand of another blind man (Phil. 3:3).

v. 4. Why not put trust and confidence in men? David gives several reasons.

'His breath goeth forth' and he dies. Man is so frail and impotent that he dies for want of a little air. No matter how much he knows, has, nor how high he stands, he will die when he stops breathing.

'He returns to his earth.' The dust is his, he was made from it and he will return to it. What can one so frail give to me?

'In that day (of death) his thoughts perish.' All of his thoughts, plans, programs, and expectations perish with him. He withers like the grass and wilts like the flower, and nothing he thought remains—only the word of God abideth forever! Our thoughts are ours, not God's (Isa. 55:8).

v. 5. 'Happy (blessed) is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his help and hope.' Who is this God of Jacob?

1. He is the God of covenant mercies. 'Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated' (Rom. 9:11-13). His mercies are sure because he chose us and predestinated us to be like Christ (Rom. 8:29-31; Eph. 1:3-7).

2. He is the God of revelation. As he revealed himself to Jacob at Bethel, blessed him, and changed his name, so he reveals himself to us and gives us his name.

3. He is the Lord Jehovah, our God. He is a 'Just God and a Saviour' (Isa. 45:20-25). In Christ he can be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:25-26).

4. He is our help (a very present help in time of trouble) and our hope (Psalm 130:7).

v. 6. We cannot trust men, but we can wisely trust our God; for he who made the heavens can make a heaven for us and make us in Christ fit for heaven. He who made the earth can preserve us while we are on the earth and supply all our needs. He who made the seas and all the mysteries therein can keep us in trouble and make a way for us to pass over.

Concerning all of our circumstances we can say, 'Jehovah Shammah,' the Lord is present. 'He keepeth truth forever.' He is true to his promises, true to his covenant, to his word, and to his Son. 'I am the Lord; I change not.' 'His gifts and calling are without change.'

v. 7. We may trust our way to the Lord because 'he executeth judgment for the oppressed.' He is the just judge. What a joy to commit our care, our defense, and our future to such a ruler! Not only does he mete out justice, but 'He gives food to the hungry.' All food comes from God, both physical and spiritual food. To complete the triple blessing, David says, 'He sets the prisoner free.' Justice, bread, and liberty. If the Son shall make you free, you are free indeed! Free from sin's penalty, power, and someday from its very presence.

vv. 8-9. Note that five times the name Jehovah is repeated in vv. 7-9. It is as God, our Saviour, as God in Christ Jesus that 'He looseth the prisoners' of sin, death, and judgment; that 'He opens the eyes of the blind' to see his glory, in the face of Christ; that 'He raiseth them that are bowed down' in distress, despair, sickness, and old age; that 'He loveth the righteous' (none are righteous in themselves, but they are clothed in the righteousness of the Redeemer); and 'preserveth the strangers.' His people do not belong to this world but, like Abraham, are strangers and pilgrims. If we are enabled by his grace to see that all of God's favor, mercies, and grace toward us are in Christ Jesus, our Substitute and Saviour, we can lay hold of every promise in these verses and rest there; we can find happiness and joy. In Christ all things are yours (1 Cor. 3:21-23) and all things work together for your good; but 'the way of the wicked and the unbeliever he will turn upside down.'

v. 10. Trust in men and perish, trust in Jehovah and live; for Jehovah shall reign forever. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever and 'unto all generations.' Praise ye the Lord!

Wisdom in Christ

Proverbs 8

This chapter contains the instructions of wisdom or Christ; for he is the wisdom of God, and he is made unto us wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 John 5:20) and understanding.

v. 1. Wisdom cries or proclaims and preaches the everlasting gospel, which directs men in the way of peace, acceptance, and eternal happiness. Truth does not whisper as the tempter nor seek a dark corner, but boldly puts forth the voice of truth that all may hear. The truth of Christ will stand the light.

vv. 2-3. Our Lord's voice is heard in his word, from his prophets (Heb. 1:1), in his own person, and by his apostles and preachers. The gospel is to be proclaimed to all men from the high places ('He went up into a mountain'), between the paths or where the roads cross, at the gates of the temple, in the city, and in private homes (Mark 16:15-16).

v. 4. The good news of reconciliation and redemption in Christ Jesus is to men—fallen sons of Adam! Not just to noble men, wise men, or good men, but it is to all men (1 Cor. 1:26-31; Matt. 11:28). 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth come to the waters.' The voice of Christ is to all the sons of man (Rev. 5:9).

v. 5. The gospel of Christ Jesus, salvation by Christ, is the wisdom of God in a mystery (1 Cor. 2:7-10). It is the highest wisdom to know Christ and him crucified. All men by nature are simple and are fools without understanding of spiritual truth, but in Christ the wisdom and understanding of God's will and purpose are revealed to them (1 Cor. 1:18-24).

v. 6. The things of the gospel excel all knowledge and light (1 Cor. 12:31; Heb. 1:4; Heb. 8:6), all persons, all covenants, and all laws. They are excellent in their author, their content, and their promises. He speaks right things—agreeable to the very righteousness of God, consistent with the justice of God (Rom. 3:25-26), and manifesting all the attributes of God (Psa. 85:8-13).

vv. 7-8. His mouth speaks nothing but the truth of God (Heb. 1:1-3), for he is the truth. All the doctrines of Christ are agreeable to the scriptures and to the character of God. The gospel of Christ is called the word of truth (Eph. 1:13). The words of his mouth are agreeable to righteousness! The necessity of righteousness for eternal life, the insufficiency of man's righteousness, and the excellency of Christ's righteousness—this is the righteousness of which he speaks (Rom. 3:21-22).

v. 9. When a man's understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of God, when he is blessed of God to have ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to understand the gospel, the mysteries of the gospel are plain and right to him. The Bible is a sealed book and the gospel foolishness to all natural men, learned or unlearned, until God gives understanding (2 Cor. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 2:9-14).

vv. 10-11. The wisdom of Christ and the knowledge of God in Christ are more to be desired than all that the world can offer. Nothing can be even slightly compared with the riches of God in Christ (Heb. 11:24-26).

v. 12. All the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and judgment dwell in Christ. He knows the hearts of men, their thoughts, schemes, and devices. He knows the wiles and craftiness of Satan and makes them known to his people, so that they are not deceived (Matt. 24:24).

v. 13. The fear and reverence of the Lord make his people to hate evil, even when it is found in themselves, especially pride and arrogance (Prov. 3:7; Prov. 16:18; Prov. 6:16-17). A froward mouth speaks things contrary to the truth, to the gospel, and to the good of his people.

vv. 14-16. These words are all of Christ! He is the counsel of God and the Counselor (Isa. 9:6). He is wisdom and understanding, the fountain, author, and giver of understanding. He has all strength, power, and authority (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2). By him all things consist, exist, and are held together. Even kings, princes, judges, and magistrates rule by his permission and pleasure; and they are accountable to him (Rom. 13:1; Prov. 21:1).

v. 17. Christ loves those who love him, for he loved them before they loved him, and they love him because he loved them (1 John 4:10, 18). Those who seek Christ are those who see their need of Christ and know the worth and glory of Christ. They shall seek him early and find him.

vv. 18-21. True riches and the honor that comes from God are found in our Redeemer; all else fades away with the fashion of this world. ‘I lead them’ in the paths of righteousness or as a shepherd leads his sheep, that those who love him shall inherit substance, that is, the reality of life, glory, and riches as opposed to the vain, shadowy, temporary things of this life.

vv. 22-31. Read these verses carefully and note the eternality of the Lord Jesus Christ, his glory and majesty, his oneness with the Father, and the affection the Father has for him (John 3:35). If one can grasp the person, power, position, and glory that Christ has with the Father, he can rest and hope with great assurance for the glory that shall be ours in him (John 17:20-24).

vv. 32-34. Now therefore, with all this in mind—(1) Hear my voice and receive my words (John 6:68). ‘To whom shall we go?’ He has the words of life. (2) Blessed is the man that hears and refuses not his gospel (Rom. 4:7-8; Psalm 65:4). (3) Blessed is the man who hears me and waits at the school doors to go in first to hear Christ, the teacher, and to sit at his feet as Mary of old.

vv. 35-36. Oh, the happiness of those who find him, and who can tell the misery of those who do not!

The conclusion of the whole matter

Ecclesiastes 1 & 2

The principal doctrine of these chapters is that the world and all things in it and of it are vain things. ‘The fashion of this world passeth away’ (1 Cor. 7:31). Our Lord said, ‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?’ (Mark 8:36). What remains of this world (its labors, its glory, its relationships, its titles of honor, its wealth) after a man is dead? Nothing at all! These all die with him. He goes naked out of this world as he came into it.

(Eccles. 1:12) Solomon was God's preacher first and king of Israel second. Being the preacher, he was qualified to teach and instruct others; and being the king, he did not lack for money, power, nor opportunity to search into and participate in all that the world afforded. If there were anyone who could speak first-hand of the vanities of the world and the true riches of God, it was the preacher-king, Solomon (1 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 4:29-31).

(Eccles. 1:17-18) ‘I gave my heart to seek and search out wisdom.’ He made himself master of the arts and sciences; he got knowledge of trades and vocations: he studied politics, philosophy, education, and history. He pursued human wisdom; not just superficial knowledge, but he penetrated into the depths of all that men can know.

His conclusion? ‘Behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit.’ ‘In much wisdom is much grief.’ The more a man knows, the more he would know, and the more sensible he becomes of his ignorance and the insufficiency of such knowledge to make him happy. All that worldly knowledge and wisdom can do is cause vexation of spirit and promote grief and sorrow. The wisdom of men is foolishness with God and only serves to take a man farther from God and promote misery of soul.

(Eccles. 2:1-3) Solomon reasoned within himself that since he could not find happiness in natural wisdom, he would seek it in pleasure. Sordid lusts and sensual pleasures are not meant here; for Solomon was too wise and too godly a man to indulge in low, lewd behavior. No particulars are given, but it is reasonable that he decided to give himself to laughter, entertainment, foolishness (taking nothing seriously), and feasting. By ‘giving himself to wine,’ he does not mean drunkenness, but giving himself to the so-called ‘good life’ of banquetry, entertaining, living luxuriously, and keeping back nothing that would give his flesh pleasure and comfort (1 Kings 4:22-23).

His conclusion? ‘Behold this also is vanity.’ He said of laughter, entertainment, and pleasure that it is mad and what good does it do? There is no solid and substantial happiness nor lasting peace in any of it. It is a road that has no end and a hunger and thirst that is never satisfied.

(Eccles. 2:4-11) Solomon then turned to ‘great works.’ He did not spend his time with small projects nor trifling things. Being the richest, wisest, and most powerful man in the world, he made GREAT works. His houses, his gardens and orchards, his lakes, his treasures, his staff of servants, and his orchestras would be the envy of any person who ever lived (vv. 9-10). ‘So I was great, wise, and wealthy: then I looked on all these things and on all my labor and behold! All was vanity and vexation of spirit.’ There was no real profit in any of it!

(Eccles. 2:12-23) Wisdom is better than foolishness: but the wise man, like the fool, dies and leaves it all behind. There is no remembrance of the wise nor the great; they all die alike. Therefore, I hated life, I hated my labor; for in itself, it is vanity and affords no peace nor rest. Here is the conclusion of the whole matter. There is an answer and there is a good life here and a greater life hereafter, if these things are put in their proper places.

(Eccles. 2:24) Is it wrong for a man to study, to improve his mind, acquire an education, become a teacher, a mechanic, a builder, or an artist? Is it wrong to marry, build a house, plant a garden, raise a family, and enjoy

our friends and life? No! 'There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink and enjoy his labor,' for it is all from the hand of God! 'A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above' (1 Cor. 4:7; James 1:17). All that God gives us is to be received with thanksgiving and enjoyed.

(Eccles. 2:25) 'Who knows that more than I,' says Solomon. God made me wise, God made me king, and God gave me what I have.

(Eccles. 2:26) Here is the key! 'God gives to the man who is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy.'

1. Who is the man that is good in his sight? 'There is none good,' say the scriptures. This is the man who is righteous and good in Christ through faith (Rom. 3:20-23; 2 Cor. 5:21).

2. God gives him that wisdom, knowledge, and joy that enables him to properly enjoy the good of his labor. He is not spiritually wise by nature but by the regenerating grace of God. 'I am what I am by the grace of God.' What he knows and what he has are gifts of God!

3. God gives the believer wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24-30; Col. 2:3). This wisdom enables him to understand the mysteries of grace and life, to understand what true riches are, to remember that a man's life is not in meat and drink, to look on things which are NOT SEEN, and to hold lightly to all material possessions and relationships; for they are temporary.

4. God gives the believer knowledge (2 Tim. 1:12; John 17:3). He knows the source of all mercies and blessings, he knows how to use them and not be used by them, he knows how to be a generous and good steward, he knows how to be abased and to abound, he knows that the earth is the Lord's!

5. God gives the believer true joy (Rom. 5:11). Our joy is not in this world nor in anything it holds; our joy and rejoicing are in our Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice that our names are in his book and we are in him (Phil. 3:1-3).

Remember now thy Creator

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

‘Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear’ (Isa. 59:1). Our Lord is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, young or old. All men and women ought to seek the Lord at all times! God commands all to repent and believe the record that he has given concerning his Son. But this chapter deals with things as they are, not as they ought to be. It is a fact that the overwhelming majority of people who do not seek the Lord early will spend old age in the gall of bitterness and die without God and without hope. Those who learn the grace of God in Christ early in life live out their days on earth walking with God in peace, resting in his good providence, and die with a good hope of life eternal.

v. 1. ‘Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.’ ‘Thy creator’ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One cannot remember, worship, nor know one without the other. Our creation, existence, and life are attributed to Father, Son, and Spirit (Read Mal. 2:10; John 1:1-4; Job 33:4).

This God (1 John 5:5-7) should be remembered. The word ‘remember’ is to recognize, think upon, and be mindful of. This is what the thief had in mind when he asked to be remembered by Christ when he came into his kingdom. Remembering our Creator is not a casual thought nor an indifferent glance, but to set him always before us in love, fear, and worship and never to forget him (Psalm 146:1-2).

1. We are mindful that there is a God of great and glorious perfections (omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, just, true) who will judge the world in righteousness (Isa. 46:9-13).

2. We are mindful that God is, in Christ Jesus, a God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity and sin by his obedience and death.

3. We are mindful that the end for which we are made is to glorify him (Rev. 4:11). If we are saved, resurrected on that great day, and conformed to the image of Christ, it will be by his grace, according to his mercy, through his own work, and for his glory (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

We are to be mindful of him in the days of youth, which are the best and choicest days. God is worthy of the first fruits, when our bodies are healthy, our minds are quick, and our souls capable of being enlarged. To delay our worship of him is ungrateful, for he is the giver of every gift, and foolish, for no man can be sure of tomorrow (Prov. 27:1; James 4:13-16).

‘The evil days’ that are sure to come mean the days of OLD AGE. They are called the evil days not because sins of old age are any more evil than sins of youth, but because old age is attended by trouble, disease, and affliction. There are weakness of body, decay of intellect, and inability to discern, desire, or put together the hopes and mysteries of spiritual truth. Men and women who live their lives without God come to old age with no pleasure in looking back, no pleasure in their present circumstance, and certainly no pleasure in thinking of death and eternity! Contrary to this, Paul viewed the past, present, and future with joy and delight (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

vv. 2-7. Solomon describes the infirmities of old age and the troubles that come upon us in order to encourage the young to seek the Lord early.

‘The sun, light, moon, and stars will be darkened.’ This is the understanding, mind, judgment, and memory. All of these are greatly impaired or lost in old age.

‘The clouds return after the rain,’ In youth troubles come, then there is sunshine and a clear day; but in old age as soon as one cloud arises and departs, another follows.

v. 3. ‘The keepers of the house shall tremble.’ The house is the body, and the keepers are the arms and hands which in old age become weak.

‘The strong men’ are the thighs, legs, and feet which have supported the house.

‘The grinders which cease because they are few’ are the teeth.

‘Those that look out of the windows be darkened’ are the eyes.

v. 4. ‘The doors be shut’ must be the lips which are opened for speaking and eating; but in the aged they are shut more than opened for either.

‘They rise up at the voice of the bird.’ Old men usually retire early and rise early.

‘The daughters of music shall be brought low.’ What are the instruments of music?—the lungs, throat, mouth, teeth, and lips, all of which are weakened by old age.

v. 5. ‘They shall be afraid of high places,’ such as mountains, hills, and towers because of the feebleness of their limbs

‘The almond tree shall flourish.’ This is the white hair which looks like an almond tree in bloom.

‘The grasshopper’ is a very light thing, but the lightest load is a burden to the aged. ‘Desire shall fail;’ desire for almost everything is weakened by old age.

‘Man goeth to his long home.’ The grave is the home of the body.

v. 6. ‘The silver cord’ is the bond between soul and body. ‘The golden bowl’ is the brain, which stops functioning; and ‘the pitcher broken at the fountain’ is the heart, which is the fountain of life.

v. 7-8. The body, which is dust, shall return to the earth; and the spirit or soul shall return to God who gave it. Now, when you consider all this vanity of the world and the flesh, is it not wise to remember, be mindful of, and seek to know the living God with whom we have to do? How foolish to invest all in decaying flesh!

v. 9-14. ‘The preacher was wise.’ God taught him and he taught the people the words of God.

‘The preacher sought to find acceptable words,’ not mere words, but words of truth, delight, and promise.

‘The preacher's words are like sharpened sticks’ to prick sinners in heart and direct them in the true way, also like nails to fasten us to Christ.

The conclusion of the whole matter, the sum and substance of the whole book is reduced to two things—the fear of God and obedience to him, which are urged from the consideration of who he is and what he shall do!

My beloved is mine and I am his

Song of Solomon 2:1-17

Solomon, next to our Lord Jesus, was the greatest son of wisdom that the church of God has ever known (1 Kings 4:29-32).

God blessed him with ‘largeness of heart.’ His love and affection are evidenced by his many wives, which were his undoing. But true understanding and love will always be found together.

Though Solomon spoke over 3000 proverbs and 1500 songs, ‘The Song of Solomon’ is his most profound and beautiful work. God used the man of greatest wisdom to write on the greatest subject—love—the love of Christ and his church!

Other writings of Solomon are more obvious and open to common understanding; but, as none entered into the holy of holies except the High Priest, so none can enter into the beauties and mysteries of the Song of Solomon except those who know and love the bridegroom—Christ Jesus! Read Titus 1:15.

In this chapter there is a conversation between Christ and his church in which they alternately set forth the excellencies of each other and express their affection for and the delight and pleasure they take in each other's company.

v. 1. These are the words of Christ concerning himself. He compares himself to the rose and the lily for fragrance and beauty (Isa. 35:1-2). He is to be preferred above all, for he is above all (Phil. 2:9-11).

v. 2. He says that his church is ‘the lily among thorns,’ beauty among ugliness! He calls the church ‘my love;’ and, though growing among thorns and unfruitful tares, he declares her beauty and his love for her.

v. 3. The church declares that Christ is as an apple tree among the barren trees of the forest. It is said that the apple tree is a symbol of love, under

which lovers sat (Song of Sol. 8:5). To send or throw an apple meant love. Christ is our apple tree for shade, rest, and fruit.

v. 4. ‘He brought me to the banqueting house.’ By his invincible grace he sought me, called me, and brought me. The house of God is the place where we feed upon him and his word. All that the church needs is satisfied there. Our reason for being there is because he loved us (1 John 4:10, 19). We are not guests only, we are the bride.

v. 5. ‘Stay me,’ or sustain me with vessels of wine poured out and comfort me with tokens and reminders of love (apples), for I am ‘sick with love;’ that is, I am eagerly desirous to know more of his love (Phil. 3:10). The church never gets enough of Christ Jesus.

v. 6. He loves his church, he feeds his church, he comforts his church, and he holds and supports his church with both hands, as a lover embraces his beloved. He will not let her go nor suffer her to leave (Heb. 13:5-6).

v. 7. There is much debate about who is speaking here, whether Christ of the church or the church of Christ: but one thing is clear—he is sovereign! No force, power, nor person can disturb him nor his church ‘till he pleases’ (Psalm 115:1-3).

vv. 8-9. The church relates how she heard the voice of Christ (John 10:27) and had a sight of him as a young deer on the hills and mountains, at some distance (as in the shadows and types of the Old Testament), then nearer, behind her wall and through the lattices (in part and through a glass dimly—I Cor. 13:9, 12).

v. 10. The voice of Christ (which the church heard) gave her a call to come away with him. ‘My love, my fair one’ (terms of endearment), rise up from where you are, what you are doing, whom you are with, and ‘come with me’ (Matt. 11:28-30). He called outwardly by his word and inwardly by his Spirit (Gal. 1:15; James 1:18; 1 Thess. 2:13-14). His call is an

effectual call. None who hear his voice in grace and mercy will refuse to come to him.

vv. 11-13. Before he came to us in love and before we heard his voice, it was as winter in our souls, dark with sin, cold and barren and dead. We were under judgment for sin and driven by the winds of Satan's temptations. The winter is past; it is summer in our hearts. We have been redeemed by his blood and are free to go in and out. The flowers bloom, the birds sing, and the sun of righteousness shines upon us.

v. 14. The church is called his dove, partly for her temperament (because she is harmless, innocent, and beautiful in his grace) and partly for her dove-like condition (because she is weak and exposed to persecution and trial and given to mourning). Therefore, she is called to hide in him, the rock, and in his secret places for protection. 'Cast your care upon him.' He says to the church, 'Let me see your face in communion and worship; let me hear your voice in prayer and praise; for your voice is sweet to me and your countenance comely.'

v. 15. 'Put away the little foxes'—our flesh, thoughts, infirmities that war against the soul; for, like tender grapes, we are children beset within and without by terrible foes (Eph. 6:12).

v. 16. These two statements are strong and positive.

'My beloved is mine.'

1. By divine decree he is mine. 'Thou gavest them me' (John 17:6-10).

2. By a living union he is my vine, head, and husband.

3. By faith he is mine, for I have believed and received him according to thy word.

4. By an affectionate relationship he is mine. He is 'my beloved.'

‘I am his.’ I belong to him.

1. The Father gave me to him (John 6:37-39).

2. He purchased me on the cross of Calvary. ‘Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price’ (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

v. 17. He is mine and I am his until the morning of that great and blessed day of resurrection when all shadows shall flee away.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved?

Song of Solomon 5:9-16

v. 9. This question is put to the church of the Lord Jesus—'O thou fairest among women'—the same title Christ gives her in 1:8.

Every soul has a beloved, an object of worship, something or someone in which to glory, rejoice, and enjoy. With some it is the world (its riches, materialism, and honors); with others it is pleasure and the applause of men; with others it is near and dear family relations; with others it is religion and works of righteousness; and with most it is self!

A true believer in Christ Jesus worships, loves, rejoices, and glories only in Christ Jesus—his beloved! Christ is preferred above all persons, possessions, and pursuits.

The world and professors of religion (because they are ignorant of Christ's excellencies) ask the church, 'What is your beloved more than our beloved?' These next verses contain the church's answer to the question.

v. 10. 'My beloved is white and ruddy.' White denotes his purity and holiness, his divine nature, the brightness of the Father's glory, full of grace and truth. 'He knew no sin.' Ruddy or red indicates his human nature, partaker of our flesh and blood, his strength in suffering, his bloody sacrifice for the sins of his people.

'He is the chiefest among ten thousand.' Among all creatures, angels, or men he is exalted. A certain number is used for an uncertain. There are kings, but he is King of kings. There are priests, but he is a priest forever. There are names, but his is a name above every name (Phil. 2:9-11).

v. 11. 'His head is as the most fine gold,' not in respect to his hair, which is black, but by reason of the crown he wears. He is the sovereign, almighty King, who rules over all (John 17:2; Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:16-18).

Our Lord is not going to be king; he is king of creation, providence, and salvation by reason of the Father's decree and his death (Psalm 2:6; Rom. 14:9).

‘His locks are bushy and black as a raven.’ Two things seem to be indicated here—his beauty and his eternal youth. Who can describe the perfections of the glorified man, Christ Jesus? John's vision on Patmos gives us a glimpse (Rev. 1:12-17). His beauty and youth are unchanging, infinite, immaculate—the very image of God's holiness, brightness, and glory. And one day we shall be like him (Psalm 17:15).

v. 12. ‘His eyes are as the eyes of doves.’ To the rebel and unbeliever his countenance and eyes may be fierce and condemning, but to his own beloved his eyes are gentle and clear as ‘washed with milk.’ He looks upon us in total love, forgiveness, and acceptance. Someone said, ‘The eyes are the windows of the soul, which reveal the true thoughts.’ Then, I can rest and rejoice, for his eyes are gentle and compassionate. His thoughts toward me are love. His eyes are ‘fitly set’ or unchanging toward me (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29).

v. 13. ‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices and sweet flowers.’ This just has to indicate the rest, comfort, and assurance the believer feels in the presence of his Lord. Leaning upon his cheek and reclining in his everlasting arms are like unto lying upon a bed of sweet spices and soft, sweet-smelling flowers. No rain, no storm, no wind can disturb my rest (Matt. 11:28; 1 Peter 5:7).

‘His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.’ This is indeed his grace and mercy, which flow from his lips continuously. Sweet to my ears, to my heart, and to my taste are the words of my Lord. His promises are sure and precious. His lips call my name, assure me of his love, and intercede for me. He has no words of condemnation, but words of life (Rom. 8:1).

v. 14. ‘His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.’ The hands are for action and distribution, by which he gives gifts and graces to his own; and,

being the Lord of all, he is rich and generous (Phil. 4:19). All of my needs he supplies. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).

‘His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.’ Some believe these words describe the overall beauty of his whole body, some believe it has reference to his priestly garments (the royal girdle of righteousness), and others the compassion of Christ to his church. His love is like ivory for the excellency of it, like sapphires for the firmness and duration of it, as well as for the sincerity of it. We know that the word ‘belly’ is used in scripture for the innermost part of a person (John 7:38; Psalm 31:9). There is merit in all these thoughts.

v. 15. ‘His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold.’ The legs support the body, and this denotes the strength and power of our Lord Jesus to bear up and carry what has been laid upon him—the covenant of grace, the mediatorial kingdom, the redemption, and the reward of his people. He is able to save (Heb. 7:25). He is able to keep (Jude 24-25). He is able to comfort (Heb. 2:18).

‘His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.’ Lebanon was a goodly mountain north of Judea; the cedars of Lebanon were the choicest and preferable to all others. Christ’s appearance and person is majestic, stately, and durable, like the choicest cedars, pleasant to the eyes. In all comparisons he is more excellent, which is the theme of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 1: 4) .

v. 16. ‘His mouth is most sweet.’ This is repeated from Verse 13 because his words are a principal part of his beauty. All that proceed from his mouth are most sweet—his gospel, his commandments, his promises, his doctrine.

‘Yes, he is altogether lovely.’ If I have neglected any part of him or failed in any respect to define him, I add, ‘he is altogether lovely!’ There is nothing about him nor his person that is not exquisitely beautiful.

‘This is my beloved and my friend,’ my rich, powerful, faithful, everlasting, and unchangeable friend.

Come now and let us reason together

Isaiah 1:1-20

Isaiah was one of the sixteen prophets whose writings are contained in the Holy Scriptures. There are more testimonies and quotations in the New Testament taken out of Isaiah than out of all the other prophets. Isaiah so fully describes the person, offices, sufferings, and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ that some have called him ‘the fifth evangelist,’ and his book, ‘The Gospel According to Isaiah.’

v. 1. His prophecy is called a ‘vision’ because the truth that God revealed to him was as clear to his mind as bodily objects are to men's eyes. He foresaw and he foretold (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:10-11).

v. 2. Isaiah calls upon the whole creation to hear the Lord's charge against Judah and Jerusalem. The Lord said, ‘I have made them my people (Deut. 7:6-8), I blessed and sustained them above all nations, I gave them the law and the prophets, and they have rebelled against me.’

v. 3. They are more stupid and ungrateful than beasts. We hear the sayings, ‘Stubborn as an ass,’ and ‘Dumb as an ox;’ but even these dumb beasts acknowledge and obey their masters and benefactors. But my people do not know me, consider nor think upon me, reverence nor obey me.

v. 4. ‘They are laden with iniquity.’ The word ‘laden’ means heavy, full and thick, as full of sin as an egg is full or a sponge is full (Rom. 3:12-18). ‘A seed of evildoers;’ children of rebels (Rom. 5:12) who have forsaken the Lord and gone their own way (Isa. 53:6). God is angry (Psalm 7:11; Heb. 10: 30-31).

v. 5. They are so depraved and rebellious that even afflictions and the judgments of God have no effect upon them (Amos 4:6, 9-11). ‘Why should I chasten and correct you?’ You are so mentally warped (head is sick) and spiritually dead (heart is faint) that even correction brings out rebellion. Judgment will not produce repentance in a depraved sinner (Rev. 16:9; Rom. 2:4).

v. 6. Here is the result of Adam's fall, a description of total depravity, the true condition of fallen flesh! From the very sole of our feet to the top hair on our heads there is no life, no truth, no light, no goodness in us (Rom. 7:18, 8:8; Eph. 2:1-3.). These wounds and sores of sin are open and ugly and have no remedy.

vv. 7-8. Because of your rebellion and disobedience you lie desolate, destroyed by the enemy, bruised, broken, and afflicted. You have no peace, rest, nor happiness. Men without God are without hope in this world or in the world to come (Eph. 2:12).

v. 9. If the Lord of hosts, by his infinite grace and goodness, had not chosen a people from Adam's race, defeated our enemies in the person and work of his Son, and called us effectually by his Spirit, no one would be saved. We would have all been cut off as the people of Sodom (Rom. 9:27-29). ‘Salvation is of the Lord’ in its origination (2 Thess. 2:13), in its execution (Gal. 4:4-5), in its application (Gal. 1:15), in its sustaining power (Jude 24-25), and in its ultimate perfection (Rev. 21:3-6).

vv. 10-15. Here is a startling revelation! Believe it or not, these ungrateful, irreverent, totally depraved people make a pretence of being religious! They are inwardly wicked and outwardly religious (Matt. 23:25-28). They kept the outward forms, ceremonies, and holy days; yet they did not love, obey, nor worship God in their hearts. It is so often true that the less a man knows of God and the farther he departs from the true and living God, the more of the outward form of religion he adopts. The less internal devotion, the more emphasis is placed on the external ceremony and the outward

rules and regulations. Their outward show of piety, prayer, sacrifice, and sabbaths was an abomination to God (Luke 16:15).

v. 16. 'Wash ye, make you clean.' Notwithstanding their sacrifices and ceremonies, they were unclean (as all men are) and needed to be washed in the blood of Christ (Psalm 51:7; 1 John 1:7). The blood of animals cannot put away sin, nor can the deeds of the law nor religious works. 'Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes.' Not only put away the doing of evil, but also the evil of doing, which is an attempt to be justified before the eyes of God by our doings (Rom. 10:1-4).

v. 17. 'Learn to do well.' These are the true works of righteousness that are produced by a right relationship with God in Christ Jesus (Gal. 5:22). Observing the ceremonies, sacrifices, and sabbaths outwardly are meaningless; but a regenerated, renewed, and cleansed heart will find delight in serving God and others.

v. 18. God in grace proposes a conference, not to determine if we are sinners nor the extent of our sins, but what is to be done about the matter. *We are* sinners and our sins are double-dyed, as scarlet and red like crimson. Only Christ can put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26; Heb. 10:12-14).

vv. 19-20. If you be made willing to come to Christ in repentance and faith, you shall eat the good of God's great land; if you refuse him, you shall be devoured, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

1. Are we willing to own and confess our sins?
2. Are we willing to repent of dead works and personal merit?
3. Are we willing to call on God in Christ for mercy and grace?
4. Are we willing to confess him and bow to him as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10)?

Then you shall be saved!

Here am I – send me

Isaiah 6:1-8

Isaiah was a prophet of God who lived about 700 years before Christ came to earth in the flesh. He lived about 120 years and preached about 85 of those years. He was a prophet in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

v. 1. ‘In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord.’ Is there some connection between the death of King Uzziah and Isaiah's vision of God's holiness? Perhaps! Uzziah was a great and successful king whom Isaiah probably admired (2 Chron. 26:22). He did many great and notable things, but he became proud and presumptuous. His pride led him to the temple to offer incense to God, not through God's priest but by his own hand. This is a denial of the holiness of God and the work of Christ, our great High Priest (2 Chron. 26:16-20). Christ is God's priest (typified by the Old Testament priesthood), and not even a king can come to God except through him (John 14:6). God judged Uzziah and he died a leper. When Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord.

1. Isaiah saw the supreme glory of Christ. It was the enthroned Christ, the sovereign Christ of all authority and glory; for John wrote of it in John 12:41, ‘When Isaiah saw HIS GLORY, he spoke of him.’

2. Isaiah saw the victorious Christ, for he was sitting on a throne. Men and nations rush to and fro; we pace the floor and fret and worry. He sits amid complete order and purpose (Isa. 46:10-11; Psalm 110:1).

3. Isaiah saw the infinite glory of Christ, for ‘He is high and lifted up.’ His name and throne are above every name and throne. ‘None can stay his hand or say unto him what doest thou?’ (Phil. 2:9-11).

4. Isaiah saw the universal glory of Christ. His glory and presence 'filled the temple.' 'Christ is all and in all.' Every revelation of God to human eye, ear, or heart is Jesus Christ (John 1:18). Isaiah saw Christ, the Lord, exalted King of kings and Lord of lords!

v. 2. Around the throne Isaiah saw the seraphims. Who are these seraphims? There are many opinions, such as heavenly creatures, or angels, or perhaps (in figurative language) the true ministers of Christ.

1. They cover their faces in modesty and humility before the Lord; for they are less than the least, unworthy to be ministers, and the chief of sinners.

2. They cover their feet, conscious of the imperfection of their walk, conduct, and ways. 'O wretched man that I am.'

3. With two wings they did fly in haste to declare the truth of his glorious person and work.

vv. 3-4. What is their cry? 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.' The chief attribute of God is his holiness. God is love, God is just, God is merciful; but 'holy and reverend is his name.' All that God is and does must be in agreement with his holiness. Nowhere is the holiness of God revealed more than at Calvary, when his holiness demanded and carried out the death of his Son to redeem a people (Rom. 3:25-26). The whole earth is his; all that is in it and all creation shall serve his glory (Rev. 4:11).

v. 5. What was Isaiah's response to this revelation of God's presence and holiness?

He saw himself. 'I am undone and ruined; I am a sinful man; I am reduced to silence.' A man may look at others and say, 'I thank thee, I am not like other men.' He may look at the written law and say, 'I am blameless.' But when a man is exposed to the absolute holiness and righteousness of God, he must cry, 'Woe is me.'

He saw the evil of his heart and mouth. Unclean lips speak from an unclean heart. The lips are the outlet of the heart.

He saw the total ruin of the human race (Rom. 3:10-19; Psalm 14:2-3). The two-fold cry of the word, of the gospel, of those who have seen the Lord is, (a) 'All flesh is grass' and (b) 'Behold your God' (Isa. 40:6-9). The sinfulness of sin, the inability of the flesh, and the need of sovereign mercy are only discovered in the light of God's holiness. Job experienced this (Job 42:5-6) and so shall all whom God is pleased to bring to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus.

vv. 6-7. God revealed to Isaiah, the sinner, his mercy and grace. When he saw the holiness of God, realized his corruption and evil, and confessed his sinfulness and inability, there follows the application of mercy and grace in Christ. Self-judgment always precedes forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10). Grace is only for the guilty; Christ died only for the ungodly (1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 5:6-8).

The *seraph* who came to him is the minister of the gospel, who comes to men sent of God (John 1:6-7). God sent Philip to the eunuch (Acts 8:29-30).

The *live coal* in his hand is the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—his word of grace, the good news of mercy (Rom. 10:13-15; Eph. 1:13). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17).

The *altar of fire* from which the live coal was taken is the sacrifice of Christ, our Lord. The Passover lamb was roasted on the altar of fire as our Lord Jesus (who is our Passover) was sacrificed for us. He endured the fire of God's wrath for our sins (2 Cor. 5:21). The pardon of sin, the cleansing, the power of God to redeem come from the blood of Christ at Calvary (Heb. 10:12-17).

He *laid it on my mouth*. That cleansing, purging fire of Calvary, the blood of the Son of God, actually met our sins, came in contact with all our iniquity, engaged to purge, burn out, and eradicate all our transgressions (Isa. 53:4-6). 'He bore our sins.'

'Your *iniquity is taken away* and thy *sin purged*.' Your sin is completely atoned for and forgiven. God said, 'I will remember their sins no more.' How can this be? Only in Christ, our substitute! God can be

holy, just, and righteous and justify us in Christ only. He obeyed the law, giving us a perfect righteousness (Rom. 5:19); and he died (the just for the unjust) to bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace kiss at Calvary' (Psalm 85:10).

v. 8. 'Who will go with the message of substitution and satisfaction through the person and work of Christ?' Only the man whose lips have been touched by experience with that fire from the altar. 'Here am I, send me.' I know, have experienced, and love that gospel.

Jesus Christ – the Mighty God

Isaiah 9:6-7

We have before us the greatest of all subjects, yet the most difficult and mysterious—the incarnation of God! God became a man. God took on himself ‘the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men’ (Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 3:16). The gift of Christ is called ‘unspeakable’ and the riches of Christ are called ‘unsearchable’ (2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:8).

The Ancient of Days became an infant of days; he who made woman was made of a woman; God who is spirit actually became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

In the same breath that the prophet calls him a child, he calls him counselor. In the same breath that the prophet calls him a son, he calls him the everlasting father. The warrior's garments are rolled in blood, yet he is the prince of peace. He is a ‘man of sorrows’ (Isa. 53:3), yet he is the mighty God. He is ‘rejected of men’ (Isa. 53:3), yet the government is on his shoulders. There are no contradictions here. Every word is true, but it is not learned by research and reason—only by revelation (1 Cor. 2:9-10, 14). As scripture is only interpreted in the light of scripture so,

There is no seeing Christ except in his own light (John 1:18).

He is the lesson learned, yet he, himself, is the teacher.

He is the one to whom we look and the light by which we see.

He is not only the tabernacle, the priest, and the mercy-seat, but he is the sacrifice and the one to whom it is offered.

1. ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.’ There is no repetition here. The careful student knows that the Spirit does not waste words.

‘A child is born,’ a man-child made of a woman, who lay nine months in the womb and came forth as all children are born, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Jesus Christ, the man, was born of a woman just as all men come into the world.

‘A son is given.’ This Son was not born but given, sent from heaven. He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:3-4).

When the angel announced to Joseph the coming of Christ in the flesh, he quoted Isaiah 7:14, ‘A virgin shall be with child and she shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.’ The virgin birth is not simply a matter for argument or amazement but of necessity. Jesus Christ is not only man and called the son of man, but he is God and the Son of God. The Son of God can have no human father but is conceived by the Holy Ghost. If he were the seed of man and not the seed of woman, he would be born in sin.; but he is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners’ (Heb. 7:26).

Is it true that God became a man? If it is true, then we have a righteousness, a redeemer, a mediator, and a hope of eternal glory. If it is not true, if there is no man in glory called Jesus Christ, then no other man will ever be in glory, then we stand alone before God’s awful throne with no mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

2. ‘The government shall be on his shoulder.’ The government, not only of the universe and the world in general, but of the kingdom of God in particular.

All things in heaven and earth were made by him, for him, and are held together by him (Col. 1:16-17).

He has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18) and all authority over all flesh (John 17:2).

He reigns as King and surety over the kingdom of God. This government is delegated to him from the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

He is head of the church, has all pre-eminence (Col. 1:18-19), and a name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9-11).

3. ‘His name shall be called *wonderful*.’ We carelessly call many things wonderful that are unworthy of such distinction. He alone is wonderful. He is wonderful in his eternality (Prov. 8:24-31); wonderful in his person—the Godman; wonderful in his everlasting, infinite, and unchanging

love; wonderful in his perfect, holy life; wonderful in his substitutionary death; wonderful in his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:1-4).

4. ‘*Counselor.*’ The world is full of people who want to be counselors and advisers, but there is but one counselor—Jesus Christ. Would you know God? Christ reveals him! Would you know the will, way, and purpose of God? They are all found in Christ! He is both the wisdom and the power of God (1 Cor. 1:30). Someone asked Mr. Spurgeon, ‘What is the best body of divinity?’ He replied, ‘There is but one body of divinity—Christ Jesus.’ (Col. 2:9-10). Religious people say, ‘Are you in trouble? Do you need the Lord? Then call us.’ Don't do it! Call on Christ; he is the counselor!

5. ‘The mighty *God.*’ The disciples said, ‘Show us the Father.’ Christ replied, ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father’ (John 14:8-9). ‘I and my Father are one’ (John 10:30). Jesus Christ is God (Acts 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:19; Heb. 1:8.). Every attribute of deity is found in him—omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. The disciples asked, ‘What manner of man is this that even the waves obey his voice?’ He is the mighty God!

6. ‘The everlasting *Father.*’ No man can explain the Trinity; we can only believe. Our God is one God, yet three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7). He that hath the Son hath the Father (2 John 9; 1 John 2:23). When Moses asked God, ‘What is thy name?’ the Lord replied, ‘I AM THAT I AM.’ On how many occasions did our Lord Jesus use these words, ‘I Am’? (John 8:58).

7. ‘The Prince of Peace.’ He is the author of peace between God and sinners (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20). He is our peace of heart and conscience (John 14:27). He brings to us everlasting peace; for his government, his peace, his kingdom are established on principles of judgment and justice (Isa. 9:6). This is no temporary peace; for Jesus Christ, the God-man, effectually, sufficiently, and once for all honored God's law and satisfied justice for all who believe (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Acts 13:38-39).

The day of divine visitation

Isaiah 12:1-6

This chapter contains a lot of praise and thanksgiving for redemption and salvation in Christ Jesus. This is strictly ‘family fare’ and cannot be appreciated, understood, nor sung by any but the redeemed of the Lord.

v. 1. ‘And in that day.’ This is a phrase used repeatedly by Isaiah to indicate a particular time of divine visitation. It may not be a twenty-four hour day, but rather a time when the Lord is pleased to reveal to his elect his grace and mercy in Christ.

1. It is a day of conviction (Isa. 2:10-11); for judgment precedes justification, emptying precedes filling, repentance precedes comfort.

2. It is a day of revelation (Isa. 25:8-9) when, like Simeon of old, the believer cries, ‘I have seen thy salvation!’

3. It is a day of assurance (Isa. 26:1-4) when his rest, peace, and joy settle upon the heart and mind, and we are enabled to trust him with complete confidence.

‘I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.’ The Lord's anger toward his elect is difficult to explain in the light of the fact that ‘He has loved us with an everlasting love;’ and he declared, ‘Jacob have I loved’ before Jacob was born. But the scripture says, ‘We were children of wrath, even as others’ (Eph. 2:3-4), and ‘at that time, we Gentiles were without Christ and without God’ (Eph. 2:11-13). Whatever it means, we know that in Christ Jesus his anger and wrath are turned away (Rom. 8:31-33, 38-39). ‘God was in Christ reconciling us to himself’ (2 Cor. 5:19); and we are comforted by his promises, by his love shed abroad in our hearts, and by his indwelling Spirit (John 14:16-18; John 16:13-14).

v. 2. ‘Behold God is my salvation.’ This may read, ‘God is my saviour.’ Christ, who is God, is my Saviour (John 1:1, 14). He is a just God and a Saviour (Isa. 45:21-22). He was appointed by the Father, provided in the covenant, promised in the word, sent in the fullness of time, and became the author of my salvation by his obedience, death, and exaltation (Acts 13:38-39; 1 Peter 3:18).

‘I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.’ I will trust him for all things needed and required—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). ‘I will rest confidently in him and believe that in him I am secure from all wrath and condemnation (Rom. 8:1, 33-34). I will not be afraid of sin, Satan, death, hell, nor the wrath to come (Isa. 26:3-4).

‘He also is become my salvation.’ In the light of our weakness, failure, and flesh, how can we have such confidence and assurance of our security and acceptance before God? Because he is our salvation! He is our strength! He is our song! God set him forth to be a mercy-seat: God laid on him our iniquities; God made us accepted in the Beloved. ‘How shall he not with him freely give us all things’ accomplished by our Redeemer-God? (Rom. 8:32). It would be nothing short of blasphemy to reckon that God would renege on his promises to Christ and his church (Isa. 46:9-11; Rom. 11:29).

v. 3. ‘Therefore with joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation.’ The Father is called ‘the fountain of living waters’ (Jer. 2:13). The Lord Jesus is ‘the giver of living water’ (John 4:10, 14). The Holy Spirit is the source of ‘rivers of living water’ (John 7:38-39). These are the wells of salvation, and from them with joy we draw water (grace) for every need. Our needs go beyond a once-for-all justification and acceptance; our needs are daily needs. He taught us to pray, ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ which is not only food for the body but comfort, faith, joy, peace, strength, and love. I must always remain at the fountain ‘drawing water’ for my thirsty soul.

v. 4. ‘And in that day shall ye say...’ If there has indeed been for you a day of Divine visitation, of conviction, of revelation, of mercy, then shall you say—

1. ‘Praise the Lord,’ for mercy to this chief of sinners, for all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3-7).

2. ‘Call upon his name,’ which takes in the whole of worship. To worship God is to call upon his name. Whether in faith for mercy, in prayer, in thanksgiving, in trial, or in a daily walk, we constantly ‘call upon his name.’

3. ‘Declare his doings among the people,’ not only his works of creation, of providence, and miracles, but especially his doing and dying to redeem a people. ‘I have finished the work thou gavest me to do’ (John 17:4). That work of redemption is the doings we especially declare.

4. ‘Make mention that his name is excellent’ (Phil. 2:5-11).

‘There's none other name given among men,
There's none can with him compare;
All others are marred, by sin they are scarred;
He's fairer than all the fair.’

v. 5. ‘Sing unto the Lord for he hath done excellent things.’ Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, vocally and together, as gospel churches, to the glory of God. Let him be the subject of our songs, for he hath done great things for us and in us and will yet glorify the riches of his grace to us! He is worthy to be praised by all his creatures (Psalm 150).

v. 6. ‘Cry out and shout all ye who are in Zion (his church) for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.’ Christ Jesus is the Holy One of Israel, the head of the church; and he has promised and grants his presence to his church; wherefore, he is worthy of our praise—for his greatness, for his mercy, for his grace.

The believer's comfort

Isaiah 40:1-9

v. 1. 'Comfort ye, comfort ye people, saith your God.'

Who speaks? It is the Lord God of hosts. Do we have ears to hear what the Lord says?

To whom does he speak? He speaks to his prophets, preachers, pastors, teachers—all who are bond-servants of the Lord.

What is his commandment? 'Comfort ye my people.' There is a time to rebuke, reprove, and correct, and there is a time for examination; but the command here is to comfort!

Who are his people? We cannot comfort where God has not converted. We cannot cry 'peace' when there is no Peace. We cannot give false assurance to rebels. Who are his people? They are a chosen people, a called people, a redeemed people, and a believing people.

Why do they need comfort? They are saved sinners who are conscious of their infirmities; they are a tried people who have troubles in the flesh; they are a persecuted people who are hated by the world.

v. 2. What shall I say to his people to comfort them? What is the believer's source of greatest comfort? It is the good news of the gospel!

'Cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished.' The battle is over and 'thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 15:55-58). All of our enemies have been engaged by our captain, and they are conquered and shall soon be under our feet as they are now under his: sin (Heb. 10:17-18), self (Gal. 2:20), Satan (John 14:30, 16:11), world (John 16:33), and Death (John 11:25-26).

'Her iniquity is Pardoned.' All of our sins (past, present, and future) are blotted out, cleansed, atoned for, and are remembered no more. The redeemed have no sins. 'With his spotless garments on, they are as holy as God's Son.'

‘Double for all her sins.’ This denotes the sufficiency of his blood and the complete satisfaction made by Christ for all our sins. Not that more was required than was due; but his offering, being infinite, fully answers more than double what can be demanded. ‘Where sin did overflow, grace did much more overflow.’

v. 3-5. John the Baptist is the voice crying in the wilderness of Judea. There is a three-fold effect of his office: (a) the humiliation of some, (b) the exaltation of others, and (c) the revelation of the glory of Christ Jesus.

‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord.’ The Messiah comes and John called upon men to repent, to lay aside all thoughts and ways contrary to his gospel and kingdom, and to embrace him when he comes.

‘Every valley shall be exalted.’ When Messiah comes, all who are depressed and bowed down with the guilt of sin, laboring and heavy laden, low and humble in their own eyes, shall be raised up and comforted.

‘Every mountain and hill shall be made low.’ The proud and haughty shall be brought down. Those who are elated with themselves and their own righteousness shall be humbled.

‘The crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.’ Could this be that those types, patterns, and pictures of the Old Testament should become clear in Christ, and prophecies, not so well understood, would be now plain and easy? (Luke 24:27, 44-45).

‘And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.’ Christ, himself, who is the brightness of the Father's glory (Heb. 1:1-3), reveals his redemptive glory (Exo. 33:18-19), which is his chief glory.

‘All flesh shall see it;’ not the Jews only, but Gentiles also, and not with bodily eyes, but with the eyes of their understanding, even the salvation of the Lord and his glory displayed in it. The everlasting gospel is called the gospel of his glory (1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

v. 6-9. I prefer to look at these verses together, for I see the two-fold, actually the three-fold, message of evangelism. Here is a command, ‘Cry!’ and a question, ‘What shall I cry?’ What shall I preach? What is the message men need to hear?

‘All flesh is grass, and all its glory and comeliness is as the flower of the field.’ All flesh (young and old, Jew and Gentile, religious and profane) is as worthless, withering grass. We are born spiritually dead and worthless; nothing we can do in life improves the condition, and the death of the flesh only confirms its corrupt condition. ‘In the flesh dwelleth no good thing’ (Rom. 7:18), and ‘in the flesh no man can please God’ (Rom. 8:8). This must be preached in order to humble the pride of men and to show the necessity of Divine power in regeneration (John 3:5-7). Not only is all flesh grass, but even man's so-called righteousness (that which is comely and commendable compared to others) is as worthless as a fading flower (Isa. 64:6). ‘Man at his best state is altogether vanity.’ We find this out ‘when the Spirit of God blows upon it,’ for he makes us to know the truth about ourselves in the light of God's holiness (Isa. 6:5; Job 42:5-6).

‘The word of our God shall stand forever.’ (v. 8) This may be applied to the recorded word of our God, which is sure and certain, forever settled in heaven and always fulfilled, or rather Christ the word, who stands forever in his office, in the efficacy of his blood, in the fullness of his grace, and in the glory of his exaltation (Col. 1:16-18).

‘Behold your God.’ (v. 9) Get up on a high mountain, lift up your voice, be not afraid, and say unto the people, ‘Behold your God!’ John Gill said it best, ‘Behold your God! That Divine person is come that was promised, prophesied, and expected; even Emmanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God manifest in the flesh, God your Saviour; and who, being God, truly God, is able to save to the uttermost. Look to him with an eye of faith and be saved. Behold your God! Behold the Son of God, the Lamb of God, Who has borne our sins and taken them away. Behold him now, as your King and your God, on the throne, made and declared Christ and Lord, crowned with glory and honor, on the same throne with his heavenly Father, having all power in heaven and earth, and let the echo of your faith be, ‘My Lord and my God.’”

The Messiah

Isaiah 42:1-21

This is one of the many places in the book of Isaiah which absolutely cannot be applied to anyone but the Messiah. It is evident that the prophet speaks of the Christ, for our Lord Jesus confirmed it in Matt. 12:14-21. Time and space will not permit us to comment on every word, so we will try to touch the high points.

v. 1. His condescension. ‘Behold my servant;’ the Messiah, who was with God, who is God, and ‘who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant’ (Phil. 2:6-8). He is the servant, not of angels and men, but of the Divine Father, who chose him, called him, and sent him to accomplish the redemption of his people. ‘Whom I uphold,’ strengthen and help as man and mediator so that he did not sink under the weight of the sins of his people and the wrath of God.

‘Mine elect:’

1. God chose men and not angels (Heb. 2:16).
2. Christ is chosen, and we were chosen in him (Eph. 1:3-4).
3. God delights and is well pleased in him and with us as we are considered in him (Eph. 1:6-7).
4. God put his Spirit upon him, not as a divine person, but as a man for the work he would do (John 3:34-36).
5. By himself he shall bring forth righteousness, truth, and justice to the nations.

vv. 2-3. His humility and tenderness. Earthly kings and rulers cry out in defense of their programs, strive with others, lift up their standards, and campaign in the streets. They have no use for the weak and weary nor the frail and the faint, and their means are justified by their goals. But our

Messiah is 'meek and lowly in heart, a tender plant, a man of sorrows, who openeth not his mouth.' He does not strive nor contend to no profit. His kingdom is not of this world, so he does not boast and try to rally support for himself in the streets. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom; his enemies are principalities and powers, rulers of darkness who are conquered and defeated by himself alone; his people are made willing in the day of his power by his Spirit and his gospel call. He came by his identification with us, his obedience and death to save sinners, weak and unworthy, frail and fainting; so he does not break the bruised, weak reed, but strengthens it! He does not quench the flickering lamp, but gives it oil to burn brighter. The bruised reed and the flickering, dimly burning lamp are his weak and frail people who are not cast off but comforted and cared for tenderly. His work is judgment and justice. The courts of heaven shall receive his people, for he justifies them on the basis of truth and righteousness (Rom. 3:25-26).

v. 4. His success. 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged.' What the Father purposed, the Son purchased and the Spirit applied. How can it even be imagined that our God should fail to accomplish his redemptive will and work? (Isa. 46:9-11; 53:10-11; John 6:37-39). 'Till he have set judgment in the earth.' He fully satisfied the justice of God for the sins of his people, settled and sent his gospel to call out his people, and sat down at the right hand of majesty till all that he purposed and performed shall be done. 'The isles (islands, distant countries, and all nations) in hope wait for his word of grace,' for he shall have a people from them all (Psalm 110:1-3).

vv. 5-7. His assignment. How often our Lord Jesus referred to 'the work thou gavest me to do' (John 4:34; 9:4; 17:4).

1. The greatness of our God, who called and sent the Messiah, is set forth. He has the power, greatness, and authority to do what he will.

2. 'I have called and sent the Messiah in righteousness,' or in a righteous manner consistent with God's perfections (Psalm 85:10-

13). Christ came a holy person (Heb. 7:25-26) and fully obeyed God's law (Rom. 5:19).

3. Christ was held, kept, sustained, and given to us as the surety, mediator, sum and substance of God's everlasting covenant of grace (Heb. 13:20-21). All the blessings and promises of the covenant are in him, by him, and given through him (Heb. 10:14-18).

4. 'He came to open blind eyes,' spiritually blind, to enable them by his gospel to see the sinfulness of sin, their need of a Saviour, and who he is! 'To set the prisoners free;' prisoners of sin, shut up to unbelief, and under the judgment of the broken law, in the darkness of spiritual death and ignorance (Luke 4:17-18). 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.'

vv. 8-9. His name and knowledge. 'I am Jehovah.' His name expresses his eternity, his immutability, his redemptive character. It is the name by which he made himself known to Israel of old. 'The just God and Saviour' (Isa. 45:21). His name expresses his character and his redemptive glory (Exo. 33: 18-19), which he will not give to another. Men who truly believe his name, call upon his name, and glorify his name shall be saved (Rom. 10:13-14). He declares the former things and the new things before they come to pass (Isa. 46:10).

vv. 10-12. His praise. These verses are summed up briefly in one phrase, 'Let them give glory unto the Lord and declare his praise' (Psalm 150).

vv. 13-15. His victory over his enemies. The Lord, for many ages, has permitted Satan, idolaters, and rebels to go to and fro. He will one day roar, destroy, and devour them at once. The last enemy, death, shall one day be destroyed, and righteousness shall reign universally.

vv. 16-21. His redemptive glory. Verses 16-18 are spoken of the Gentiles, who shall be made to see and hear what they have never seen and heard; and Verses 19-20 refer to the JEWS, who are called the servants and messengers of God and who claim to see and be perfect. But none are so

blind and deaf as those who think they see and hear but do not! 'But the Lord is well pleased' (v. 21) with the obedience and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, who in life and death magnified God's law and made it honorable. There is nothing so important to any who would know God as to be taught by God's Spirit three things:

- (1) The holiness of our God,
- (2) the sinfulness and inability of our flesh, and
- (3) the righteousness of God effectually and sufficiently displayed in and wrought out by our Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 10:1-4).

A just God and a Saviour

Isaiah 45:16-25

This chapter contains prophecies concerning Cyrus (the deliverer of the Jews from captivity) and the great things God would do for him and by him (vv. 1-3). The reasons God would do these things were for the sake of Israel and that he might be known to be the only true God, who is the maker and owner of all things (vv. 4-7). A declaration is made of the Messiah as the author of salvation and righteousness (v. 8), and the contention and murmuring of the Jews about the Messiah, son of man (vv. 9-10). Christ is the antitype of Cyrus; and the Lord says, ‘Ask of me and expect great things to be done by me through the Messiah, whom I have raised up in righteousness. He shall build my city’ (vv. 11-13). The conversion of the Gentiles is prophesied, who shall come over to the church, subdued and conquered by the grace of God, saying, ‘God, the only God, is in thee’ (v. 14). God is sovereign in mercy and will reveal himself as Saviour when and to whom he will (v. 15). But the makers of idols and worshippers of false gods shall be confounded and ashamed forever (v. 16).

v. 17. ‘But Israel shall be saved in the Lord.’ The word ‘Israel’ is used in the Bible over 2500 times. Most of the time it refers to the nation Israel, the typical people. But here, and in many other places, it refers to spiritual Israel—the true people of God among all nations. True Israel are the sons of Abraham in Christ, the seed (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7, 16, 29). He is not a Jew (Israel) which is one outwardly (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:7-8). All who are given to Christ, for whom he died, who are called to repentance and faith, are Israel and shall be saved with an everlasting salvation (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29; John 6:37-39). They shall never be ashamed nor put to shame, forever!

v. 18. This is no idle promise! God's creation is not in vain. He created the heavens and the earth; and out of all of it will come his new heaven and new earth, which he formed to be inhabited by a people conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:19-23, 29-30). The end of all things is decreed and determined by our God before one stone was laid in the earth's foundations (Isa. 46:9-11; Eph. 1:3-6).

v. 19. This covenant of grace and plan of redemption is no secret plan! God said, 'I did not whisper the way of life in secret; I did not hide it in a dark place, nor did I say in vain to the sons of Jacob, seek ye the Lord.' God, the Lord, speaks in righteousness and justice to all the earth. He has made known his law, his righteousness and holiness, and his mercy to sinners by his grace through the one great mediator, high priest, and atonement, which enables him to be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:19-26). The Scriptures (translated into 2000 languages) are clear to all who read, but 'ye will not come to [Christ]' (John 5:39-40).

v. 20. Men who turn from the Almighty God to their own gods and ways of salvation have no knowledge, for they pray to and preach about an impotent god who cannot save. The god of men cannot do his will but must wait upon the will of the creature. The living God cannot lie and can do nothing contrary to his nature; but he can save sinners, for in his infinite wisdom and power he has provided in Christ a righteousness which enables him to be a 'just God and a Saviour' (Rom. 10:1-4).

v. 21. He has declared this glorious salvation from ancient times, from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Matt. 25:34; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8). Who can do this? Who only can declare the end from the beginning? Only the sovereign, almighty, omnipotent God; and there is none beside him. But here is a key—a truth to be learned—he is a 'just God and a Saviour.' In saving sinners God cannot, will not, and does not compromise his holiness. That is why Christ, the God-man, must come, must obey the law, must die on the cross—to enable God to be holy as well as merciful (Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 1:16-17).

v. 22. Then to whom should we look if we would be saved? To whom must we look if we would be saved? To him!

The word is look, not work, labor, nor serve. These things are the results of salvation, but salvation and eternal life is the gift of God through the person and work of Christ. Only believe and live! (John 3:14-16, 36; Acts 13:38-39).

‘All the ends of the earth.’ All men died in Adam, all men are under the curse of sin, and all men (Jew or Gentile) will look to Christ and be saved or they will perish (John 14:6; Acts 4:11-12).

v. 23. Christ, being the true God, can swear by no greater (Heb. 6:13). This shows that what follows is of the greatest importance. ‘The word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness,’ concerning how men are to be saved, agreeable to truth and justice, ‘and shall not return’ or be changed. ‘Unto Christ Jesus shall every knee bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord (Phil. 2: 9-11). Men will repent, believe, and own Christ to be their Lord now and be saved (Rom. 10:9-10); or they will, in the day of judgment, confess it in their utter damnation.

(v. 24) This is the confession of all believers, ‘In the Lord Jesus Christ we have righteousness, acceptance, and strength.’ We came to him; and in coming to him, we came to God (1 Peter 3:18). We were at one time ‘incensed against him’ and are ashamed of our unbelief, and those who continue to reject him shall eternally be ashamed.

v. 25. All of spiritual Israel, whether Jew or Gentile, given to Christ, represented by Christ, redeemed by Christ, and interceded for by Christ shall be justified in him and shall glory in him, not in themselves but in him who is made unto us all we need (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

The Redeemer describes himself

Isaiah 50:1-11

All scriptures declare and reveal the person and work of Christ Jesus, our redeemer (Acts 10:43). He is the 'key of knowledge' denied by the Pharisees and lawyers (Luke 11:52). When Paul wrote, 'He died, was buried, and rose again according to the scriptures,' he was referring to the Old Testament scriptures such as those before us (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

v. 1. 'Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement?' When a man divorced his wife, he was required to give her a paper stating that he had officially divorced her. Our Lord says, 'You have no such bill; I did not forsake you.'

'Which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?' When a man was so heavily in debt that he could not pay, he would sell his children into slavery to satisfy his debts. The Lord owes no one; he has no creditors.

The truth of the matter is, 'for your sins you have sold yourselves. For your transgressions are you separated from God.' Man's ruin, spiritual death, and slavery lie at his own door. 'Your sins have separated between you and your God' (Isa. 59:1-2).

vv. 2-3. 'When I came, was there no man?' He was in the world and the world knew him not; he came unto his own and his own received him not (John 1:10-11; Isa. 53:1-3). 'When I called, was there none to answer?' He called to peace, rest, and to the marriage feast; and they made light of it. He stretched out his hand, and no man regarded (Prov. 1:24-28). Sinners are not to be pitied, but rather to be blamed; for our condemnation is our own fault.

God is able to save; he is able to redeem all who call upon him. He has power to deliver; nothing is too hard for our God.

- (1) He dried up the sea for Israel to cross over.
- (2) He made the river Jordan a wilderness.
- (3) He clothed the heavens with blackness (Exo. 10:21).
- (4) He made sackcloth to cover the sun (Rev. 6:12).

Preachers today may make man to be more than he is and God to be less than he is; but when our God describes himself, he declares his majesty, power, and total sovereignty (Rom. 9:15-16). The Bible knows nothing of an impotent God nor a doormat named Jesus. He declares, 'I have spoken it. I will bring it to pass. I have purposed it. I will do it. My counsel shall stand' (Isa. 46:9-11; Rom. 8:29-31).

v. 4. The Lord describes his prophetic office. You are familiar with the fact that our Lord has a three-fold office. He is the *King*, typified by David. As King he reigns over all by decree, by design, and by the fact that he died that he might be Lord. He is *that priest* forever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:17-25), and he is *that prophet* spoken of by Moses (Deut. 18:18-19). 'This is my beloved Son; hear ye him' (Heb. 1:1-2). 'He that heareth me, heareth my Father.' 'No man knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him' (Matt. 11:27; John 17:6-8). Our Prophet reveals and manifests the Father's will, word, and work.

v. 5. The Redeemer declares his submission as the messenger of the covenant and the Father's servant (Isa. 42:1). He is the God-man and servant who was willing to do all that was required to redeem the elect. 'The Lord hath digged or bored my ear.' This comes from the scripture in Exo. 21:1-6 where the slave, who had served his time and was free to go, chooses out of love for his master to remain as a willing, loving bondsman, and has his ear bored before the judges. 'No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down willingly' out of love for the Father's will and love for his people.

v. 6. The Redeemer describes himself as the suffering servant. 'He opened not his mouth' against the witnesses, the charges, nor those who abused him (Isa. 53:7). 'He gave his back to the smiters' (Matt. 27:26) and his

face to those who spit upon him and pulled out his beard (Matt. 26:67). The suffering and death of our Redeemer was no accident nor unexpected tragedy. It was decreed by the Father (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28), prophesied in scripture (Isa. 53:4-6; Acts 13:29), and fulfilled by the Son—willingly.

vv. 7-9. The Redeemer describes the success of his work. ‘The Lord God will help me.’ This is no contradiction of the deity of Christ nor any sign of weakness in him, but he was a man with the weaknesses and limitations of flesh and needed the strength and power of his God to effect the greatness of the work of our redemption (Luke 22:42-43).

‘I shall not be confounded nor ashamed,’ neither of his ministry (which was with power and authority in truth), nor of his obedience (which was perfect and pleasing to the Father), nor of his sufferings (for the sake of his people), nor of his work of redemption (which was effectual). (John 17:4-5.)

‘I have set my face like a flint (cf. Luke 9:51) for he is near that justifieth me.’ The Father, designed and decreed his death and sent him into the world. The Father was near him in his whole state of humiliation and justified him from all the false charges brought against him and from the sins of his people laid upon him as evidenced by his resurrection (Acts 13:29-30; Acts 17:31). ‘Who shall contend with me and who shall condemn me?’ Not Satan, nor the law, nor the justice of God. Satan came and found nothing in him, and he honored the law and satisfied justice.

vv. 10-11. The Lord sets forth two classes of people:

1. Those who fear the Lord and have been given ears to hear the voice of Christ and see the glory of God in the face of Christ. They know they are in the darkness of sin and have no light; therefore they look to Christ, trust him for all truth and righteousness, and stay upon their God. These shall never be ashamed.

2. But there are those who will not come to him, but rather depend upon their own works and righteousness. They ‘kindle a

fire' and 'walk in the light of their own fire.' These shall lie down in death and eternal sorrow and have judgment at God's hand.

Our confession of faith

Isaiah 53

Someone asked an old minister of the gospel, 'Is your creed in print?' He replied, 'Yes, you will find it all in Isaiah, Chapter 53.' Here is the gospel of God's grace in one chapter.

v. 1. 'Our report' is our message of the love, mercy, and grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-4). There has never lived a prophet who did not mourn the fact that men would not believe the good news of grace. 'The arm of the Lord' is Christ Jesus, the wisdom and power of God; for the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Natural men do not see, hear, nor understand how God can be just and justifier, righteous and merciful to sinners through the obedience and death of Christ, the substitute (1 Cor. 2:8-14). He must be revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit.

v. 2. 'A tender plant' signifies his lowly entrance into the world. He came not full grown in the pomp and glory of men but as a tiny, frail, helpless infant, born of a woman (Gal. 4:4-5).

'A root out of a dry ground' reveals the condition of David's house and the nation of Israel at this time. There was nothing left of the glory of David's kingdom, only dry ground, its king an unlikely son of a carpenter (John 6:42).

'No form ... no comeliness ... no beauty.' In sending our Redeemer into the world, the Lord God rejected and refused all fleshly, human attraction. Anything that would attract the eye of the flesh or support of the natural mind was refused. 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 1:10-11).

v. 3. 'Despised and rejected of men.' Because of the lowliness of his birth, the poverty of his parents, his hometown and vocation, his lack of formal

education, the people with whom he associated, his personal habits, the doctrine he preached, his claim to be one with the Father, and his condemnation of their tradition, everybody who was anybody turned from him, esteemed him not, and despised him. ‘A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’ From the cradle to the grave, two words can sum up his pilgrimage through this world—‘Jesus wept’ (John 11:35; Lam. 1:12).

v. 4. ‘He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.’ The grief and sorrows, spiritual infirmities and sicknesses (Matt. 8:17), which he bore were not his own but ours. He *had* no sin, *knew* no sin, and *did* no sin. He was our substitute and representative.

‘Stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.’ The wrath of God and the sword of God's justice were sharpened to pierce him because he bore our sins and stood in our place. Though he had no sin, he stood before the justice of God as the world's greatest sinner; for on him were laid all the sins of all the elect of all ages.

v. 5. If you would learn the gospel, then learn the meaning of these two words—*substitution* and *satisfaction*. ‘He was wounded for our transgressions.’ He was literally our *substitute* before the law and justice of God. In our place, in our stead, bearing our transgressions and all of our iniquities, he took upon himself all that justice could inflict. He made full *satisfaction*, for ‘by his stripes we are healed.’ God is reconciled, the debt is paid, justice is satisfied. He fully reconciled us to God by his obedience and his death (2 Cor. 5:19-21). The heart of the sinner was not changed toward God in the sufferings of Christ (that is accomplished later by the Holy Spirit and the word), but the wrath of God was removed toward the sinner. Reconciliation is the work of God in Christ toward himself (Rom. 3:24-26).

v. 6. The prophet is careful not to say ‘they’ or ‘them,’ but ‘we!’ ‘All WE like sheep’ and ‘the iniquity of US all.’ Read Verses 4-6 and put your name in every place you read ‘our’ and ‘we.’ Someone wrote,

‘My sins, my sins, my Savior,
how sad on thee they fall;
when I see them in thy death,
I ten-fold own them all.

My sins, my sins, my Savior,
their guilt I never knew;
till I saw them at the cross,
the Lord of hosts they slew.’

v. 7. ‘He opened not his mouth.’ He was a willing Redeemer. ‘No man takes my life, I lay it down.’ He was brought as a lamb to the altar, as a sheep to be shorn of all dignity, comfort, honor, and even his life. ‘Yet he opened not his mouth,’ not against his people, his Father, his enemies, nor justice. He was willing to die for his sheep (John 10:14-18).

v. 8. His life was taken away in a violent manner, under a pretense of justice. Wrong charges were brought against him; false witnesses lied. ‘He was cut off out of the land of the living.’ Who shall declare the wickedness of men? But for the transgression of his people he was stricken (1 Peter 3:18).

v. 9. ‘Grave with the wicked’ signified the fact that he was assigned to die between two thieves. ‘With the rich in his death’ denotes the fact that he was laid in the borrowed tomb of a rich man. Such vile and wicked treatment was accorded him, although he had done no violence and knew no sin.

v. 10. ‘It pleased the Lord to bruise him.’ This is a key verse. (1) The Lord bruised him, (2) the Lord put him to grief, and (3) the Lord made his *soul* an offering for sin. The Father not only permitted him to suffer as our substitute and sin-offering, he purposed it, predestinated it, and willed him to die (Acts 2:22-23; 4:26-28). His soul suffering shall make an offering, an atonement for our sins; and ‘He shall see his seed’ (every son, sheep, and elect person is seen, known, and loved by Christ); ‘He shall prolong

his days' (He lives forever and so shall they); and 'The pleasure, purpose, and will of the Father shall prosper, be accomplished, fulfilled in his hands' (John 3:35; Eph. 1:3-14).

v. 11. Our Lord did not suffer in vain. He is 'satisfied,' yea even SEATED, having finished his work! All for whom he suffered are justified, for he bore their iniquities (Rom. 8:29-32).

'Payment God's justice cannot twice demand,
first at my bleeding surety's hand,
then again at mine.'

v. 12. He is exalted above all exaltation (Phil. 2:9-11), and he shall divide the spoil of the strong because:

1. He has poured out his soul unto death—*satisfaction*.
2. He was numbered with the transgressors—*representation*.
3. He bore the sins of many—*substitution*.
4. He made intercession for the transgressors—*mediation*.

Seek ye the Lord

Isaiah 55

Isaiah 53 sets forth *the gospel provided* through the suffering Saviour. Isaiah 54 sets forth *the gospel promises* that are sure and certain (vv. 10, 16-17). Isaiah 55 sets forth *the gospel proclaimed* to the needy. The mercies of God in Christ are a proclamation to all men (Mark 16:15) and an effectual call to his sheep (John 10:27-29).

v. 1. ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth,’ not in a natural sense as the woman at the well first thought; but everyone whose soul thirsts for fellowship with God (for mercy, forgiveness, and life) is called to the fountain of life.

‘Come to the waters.’ Come to the water of life that cleanses and refreshes, to the *wine* that makes the heart glad and to the *milk* which gives life and health. It's *free* to those who are poor and have nothing to pay; it's already paid for by the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:24).

v. 2. Why do men spend, time, energy, and strength in pursuing a false religion which is not the bread of life and can never satisfy? Salvation by works is not bread; it is chaff. It is not nourishing; it is harmful. it will not satisfy; only condemn. ‘Listen to me,’ saith the Lord, and feed upon Christ; and your soul shall rest and delight itself in his fullness (Col. 2:9-10).

v. 3. Here are two precepts and two promises.

The precepts:

1. ‘incline your ear.’ Is this asking too much of beggars? of guilty sinners? The body is fed through the mouth, and the soul is fed through the ear. You can hear the error of the world and poison

your soul, or you can hear the precious word of God and live. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

2. 'come unto me' (Isa. 1:18; Matt. 11:28; John 7:37-38). Don't turn to religion, to law, nor to men. 'Come to me.'

The promises:

1. 'And your soul shall live.' There is power and life in the gospel (Rom. 1:16; James 1:18). All that God has for sinners is in Christ. Those spiritual blessings are ours through a union with Christ; that union with Christ comes by faith; faith comes by hearing the word of truth (Eph. 1:13-14).

2. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' Peter calls these 'precious promises.' This is the everlasting covenant which David (on his dying bed) called 'all my salvation and all my desire' (2 Sam. 23:5). Here are five of those sure mercies of David.

'I will be their God and they shall be my people' (Jer. 31:33).

'They shall all know me' (Jer. 31:34).

'I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more' (Jer. 31:34).

'I will give them one heart and one way' (Jer. 32:39).

'I will not turn away from them and they shall not depart from me' (Jer. 32:40).

v. 4. This everlasting covenant is made with our Surety, that great Shepherd of the sheep, Christ Jesus (Heb. 13:20-21). The Lord has given him for a witness, for he is that Prophet who manifests and reveals the Father (Deut. 18:18-19). He is a leader, for he is our great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec; he is our shepherd, who leads us in the paths of righteousness; and he is commander, or King of kings!

v. 5. We do not look to nor follow him in vain, for he shall not fail (Isa. 42:1-4). He shall call and save the Gentiles, who shall willingly run to him because of the power of God (Psalm 110:3). All that Christ is, does, and

will do for his people shall be for the glory of God (John 17:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

v. 6. Are you thirsty? Are you poor? Have you inclined your ear and heard? Have you beheld the great Messiah, Christ Jesus? Then ‘seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.’ Bartimaeus did; the woman with the issue of blood did; the thief did! What is it to seek the Lord?

1. It is to discover that by nature I do not have him and I need his grace.

2. It is to desire his mercy and fellowship with him more than all.

3. It is to be made willing to be saved on his terms that he might be just and justifier.

4. It is to be willing to part with all that is opposed to Christ.

5. It is to him, not his. If we have him, we have that which is his.

vv. 7-9. Our thoughts are not God's thoughts, and our ways are not God's ways. This is evident in all things. But the main reference here is concerning God's thoughts and God's way of redeeming sinners! Our thoughts and ways, which seem right to the natural mind, are the ways of works and will lead to death. Naaman, when confronted with God's way, said, ‘I thought.’ Do you think that God can accept our imperfect righteousness or pardon a sinner without justice being fully honored? Suppose he did. Suppose that without Christ's righteousness and blood God accepted you. What peace could you have?

1. A god who could pardon without justice may one day condemn without reason.

2. A god who could set aside his righteousness may one day set aside his mercy.

3. A god who could deny his law may one day deny his gospel.

4. A god who could change his character may one day go back on his promises.

But the God of glory is never unjust in order to be gracious. He saves and accepts sinners, but not until Christ has honored his law and satisfied his justice. This is God's way, and it is the way of peace and assurance!

vv. 10-11. As the rain and snow falls from heaven in its season and makes the corn, wheat, and vegetables to grow and is not drawn up again into heaven but abides for a time on the earth to do the work for which it is sent, 'so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.' His word of truth, his gospel of Christ our Lord, and the sure mercies of David, which are contained therein, are sent forth into this world and shall not return until that word has accomplished that which he pleased and that for which he sent it—the salvation of his sheep (Isa. 46:9-11).

vv. 12-13. God's people shall go out of bondage with joy and be led forth in peace without fear of ever being retaken by their enemy. Even the creation shall rejoice with them and for them. Their land, once subject to the same bondage of sin, shall be freed and partake in their redemption (Rom. 8:19-23). In all this, his name shall be exalted and glorified.

The person and work of the Messiah

Isaiah 61:1-3 (Luke 4:16-21)

Isaiah 61 should be read along with Luke 4:16-21. Word had come back to Nazareth concerning one whom they knew quite well—one who had been brought up in their town, working as a carpenter. They had heard of some of the great things he had done and said (Luke 4:14-15, 23). Now, he was back in town; so they all gathered at the synagogue on the Sabbath day, knowing that he would be there (Luke 4:16) and would read and speak. Our Lord selected the Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 61:1-3, read it, and declared, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’

If we can discover what this scripture is saying, we will have an understanding of the person and work of our great Messiah. The people of Nazareth did not understand him nor his ministry and sought to kill him (Luke 4:28-30). I pray that we understand the person and work of the Messiah.

v. 1. ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me.’ Even the Saviour's mission and ministry were dependent on the Spirit of God (Mark 1:9-11; John 3:34-35). The Father ordained and anointed the God-Man, Christ Jesus, to be our surety, substitute, sin-offering, and Saviour. He gave him the Holy Spirit without measure. He came from the Father on behalf of his elect to accomplish the Father's will, speak his words, perform his work, honor his law, and satisfy his justice.

‘The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek’ or the gospel to the poor. Our Lord preached (Matt. 4:17) by his words, his miracles, his silence, and his looks. He lived the prince of preachers, he died the theme of all preaching, and he arose the Lord of preachers. He preached good tidings of grace, mercy, and forgiveness of sin to the poor, not necessarily to the materially poor (for even the rich are poor spiritually), but to the poor in spirit. These are those who are sensible of their sins and humbled because of them. These poor disown any

righteousness of their own and stand naked and condemned before God. These poor have nothing, know nothing, and can do nothing acceptable unto God. They are in desperate need of all things and ascribe all that they receive to the grace of God.

‘He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted.’ A broken heart is painful and finds no relief for its distress in the flesh. A broken heart is helpless. We know what to do for a broken arm, but a broken heart needs a transplant—a new heart which only our Lord can give (Psalm 34:18; 51:17; Ezek. 36:25-27).

‘To proclaim liberty to the captives.’ In September, 1862, Mr. Lincoln issued an Emancipation Proclamation effective January 1, 1863, freeing all slaves. It was not a request nor an invitation nor a suggestion, but a proclamation—they were free! Our Lord came to set the captives of the law free from its curse, the captives of Satan and sin free from his dominion and from the penalty of sin (Rom. 8:33-34). By his grace through his offering, we are free forever (Heb. 10: 12-14).

‘The opening of the prison to them that are bound.’ Believers, who have been bound by sin and in bondage to the flesh, are set free; but some are set free from the darkness and bondage of false religion, like Saul of Tarsus. False religion, tradition, and legalism are a prison. We are delivered by Christ (Gal. 5:1).

v. 2. ‘To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ This is the fulfillment of the ‘year of Jubilee’ (Lev. 25:8-10). Every seventh year was the Lord’s year and was a sabbath of rest to the land. But on the year following the seventh of these sevens was the year of Jubilee. Every man sold into slavery was set free, all property and family land was redeemed and returned, all debts were discharged, and a year of rest was proclaimed.

Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, has done all of this for us. Our souls are free, our inheritance is restored, our debts are paid, and we have entered into his rest forever.

‘And the day of vengeance of our God.’ I know that many read this to be that awful day of vengeance when God was pleased to visit all the iniquity and transgressions of his people on Christ. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he was smitten of God and afflicted. This is true, but the

gospel is proclaimed with a two-fold effect! All men do not believe. ‘Some believed and some did not believe.’ The gospel preached is a fragrance of life to those who have life, but it is an odor of death and judgment to those who will not believe. God will visit his wrath upon those who will not believe (John 3:36; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:14-16). This is the day of vengeance of our God.

‘To comfort all that mourn.’ Christ is the true comfort for all true mourners. They mourn under a sense of sin (their own sins and the sins of others); they mourn under trial and affliction; they mourn when they cannot repent as they should, believe as they should, nor pray as they should. But they find comfort for all this in Christ, his blood, his intercession, and the precious promises of his word.

v. 3. ‘To give them beauty for ashes.’ Ashes mean the fire has gone out. Our fire of joy, life, and hope is burned out in Adam; but Christ restores the beauty and warmth of spiritual fire. Ashes mean death; ‘Dust to dust and ashes to ashes.’ In Christ we have eternal life, never to die. Ashes represent sorrow. In extreme sorrow there were ashes and sackcloth.

But he took our death, our mourning, and bore our sorrows, giving to us beauty, his beauty (Ezek. 16:14).

‘Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.’ Here is what Isaiah is saying: The Lord Jesus gives his mourners the beautiful garments of his salvation, the robe of his righteousness, the graces of his Spirit, and his gracious presence, together with his word; and these yield joy, peace, and comfort through all of this pilgrim journey.

‘That they might be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.’ Several things are suggested.

1. Trees are planted by someone. These are ‘the planting of the Lord.’ (Matt. 15:13).

2. Trees that live have roots in water (Matt. 13:6; Psalm 1:3). Our root is in Christ, the living water.

3. The life of the tree is the sap within. The Spirit of God dwells in believers (John 7:37-39).

4. Trees which God plants bear fruit (Gal. 5:22).
5. Trees which God plants never wither (Psalm 1:3-4).

And in all of this God is glorified! From Alpha to Omega in the redemption of a sinner, God is glorified (John 17:1-4).

The Lord our righteousness

Jeremiah 23:1-8

This scripture is so applicable to our day that it could have been written this morning. The prophet deals with four powerful and present truths!

1. He pronounces woe and judgment on false preachers and pastors. (vv. 1-2)

2. He promises that God's elect will be called out of all nations, and true shepherds and pastors shall feed them. (vv. 3-4)

3. He presents the Messiah, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus, who is the hope of all believers and the message of every true preacher. (vv. 5-6)

4. He declares that in comparison with the salvation of Christ, the deliverance out of Egypt would not even be spoken of. (vv. 7-8)

vv. 1-2. In all ages there have been false prophets and preachers. Our Lord called them 'wolves in sheep's clothing' (Matt. 7:15-16). Peter said, 'There were false preachers in Israel and there shall be false preachers in the church who bring in damnable heresies, and many shall follow them' (2 Peter 2:1-3). Paul called them 'ministers of Satan' (2 Cor. 11:13-15) and their message 'doctrines of devils' (1 Tim. 4:1-3). But no one spoke out more strongly against these false preachers than Jeremiah, the weeping prophet (Jer. 9:1).

1. He charged them all with greed and covetousness (6:13 cf. Ezek. 34:1-3).

2. He said they give people a false peace. (6:14)

3. He charged them with denying God's judgment against sin. (14:13-14)

4. Their message is not the word of God but rather their own thoughts. (23:16-17)

5. They preach their dreams and visions and keep God's word from the people. (23:25-32)

The sad thing about this is that, because of the depravity and deceitfulness of the human heart, people prefer to hear the words of the false preachers rather than the word of God. Read Jer. 5:31, John 3:19, John 5:43, and II Tim. 4:3!

vv. 3-4. When we look about us at the vast religious organizations steeped in tradition, idolatry, and false doctrine, when we behold the multitudes of people who claim to be Christians but who have no knowledge of the living God, no love for the Lord Jesus, no evidence of the new birth, and no commitment to holiness, when we hear all of the popular preachers with their messages of works and free-will, we are made to wonder with Elijah, 'Am I the only one left?' or to ask with the apostles, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' But God says—

'I will gather my flock.' Our Lord has an elect people, never doubt it! The Father gave them to him (John 6:37-39; 17:2,9), they were chosen and given to him in eternity past (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Thess. 2:13); Christ loved them and gave himself for them (John 10:14-16); they shall all be justified, called, and glorified (Rom. 8:28-31).

'I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them.' Election is not salvation; it is unto salvation. Those whom the Father has chosen, those whom the Son has redeemed must be quickened by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:1) through the word (James 1:18, I Pet. 1:23) preached by faithful preachers (Rom. 10:13-17). All must hear the gospel, repent, and believe that gospel (2 Thess. 2-13; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 1:21; John 5:24; Rom. 1:16-17).

'They shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor lacking.' The true pastors shall comfort them with God's promises in Christ, establish them in the word of God, and they shall grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ through the word (Eph. 4:11-15).

vv. 5-6. Here is the gospel, the good news, the children's bread, the hope of the believer, and the central fact of all scripture! Here is the summary of

redemption and the one way God can be a just God and a Saviour (Rom. 3:25-26).

‘Behold the days come.’ All days, events, promises, and patterns before Jesus Christ came to earth pointed to that day in the fullness of time when he was born; and all days in the future look back to that hour in which he died for sinners.

‘The Lord will raise unto David a righteous branch.’ Salvation is of the Lord. The Father purposed, planned, and sent the Son. It is the will of God that prepared him a body, made him the Seed of David, the Son of Man, and our Substitute (Heb. 10:7-10; Phil. 2:5-11).

‘The Lord raised up the king who executed judgment and justice in the earth.’ Jesus Christ is Son of man and Son of God. Jesus Christ is the servant, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and also God Almighty—King (Rom. 1:3-4; Isa. 9:6; 2 Cor. 5:19-21).

‘In his days Judah and Israel shall be saved and dwell safely.’ True Judah and Israel is not that Old Testament nation which was but a national people and a picture. True Israel, the true seed of Abraham, are the elect of God in Christ out of every nation on earth (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:7, 16, 26-29). These shall all be saved.

‘The name whereby our Lord is called is the Lord our righteousness.’ He is our righteousness, having by his perfect life imputed unto us the very holiness of God (Rom. 10:1-4). He is our justification, having honored and satisfied every demand of justice by his death. It is his name that saves, his name upon whom we call, and his name by which we are called the righteousness of God! (Jer. 33:16).

vii. 7-8. ‘Behold the days come’ and are here in Christ when the people of God, redeemed by Christ and rejoicing in his grace, shall no more talk of the deliverance out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, but shall speak only of the Lord Jesus our righteousness, who has delivered us from the wrath to come by his perfect life and precious blood. What is the deliverance from Egypt when compared to the effectual deliverance of Christ from the curse of the law?

‘All hail the power of Jesus name,

let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem
and crown him Lord of all.’

The believers hope

Lamentations 3:1-26

Someone said, ‘God has hedged us about on the one side with his promises of mercy lest we despair, and he has hedged us about on the other side with warnings lest we presume.’ John Newton could sing,

‘Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me;’

and he also wrote,

‘Tis a point I long to know,
oft it gives me anxious thought;
do I love the Lord or not,
am I his or am I not?’

The Apostle Paul urged all believers to ‘Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.’ Peter wrote, ‘Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.’ What and who is the believer’s hope? When we think upon our beginning in Adam’s transgressions, of our nature of sin, and our inability to think or do anything pleasing to God, how can we entertain a blessed hope of eternal life and glory? Jeremiah sets forth our hope as it always has been, is now, and ever shall be. Our hope is in our redeemer!

vv. 1-18. As one reads these lamentations of Jeremiah before the Holy God of Heaven, he comes to the same conclusion as Jeremiah in Verse 18, ‘My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord:’ or as Isaiah said when he saw the Lord in his holiness and himself in his uncleanness, ‘I am cut-off, there is no strength or hope in me.’

vv. 19-20. When I remember or call to mind my afflictions, my misery, and the corruption of my nature and flesh, my soul is humbled and bowed down within me. There is no way that a man who has seen God in his holiness and the law of God in its perfect requirements can look within himself or at his works and find any comfort or hope. A true sight of self in the presence of God can only convict us, humble us, and crush us.

v. 21. 'This I recall to mind.' What? My works? No! His grace! What? My sins and misery? No! His love and mercy! Jeremiah has looked within and can only grieve: but now he looks to Christ, and he shouts, 'Therefore I have hope!'

vv. 22-26. This blessed hope is six-fold:

1. 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.' In David's psalm of repentance (Psalm 51), he does not ask for justice but for mercy. 'Have MERCY upon me, O God.' He said in Psalm 51:4 that God would be just to condemn him. In Psalm 130 the same theme is repeated, 'If God should mark iniquity, none shall stand; but with the Lord there is forgiveness and mercy.' Mercy is totally undeserved (Eph. 2:1-4), mercy is sovereign (Rom. 9:15-16), mercy is in Christ (Titus 3:5-7). We deserve condemnation, our hope is that God will be merciful to us in Christ.

2. 'His compassions fail not. They are new every morning.' God is love, and his love for his people shall never fail. His love is of old and everlasting; yet it is so fresh that it is new every morning. We are such unloving and unlovely creatures that it is difficult for us to comprehend the love of God in Christ for his elect.

Love begins with God. We did not love God but rather hated him, yet he loved us (1 John 4:10, 19).

His love is unchanging (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 8:38-39).

His love is infinite (John 3:16; John 15:12-13).

Nothing I have done caused God to love me, and nothing that I have done or will do will make God cease to love me. This is our hope!

3. 'Great is God's faithfulness.' We hear much preaching that exhorts us to be faithful stewards of the grace of God, faithful givers, faithful in worship, prayer, and holiness; but our hope of life and glory is not in our faithfulness but in his faithfulness! We will be faithful by his grace and because he has given us a new heart which desires to walk with him; but even when we fail, fall, and falter, he is faithful.

God is faithful to himself and his word (Num. 23:19; Isa. 46:9-11).

God is faithful to his covenant (Rom. 8:29-31; Jer. 32:38-40).

God is faithful to his Son (John 6:37-39; John 17:1-3, 24).

This was David's comfort when he lay dying, not in his faith, his works, nor his service, but in God's faithfulness to his covenant (2 Sam. 23:5).

4. 'The Lord is my portion, therefore I will hope in him.' Aaron is a picture of the believer in this matter (Num. 18:20). 'The Lord said unto Aaron, thou shalt have no inheritance or any part among them; I am your portion and your inheritance.' As our father, husband, brother, and friend, he has undertaken our total care spiritually and physically and materially. He is our portion, part, and inheritance (1 Cor. 1:30; Matt. 6:31-34). If the Lord indeed by his own choice and by God-given faith is my portion, therefore will I hope in him.

5. 'The Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.' Do you suppose there could ever be found one who sincerely waited upon God, sought his mercy in Christ, and called upon him for mercy who did not receive his grace? God forbid! 'I sought the Lord, and then I knew that it was he that sought me: I waited and found the Lord, and afterward I knew that it was he who found me.' He is eternally good and gracious to

all who call upon him, for in Christ he purposed to be. This is our hope—
The Lord is good!

6. ‘We hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.’ These five words are also the hope Jonah expressed from the belly of the fish (Jonah 2:9): ‘Salvation is of the Lord.’ We rejoice in his mercy, his love, his faithfulness, his sufficiency, and his goodness; but in these five words the whole of the matter is summed up: ‘*Salvation is of the Lord.*’ This is the believer's hope. It is of the Lord in its planning, its execution, its application, its sustaining power, and in its ultimate perfection (Psalm 65:4).

From nothing to everything

Ezekiel 16:1-14

The great, powerful, and glorious nation of Israel (that arose to such splendor and beauty in the days of David and Solomon) started with one lone man—Abram. And when God called him, he was an idolater in a heathen land (Joshua 24:2-3). Think of it—Abram, well up in years, no children and his wife past the age of child-bearing. From him came this mighty nation—from nothing to everything by the grace of God (Deut. 7:6-8) and by the power of God (Jer. 18:1-6). According to Verses 10-14, their beauty was perfect through his beauty, which he put upon them.

But our chief business is not with national Israel but to see what this scripture shows us about ourselves, spiritual Israel, and the Kingdom of our Lord. All that the Lord God did in Israel is a picture and type of his grace to us (spiritual Israel) in Christ. For ‘they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham’ (Gal. 3:7). ‘He is a Jew which is one inwardly’ (Rom. 2:28-29).

1. What we were

vv. 3-5. I am told that among some of the pagan nations, there was a terrible custom of leaving unwanted, deformed infants in the fields to perish. You will find no better picture of our state at birth in Adam than the story of this infant.

We were born in sin of fallen parents (Psalm 51:5; 58:3). We did not come into the world as those who might stand or fall but as those who had already fallen.

Ours was a state of total depravity and total inability (Rom. 5:12). This newborn is helpless, hopeless, and without any power or ability to help itself. All he can do is cry until he perishes (Eph. 2:12).

No outside help is available (*v. 5*). ‘None eye pitied thee.’ The law must condemn, holiness is offended, truth is sworn to testify against us, and justice bares its sword to destroy.

This is a loathsome sight but a true picture of fallen sinners! As Isaiah said, ‘From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores’ (Isa. 1:6). If there is any help for such awful creatures as we are, it must come from our God (Rom. 3:10-26).

2. *What God did*

vv. 6-7. ‘I passed by thee.’ We did not seek him; he sought us! We did not choose him; he chose us! We did not come where he is; he came to us where we were! He was mindful of us and set his love upon us before the world began; and he entered into a covenant of mercy on our behalf with Jesus Christ, our surety (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3-4; Heb. 13:20-21). He came where we were in the person of his Son (2 Cor. 5:19; Matt. 1:21-23), took our nature, obeyed the law (Gal. 4:4-5), took our sins and shame upon himself, and redeemed us to God by his blood (1 Pet. 3:18).

‘I saw thee polluted in thy blood.’ He saw us as we really are, yet he loved us! Mercy is for the miserable, grace is for the guilty, and salvation is for real sinners (Matt. 9:10-13). ‘But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom. 5:6,8,10).

‘I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live.’ In the same way that our Lord stood before the grave of Lazarus (who stinketh) and called him forth to life, he quickens us (dead sinners) and makes us to live in him (Eph. 2:1; John 5:21). When our Lord quickens a sinner to life through his word (James 1:18), death gives way to life, darkness becomes light, inability gives way to strength, and our enemies flee away. The same power that raised Christ from the grave raised us (Eph. 1:19-20).

3. *What we are now*

vv. 8-14. ‘It was the time of love,’ not our love for him but his love for us (1 John 4:10). ‘We love him because he first loved us.’

‘I covered thy nakedness.’ He took away our reproach, our shame, and our guilt and made us righteous and holy in Christ (Jer. 23:5-6; 2 Cor. 5:21).

‘I washed thee with water.’ He cleansed us with water and blood.

‘Let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure (justify and sanctify),
save from wrath and make me pure.’

‘I clothed thee, I decked (adorned) thee, I put a beautiful crown on your head; you became mine!’ By his grace, through the merits of our Lord Jesus, he has brought us from death to eternal life, from the pit of corruption and sin to perfect righteousness in him (Jude 24-25). Salvation is of the Lord from the beginning to eternal glory.

Verse 14 declares, ‘Your beauty is perfect through my comeliness, which I have put upon thee.’ C. H. Spurgeon once said, ‘The whole of the work whereby a lost sinner is lifted from the dunghill of sin, washed in the blood and made righteous, exalted to eternal life and glory is of the Lord and of him only.’

Lost, driven away, broken, sick

Ezekiel 34:1-6

The Lord has been pleased to use prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastor-teachers to preach the gospel of his grace to his people that they may hear, believe, and be converted (Eph. 4:10-14). 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe' (1 Cor. 1:21). While these men are called 'shepherds,' the Lord Jesus is the chief shepherd, the good shepherd, and our great shepherd. These under-shepherds labor as his servants, stewards of the grace of God, and as those who must give an account of their stewardship (Heb. 13:17; Luke 16:2).

Our text begins with the Lord's rebuking some unfaithful preachers who have not done what they were called to do.

v. 2. Their first concern was for themselves and not for the sheep. Should not a true shepherd's first concern be for the well-being of his flock?

v. 3. These preachers eat well, live well, and are clothed and cared for by the sheep; but, while they take from the flock, they do not feed them the word! Isaiah said, 'They all look to their own gain' (Isa. 56:10-11).

v. 4. In this verse we encounter for the first time four words which are found later in this chapter to describe the ministry of our chief shepherd, the Lord Jesus! Here is the charge against the shepherds: 'You have not sought that which was lost.' 'You have not brought again that which was driven away.' 'You have not bound up that which was broken.' 'You have not healed that which was sick.'

If this is the ministry of the chief shepherd, then it should be our ministry. If this is the work of our Saviour-God, then let us who preach and teach his word, who are called to feed his sheep, study his person and work and be about our Master's business (John 10:14-16).

vv. 11-16. He says, 'I will both search my sheep and seek them out' (v.11); 'I will feed them in good pastures (v. 14); 'I will feed my flock and cause them to lie down' (v. 15). And, as he has always used faithful men, he will raise them up and send them to his sheep today! But the under-shepherds must understand the character of his sheep and the character of his gospel, which is given in Verse 16 using these four words—lost, driven away, broken, sick!

'I will seek that which is lost.' This is a term our Lord used often to refer to those whom he came to save. 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost' (Luke 19:10; Matt. 10:6; 15:24). A lost sheep is away from the fold, separated from the shepherd's care, does not know the way back, and has no power nor ability to return to the fold. Paul describes us as 'without Christ, having no hope and without God' (Eph. 2:12).

The good news of the gospel is that our Lord will seek that which was lost. He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (Matt. 9:10-13). He will seek and save the lost sheep and welcome home the lost son.

'I will bring again that which was driven away.' What took the sheep away from the shepherd? We are out in the wilderness of shame and iniquity, away from God. How did we get in this condition? 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you' (Isa. 59:2). (1) The fall of Adam has driven us away from God (Rom. 5:12), and (2) our vain, religious ceremonies and attempts at self-righteousness have driven us away from God (Isa. 1:11-15; Rom. 10:1-3). Thank God, he will not leave us away from him, but our Lord Jesus 'died the just for the unjust to bring us to God' (1 Peter 3:18).

'I will bind up that which is broken.' Read Psalm 34:18 and Psalm 51:17. Is that which is broken good for anything? One cannot see in a broken mirror; one cannot drink from a broken glass; one cannot use a broken arm; one cannot walk with a broken cane. Only the heart is at its best state when it is broken.

It is acceptable and well-pleasing to God (Psalm 51:17).

It makes up for defects in our duties (Psalm 51:17).

The Lord is nigh unto the broken heart (Psalm 34:18).

The Lord will save the broken heart (Psalm 34:18).

God dwells with the broken heart (Isa. 57:15; Ezekiel 34:1-6)

A broken heart implies a godly sorrow over sin, is humble before God, claiming no merit nor goodness, and yields sweet fragrance like a sweet-shrub crushed.

‘I will strengthen that which is sick.’ It is true that the Lord sometimes heals his people when they are ill, and sometimes he does not. He is able to deliver us from any distress, trial, or trouble if it is his will to do so. But our sickness in this scripture is a spiritual sickness called sin, iniquity, and transgression. Isaiah’s prophecy in Isa. 53:4 declares, ‘himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses’ (Matt. 8:17). Also, ‘By his stripes we are healed.’ This is not teaching that our bodies will not be sick because of his atonement. We shall endure physical suffering, pain, and death, but not our souls. They are perfectly healed and whole from all disease, sin, and death. ‘He that believeth on the Son shall never die’ because ‘by his stripes we are healed,’ perfectly whole forever.

v. 17. One word must be added. While our Lord delights to show mercy to the lost, driven away, broken hearted, and sick, he will destroy those who think that they are fat, strong, and have no need. Luke 9:11 says, ‘He healed them that had need of healing.’

Can these bones live?

Ezekiel 37:1-14

There are at least three things taught in these verses.

This scripture is a prophecy of the restoration of Israel as a nation, and some say the conversions of many of them. Charles Spurgeon wrote in 1864, ‘There will be a native government again. The state of Israel will be incorporated. The Jews shall return to Palestine and walk upon her mountains and sit under her fig trees.’

This scripture is a description of the resurrection of the dead. I have watched as the bones of the dead in Mexico have been transferred from a grave to the family box; and in amazement I have wondered, ‘Can these bones live?’ Our Lord said that they will all live again (John 5:28-29).

But as all of the Old Testament scriptures ‘testify of Christ’ (John 5:39; Luke 24:27), this scripture is a picture of the resurrection of dead sinners to eternal life through and by the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:22). The giving of life and salvation to dead sinners is a greater miracle than the restoration of Israel or the resurrection of dead bodies. The two greatest mysteries and miracles are (1) the Son of God became the Son of Man and (2) the sons of men, by his grace, become the sons of God! (1 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 3:1).

1. Here is the truth about human nature—dead in sin.

vv. 1-2. Do you want to know the truth about our fallen state? Do you want to see what we really are as a result of Adam's transgression? (Rom. 5:12). Here it is! Evidently there had been a battle fought in this valley years before, and many men were killed. Their bones lay scattered about in the sand, bleached white, so dry and parched a dog would not pick one up, all the moisture and marrow gone out of them for years, very many and very dry.

Martin Luther once said, ‘If a man could get a full view of his sin and lost condition as it really is, he would lose his sanity.’ Like these dry

bones, by nature we are without help, without hope, without Christ, and without God in this world (Eph. 2:12). The dead sinner cannot feel, will, fear, love, repent, nor believe because he is devoid of spiritual life. He is dead!

2. *'Can these bones live?'*

v. 3. This is the question the Lord God put to the prophet. Can men with blood, breath, and bodies stand where these bones lie in the dust?

This is the whole issue of scripture. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots? Can we do good that are accustomed to do evil? (Jer. 13:32). Can the fragrance of the rose issue forth from the sepulchre? Can the cursing tongue praise the Lord? Can hate be turned to love and pride and arrogance to humility?

The prophet gave the only answer! 'O Lord God, thou knowest.' The preacher certainly has no power to accomplish such a miracle. The bones themselves have no power to raise themselves. So a dead sinner has no more power to give himself spiritual life than a dead body can raise itself. Our Lord said, 'No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him' (John 6:44). No man will move toward God until God moves him. By nature we not only have no power to live, but we have no desire nor will to live. 'Thy people are made willing in the day of thy power' (Psalm 110:3).

3. *The command comes from the Lord, 'preach to the bones'*

v. 4. Prophesy unto the bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord.' I suppose if one wanted dry, dead bones to live, the very last thing he would consider doing would be to preach to them. But this is God's way and God's command, 'Preach the word of the Lord to them' (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16, 10:13-17; James 1:18).

The word of God is the word of life.

Christ is the word of God, and one cannot separate the word incarnate from the word written and spoken.

Life-giving sermons are sermons filled with Christ—his person, his obedience, his blood, his resurrection, his exaltation, and his intercession (Acts. 13:38-39; 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

When Christ is preached (who he is, what he did, why he did it, where he is), those who are given ears to hear, hear Christ (John 13:20). The Holy Spirit and the word of God bring life (1 Peter 1:23). This is why the apostle Paul determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2), for this gospel preached is the power of God to salvation (Rom. 1:16).

4. The message that God gave Ezekiel to preach rang of free and sovereign grace

vv. 5-6. The message was not an appeal to the bones to do something for God, but it was a proclamation of what God was pleased to do for them. ‘I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live.’ ‘I will lay sinews, flesh, and skin upon you.’ ‘You shall know that I am the Lord’ (Isa. 45:22). The word is not ‘I will if you will;’ but rather God, says, ‘I will and you shall!’ God’s will and purpose are not subject to man’s depraved will. He works all things after the counsel of his will and makes us willing (Eph. 1:11). Through the years preachers have been exhorted not to preach God’s sovereignty, covenant mercies, elective grace, and effectual, particular redemption to sinners; but these are the very truths God instructed the prophet to preach to these dead bones. Tell them who God is, what they are, and what God is pleased to do for them in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3-14).

5. The results of preaching the gospel of God’s glory.

vv. 7-10. ‘So I preached as I was commanded.’ Wouldn’t it be refreshing if all preachers would forget the programs, the entertainment, the methods, the eloquence and preach the word of God as they are commanded!

‘There was a noise’ or a stir! If the true word of God is preached in the power of God’s Spirit, there will be a stir—the stir of interest, of life, of joy, of faith. But there will also be the stir of opposition, persecution, and trouble.

‘O breath, come and breathe upon these slain that they may live.’ Ezekiel did more than just preach; he prayed to the Spirit of the Lord to give life (John 3:5-8). Doctrines and facts (as true as they are) do not save nor give life. Christ is our life and he must give life! He said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live’ (John 11:25).

Four things God taught Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4:28-37

Those who know the living God, who have seen a little of his glory and majesty in the face of Christ Jesus are troubled by the low opinion that men today have of God. ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes’ (Rom. 3:18). ‘Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself’ (Psalm 50:21). Such trash and trite that is permitted in the pulpit and church in the name of God and such familiarity, irreverence, small thoughts, and loose talk about the Lord God is unheard of in the scriptures or among our ancient fathers. Let us look at the text and see how the Lord dealt with Nebuchadnezzar and what he was pleased to teach him.

No one ever accused Nebuchadnezzar of being a prophet; but the Lord taught him, as he taught Jonah, some powerful truth in a most unusual way. Nebuchadnezzar was a great and powerful man, also a very proud man (vv. 22, 30). Because of his pride and boasting, the Lord took away his kingdom and his understanding and he became like an animal for a time (vv. 32-33). Through this experience he learned four things:

1. He learned the majesty, greatness, and sovereignty of God.

v. 34. At the end of those days, Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion.’

When Moses stood before the bush that burned and was not consumed and asked, ‘What is thy name?’ the Lord said to Moses, ‘I AM THAT I AM.’ There was a time when man was not; there was a time when the world was not; there was a time when the heavens were not; there was a time when time was not; but our God is, was, and ever liveth. ‘I praise him that liveth forever.’

The Lord God's dominion and reign is everlasting, infinite, irresistible, and immutable. The hymn writer wrote:

‘Thy throne eternal ages stood,
ere seas or stars were made;
Thou art the ever-living God,
were all the nations dead.

Eternity with all its years
stands present in thy view;
To thee nothing old appears,
great God, there's nothing new.

Let idols topple to the ground
and their own worshippers confound,
But Judah shout and Zion sing
and each confess our sovereign King.’

He is absolutely sovereign in *creation*. All things were made by him and for him, and by him they are held together. By him they shall be destroyed, and he shall make ‘all things new’ (2 Peter 3:10-13).

He is totally sovereign in *providence*. ‘Not a bird falls to the ground without him.’ He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will’ (Isa. 45:5-7; 46:9-11; Eph. 1:11). He so orders all events, all men, and their actions that ‘all things work together for good to them that love him and are the called according to his purpose.’

He is sovereign in *salvation*. He said to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy’ (Rom. 9:10-18; 8:28-31). Our Lord said, ‘The Son quickeneth whom he will’ (John 5:21).

How did David identify the Lord God when the heathen asked, ‘Where is your God?’ He replied, ‘Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.’

2. *He learned the nothingness of man.*

v. 35. ‘And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.’ ‘All the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing;’ not some, not the poor, the rich, the weak, the openly wicked, but all together. Kings, emperors, the rich,

the powerful, the learned, the talented, the wise, and the foolish are all before him as nothing. Men came from the earth and will return to the earth. 'We brought nothing into this world and we carry nothing out.' 'Without him we can do nothing!'

Isaiah wrote in Isa. 40:15-17, 'All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him as nothing.' We are a 'drop of the bucket.' This is the unnoticed drop of liquid which falls from a bucket when it is emptied. We are 'counted as the small dust of the balance.' This is the dust upon the scales which does not affect the weight nor the outcome.

This knowledge of who God is and what we are enables us to praise God and give him all the glory for the mercy and grace he gives us in Christ Jesus. This knowledge made David to exclaim, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him' (Psalm 8:3-4). It made Paul say, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 7:24-25).

3. He learned that the will of God is unchangeable and shall be done

v. 36. He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou?

Only God has a free will! One may argue about my will, your will, free will, and whosoever will; but in this universe there is one sovereign, immutable will, and that is the will of God. 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Even men such as Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17), Judas (John 17:12), and the crucifiers of Christ (Acts 4:27-28), doing what their perverted wills wanted to do, were at the same time fulfilling God's will (Acts 13:29).

David said, 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, and in the seas, and all deep places' (Psalm 135:6). What has it pleased God to do?

It pleased God to make you his people (1 Sam. 12:22).

It pleased God that in Christ shall all fullness dwell (Col. 1:19).

It pleased God to bruise Christ (Isa. 53:10).

It pleased God to reveal Christ in us (Gal. 1:15).

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21).

4. He learned that those who walk in pride the Lord is able to abase

v. 37. Over and over in the scripture the Lord has revealed his wrath against pride. Pride is the first on the list of seven things which God hates (Prov. 6:16-17). He will turn away the proud and bless the humble (James 4:6).

May it please God to have mercy upon us according to his lovingkindness and his tender mercies, to blot out our transgressions, to create in us a clean heart and a right spirit, and to save us for Christ's sake!

Thy God will deliver thee

Daniel 6:1-24

Daniel (the prophet of God), who was in captivity, had interpreted the handwriting on the wall for King Belshazzar. Because of this, Daniel was clothed with scarlet, a gold chain was put on his neck, and he was made the third ruler in the kingdom (Dan. 5:25-29). That night Belshazzar was slain and Darius became the king.

vv. 1-3. Darius set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty princes; and over these princes he established three presidents, of whom Daniel was the Chief President. The king respected and admired Daniel ‘because an excellent spirit was in him’ and he planned to set him over the whole realm.

vv. 4-9. The other presidents and princes were jealous and envious of Daniel and desired to find a reason whereby Daniel could be discredited before the king. But they could find no fault with this faithful man. They finally decided that the only area in which Daniel could be charged would be concerning his love for, and faith in, the true and living God. Though Daniel was in a pagan society and surrounded by idolatrous people, he worshipped, prayed three times daily, and gave thanks before God (*v. 10*).

Pretending to honor King Darius, these wicked men drew up a decree (they called it a royal statute) that for thirty days if any person in the kingdom should pray or ask a petition from any god or man, save of King Darius, he would be cast into the den of lions. They knew that in this way they could trap Daniel, for he would never go even a day without prayer. The king was fooled and flattered by these men and signed the degree ‘that it could not be changed,’ according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not (*v. 8*).

vv. 10-17. Daniel prayed and gave thanks to God, as he did everyday. Then these men reported Daniel to the king and reminded the king of his decree. Darius was displeased with himself; and, because he admired Daniel he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him (v. 14). There was nothing that Darius could do; the law was established; Daniel had violated the law and the sentence must be carried out. The king commanded Daniel to be cast into the den of lions and said unto him, 'Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.'

vv. 18-24. The Lord did indeed deliver Daniel from the lions. Daniel told Darius, 'My God hath sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me.' Then the king brought those men who had accused Daniel and put them in the den of lions.

This is an Old Testament picture of our deliverance from the judgment and curse of the law of God, which we have broken. Consider these things!

1. The law of God cannot be changed; it altereth not

Unlike Darius' law, which was a foolish one, God's law is holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12). It is a revelation of the holiness and righteousness of our God.

God's law is spiritual and requires not only outward obedience but inward perfection (Rom. 7:14; Matt. 5:21-28). There are no loopholes and no compromise. 'Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them!' (Gal. 3:10).

2. We have broken God's law

The law of King Darius, which Daniel violated, was a wicked law and should have been disregarded by a true believer; but the laws of our God should be kept; but we have not, do not, and cannot in this flesh obey them perfectly. Sin is the transgression of God's law; and we are all transgressors, sinners, and workers of iniquity (Rom. 3:10-19; Psalm 14:1-3). And, like Darius, we may labor all our lives (till the going down of life's sun) to establish a righteousness, to appease a holy God, or to escape

the just condemnation for our sins; but it cannot be done! God will and must carry out sentence and judgment against our sins (Ezek. 18:20).

3. Thy God, he will deliver thee

Darius could not find a way to deliver Daniel from his law. But our Father purposed a way to honor his law, to satisfy his justice (without compromising his holiness), and a way whereby he could be just and the justifier of sinners (Rom. 3:19-26). The Lord Jesus Christ (the God-man) (1 Tim. 3:16) ‘came into this world, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them who had broken the law.’ By his perfect obedience he imputed to us his righteousness. By his death (1 Pet. 3:18; Isa. 53:4-6) he took our sins and ‘paid it all, all the debt we owe. Sin has left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow.’ Our God delivered us literally by going into ‘the den of lions’ for us. He did not come to destroy his law but to fulfill it, not to find a way around justice but to meet it (bearing our sins) and satisfy it in full!

Who can be in the form of God and take the form of a servant?

Who can come to the earth in flesh and never leave the bosom of the Father?

Who can be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners yet be numbered with them?

Who can be tempted in all points of the law yet be without sin?

Who can die, be buried, and walk out of the tomb victoriously under his own power?

Who can ascend to heaven and be commanded to sit at the right hand of majesty and yet be the man?

Who? The God-man! Our Lord Jesus Christ!

This is the gospel of substitution and satisfaction. Christ, our substitute made full satisfaction to the law and the justice of God on our behalf.

Hosea-type of Christ

Hosea 1-3

The name 'Hosea' is the same with Joshua and Jesus and signified a saviour or a deliverer. Hosea was not only a faithful prophet and servant of the Lord, but he is a powerful type and picture of our Lord Jesus in his love and mercy to sinners. It is surprising that we do not hear more sermons on Hosea, since he has such a name and his writings are so filled with grace for the guilty.

The story in brief:

God commanded Hosea to take a wife from among the people of whoredom. Fornication and adultery was their form of life. Hosea married Gomer, who was quite young, and she bore him three children. Then Gomer began to walk the way of her heritage, leaving Hosea for her lovers. Even though she had left him and was living in wickedness and shame, Hosea continued to provide corn, wine, oil, and money for her. Gomer thought these gifts were from her lovers, and she praised them. Soon she was brought down to poverty, shame, and loneliness and was to be sold on the block as a common slave. Hosea loved her yet, and he went to the marketplace and bought her for the price demanded and took her home to be his wife, no more to leave.

The key to this story

Hosea 3:1. 'Then said the Lord unto me, go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.' The Lord put Hosea through this unusual experience to demonstrate his grace, love, and mercy to his people, all of whom have 'sinned and gone astray, turning to our own way.' We did not love him, but he loved us with an 'everlasting love' and 'loved us to the end.'

1:1-3. According to the commandment of the Lord, Hosea went among a vile race, a sinful people, and took his bride, joining himself to her as one!

Our Lord chose his bride from Adam's fallen, sinful race (1 Cor. 1: 26-29; Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 2:1-4).

We did not love him; he loved us (1 John 4:10). We did not choose him; he chose us (John 15:16). We did not deserve his mercy and love. The cause of his love for us and our redemption is found only in himself, not in us!

2:1-5. A short time after their marriage, Gomer left Hosea and followed the ways of her people. She was from a people of whoredom; and when she became of full age, she walked the same path they walked.

Though our God entered a covenant with Christ, chose us in Christ, and made us his own before the world began (Eph. 1: 3-6; 2 Thess. 2:13; Gal. 1:15), we were born into this world sons of Adam, fallen sinners; and we go astray from the womb (Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 5:12, 19).

We do not come into the world as those who might fall; we are born fallen and only have to reach certain ages and be exposed to certain temptations to reveal what we already are! We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners (Rom. 3:10-19). It is our nature to love sin and hate holiness.

2:5-8. Hosea took care of Gomer even in her rebellion and sin. She said, 'I will go after my lovers who gave me good things.' Hosea said, 'She did not know that I gave her these things.'

Oh, how gracious the Lord is to his people all the days of our lives! From our birth and all the days of our lives he has protected us, provided for us, and blessed us, even when we knew him not nor desired to know him.

Like Gomer, we praise ourselves, talk about good luck, or give the glory to the flesh, and know not that our Lord is the giver of every good gift (Rom. 8:28-31; Gal. 1:15).

2:9-11. Finally, Gomer was brought low; her life became a burden; her joy was turned to mourning; the sweetness became bitter; that which she had loved, she hated.

The Lord God will bring his people to this place. A sinner must be lost to be saved; he must be brought low before he can be lifted up and exalted; he must, like Gomer and the prodigal son, discover what he is, where he is, and feel the guilt, shame, and burden of sin (John 6:44-45).

We cannot taste of grace until we weary of sin. We will not love and flee to Christ until we hate our fleshly lovers and what they have done to us. To miss conviction of sin is to miss repentance, and to miss repentance is to miss faith, and to miss faith is to miss Christ. The Holy Spirit of God, in bringing us to repentance toward God and faith in Christ Jesus, will convince us of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).

3:1-3. Gomer belonged to the fallen system! She was in the clutches and possession of her masters. There was a price on her head. Hosea bore the shame of identification with her and, revealing his special care for her, paid the price and set her free.

We belonged to a fallen humanity; we were in the possession of the law and justice. There was a price on our heads—eternal condemnation, curse, and death (Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12).

Christ loved us, was numbered with us, and ‘despising the shame,’ he endured the cross and paid what we owed but could not pay. ‘He paid a debt he did not owe for us who owed a debt we could not pay.’

Hosea 3:3 reveals the security of the Lord's purchased bride and her eternal union with him (John 10:24-30). This is the covenant revealed in Jeremiah, ‘They shall be my people, and I will be their God... I will not turn away from them to do them good and they shall not depart from me’ (Jer. 32: 38-40; Mal. 3:6; Phil. 1:6).

A famine to be feared

Amos 8:11-13

The nation of Israel often disobeyed God, rebelling against his law and commandments. Yet the Lord continued to send his prophets to warn them, to instruct them, and to call them. Though they were a stiff-necked people who ‘erred in their hearts and did not know my ways,’ even followed other gods, yet the Lord owned them, restrained them, and would not suffer them to be without ‘a word from the Lord.’

Now in this chapter of Amos, the Lord announces judgment upon Israel, the very worst thing that can come upon them, ‘I will take my word from you and there will be no message from the Lord’ (Amos 8:11-13). If men are deprived of light, they wander in darkness. If men are deprived of truth, they walk in error. Judicial blindness and no word from God is our greatest fear. It was said of Ephraim, ‘Leave him alone;’ and of the Pharisees, ‘Leave them alone.’ Nothing could be worse.

David feared this and said, ‘Take not thy Holy Spirit from me’ (Psa. 51:11).

Jeremiah wrote, ‘The prophets also find no word from the Lord’ (Lam. 2:9).

Micah said, ‘There is no answer from God’ (Micah 3-7).

Amos wrote, ‘They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.’

These servants of God all feared for the people when the heavens were silent.

1. What are the signs of ‘a famine of hearing the words of the Lord’

Religion does not cease; for religion is as much a part of man as any emotion, as revealed in John 1:11, ‘He came unto his own (nation, priesthood, and tabernacle) and his own received him not.’ But when there is a famine of hearing the word of the Lord:

Ministers go on preaching but without the power of the Holy Spirit. The voice of a man is the only voice the people hear. The gospel is heard in ‘word only’ (1 Thess. 1:5); and there is no regeneration, no conviction, no revelation of Christ, and no comfort nor growth.

Assemblies gather together on the Lord's day, but the Lord is not present with them. Like Mary and Joseph, ‘They travel a day's journey supposing Jesus to have been in the company’ (Luke 2:44), but he was not there and they sought him sorrowing.

The word of God is read, but there is no application to the heart. The disciples said, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the scriptures?’ Dear friends, someone said, ‘We have listened to the preacher, truth by him has been shown; but we need a great teacher from the everlasting throne; application is the work of God alone!’

The ordinances (baptism and the Lord's table) are observed, but they are meaningless rituals and ceremonies without him. The formality of prayer is kept up; but if the Lord God ‘has no respect to the prayer of his servants,’ it is useless to pray (1 Kings 8:28).

The famine is in full drought when the scriptures become a source of controversy instead of comfort, a source of debate instead of instruction and inspiration. When we are more concerned with proving our doctrine than proving ourselves, then our table becomes a snare and the means of salvation becomes a means of delusion (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

*2. By the grace of God, how can such a famine be prevented in our area?
In our day?*

I urge you to look at Psalm 51—the seeking sinner's guide and the believing sinner's comfort. God heard David when he lived and prayed this Psalm, and he will hear us when we do!

Psalm 51:1-2 - A plea for mercy! David pleads for mercy on the grounds of the Lord's lovingkindness and tender mercies. He does not claim any

merit nor righteousness; but he prays to be washed, cleansed, and his sins blotted out because 'there is forgiveness with thee' and 'thou art plenteous in redemption' (Psalm 130:3-7).

Psalm 51:3-4 - A confession of sin! You can be sure that there will be no forgiveness of sin nor mercy from God where there is no confession of sin. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive' (1 John 1:9). 'He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy' (Prov. 28:13). Note the openness and honesty of his confession. 'My sin is ever before me and against thee have I sinned and done evil in thy sight.'

Verse 4 has a solemn and important statement. David justifies God and takes sides with God against himself. 'You are just when you speak against my sin and you are clear when you judge and condemn me.' A truly repentant sinner will own that he deserves to be damned (Luke 7:29-30).

Psalm 51:5-6 - A reason for our troubles! Our great problem is not so much what we do as what we are. What we are (fallen, depraved, corrupt sinners) determines what we have done and what we do. David confesses that his problem is within. Not only is the water bad, the fountain is bad! We were conceived in sin and brought forth from the womb speaking lies (Psalm 58:3; Rom. 5:12). We need to be born again; we need a new heart and a new nature (John 3:3-8).

Psalm 51:7-8 - A remedy provided! The Roman Church has a doctrine called purgatory, a place where all people go after death to be prayed from their sins by suffering themselves or by the good works of loved ones on earth. In purgatory they are purged from sin and made ready for heaven. One thing is true in all of this; if we are to stand in God's presence, we must be purged from all sin. This is what David desires when he says, 'Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.' But David speaks of the blood atonement on the mercy-seat provided by the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The first mention in the Bible of *hyssop* was in Exo. 12:22 when the hyssop was dipped in the blood of the Passover lamb and

sprinkled on the door in Egypt. God said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.' This is the message which brings blessings, the presence of God, and good to his people. There will be no famine of the word where there is:

1. A plea for God's mercy from the heart.
2. A genuine confession of sin.
3. An understanding of the root of our problem.
4. The preaching of Christ, our substitute, and him crucified.

Our God will honor those who honor his Son. Most of the time when there is a famine of the word, the problem is not in the pew but in the pulpit. Where God's servants faithfully preach Christ Jesus, the Father will bless.

Salvation is of the Lord

Jonah 2:1-10

I do not know how much importance can be attached to this nor whether it is of any importance at all, but the word of the Lord came to Jonah saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it' (Jonah 1:2). Then after he fled from the presence of the Lord, sailed to Tarshish, was swallowed by the fish, and uttered these immortal words, 'Salvation is of the Lord,' Jonah was told by the Lord, 'Arise, go to Nineveh and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee' (Jonah 3:1-2). Crying against a city because of their wickedness does not require much knowledge, understanding, nor compassion. But preaching the Lord's message of grace and salvation involves an understanding by experience and faith in that gospel and the glory of God. This Jonah received in the darkness and hopelessness of the fish's belly.

Moses declared unto the children of Israel, as they stood before the Red Sea with the thundering hosts of Egyptians descending upon them, 'Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord' (Exo. 14:13). David wrote more than once in the Psalms, 'Salvation belongeth to the Lord' (Psalm 3:8; 37:39; 62:1). Jahaziel told Israel, 'The battle is not yours, but God's. Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord' (2 Chron. 20:17). Simeon prayed to die for 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation' (Luke 2-30). A man can only preach what he has experienced, and Jonah learned that 'Salvation is of the Lord.'

1. What do we mean by these words, 'salvation is of the Lord'?

Someone wrote years ago, 'The royal bath of mercy, wherein black souls are washed white as the snow, was filled from the veins of our Lord Jesus Christ. No blood of martyrs mingled with that stream. No blood of noble confessors and heroes of the cross entered into that river of atonement. The atonement is the unaided work of the Lord of glory.' The banquet of mercy is served by one host, the Lord Jesus Christ, who prepared the feast,

invited the guests, made them willing to come, and gave to them their robes of spotless righteousness. A preacher of the last century declared, 'My gospel is simply this: the whole of the work whereby a guilty, fallen son of Adam is lifted from the dunghill, washed, justified, and translated into the kingdom of God and made like his beloved Son is of the Lord from the beginning to its glorious consummation' (Eph. 2:8-10).

2. Salvation is of the Lord in its origination

Our Lord planned and purposed the redemption of his people from the beginning (Eph. 1:3,4; 2 Thess. 2:13). Our Lord Jesus was 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev. 13:8). Salvation is too splendid and too wise to have been the product of any mind except that mind which could accomplish it.

Suppose that God had called a council of angels and declared, 'Man that I shall create will rebel against me. I shall punish all sin; my justice and my law demand that I should do so. But I intend to show mercy, for God is love! Tell me, how can my law be honored and the demands of my justice be fulfilled that mercy may reign? Where shall mercy and truth meet together? righteousness and peace kiss each other? (Psalm 85:10). How can God be just and the justifier of sinners who believe?' Those angels would still be sitting there in silence. Only God can plan and accomplish salvation (Isa. 46:9-11).

3. Salvation is of the Lord in its execution

The Father made the beloved and only begotten Son our surety, our representative, and the federal head of an elect people, chosen in him and given to him to redeem and bring to glory (John 6:37-45; 10:14-16; 10:24-31). In Adam we died; in Christ we live (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22). In Adam we were made sinners; in Christ we are made righteous (Rom.5:19). In Adam we were separated from God; in Christ we are brought to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

The Father is the first cause of all that took place in the work of our Redeemer. 'He (the Father) hath made him (the Son) to be sin for us (the sinner), who knew no sin (Christ was perfect) that we might be made the

righteousness of God in Christ' (2 Cor. 5:21). 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him (Isa. 53:10). Even those who planned his death, betrayed him, tried him, scourged him, nailed him to the cross, and put him in the tomb did what God determined before to be done (Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28). Christ died not as a reformer, nor an example, nor to gain the pity of men. He died as the substitute, sin offering, and sacrifice for his people. As the blood atonement on the mercy-seat of old was offered 'before the Lord,' Christ Jesus, by one offering before the Lord, perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10: 9-17). The Father ordained and pictured for us in the Old Testament all that our Lord would do for our redemption, and he died 'according to the scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:1-3).

4. Salvation is of the Lord in its application

'No,' says the free-willer; 'God has done all that he can do. He has given his Son; he has provided salvation; now it is up to us to want it, seek it, and accept it.' Can the dead sinner give himself life? Can the lost sheep find itself? Can the unregenerate begat themselves? 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin?' (Jer. 13:23).

No, my friends! his people are made willing in the day of his power. 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth' (James 1:18). We receive Christ and believe on his name because we are 'born of God' (John 1:12-13). Paul summed up his call in these words found in Gal. 1:15, 'But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me.'

A fountain opened for mourners

Zechariah 12:10; 13:1

Charles Spurgeon (minister to London for 38 years) wrote, ‘In this scripture, first of all, there is a prophecy concerning the Jewish people; and I am happy that it confirms our hearts in the belief of the good which the Lord shall do to Israel. We know of a surety, because the Lord has said it, that the Jews will be restored to their own land and that they shall inherit the country which the Lord has given to their fathers by a covenant forever. But, better still, they shall be converted to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and shall see in him that Messiah for whom their fathers looked with joyful expectation, that Redeemer of whom the prophets spoke, but who was despised and rejected by his own. Happy day, when not only the Gentiles but the Jews will be found worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Redeemer and High Priest. We have the promise, and we expect the fulfillment when the due season arrives. Israel shall own her King!’

I intend to use the text as it speaks to us, true spiritual Israel (Gal. 3: 7, 29); and it does speak to us on a very vital issue—repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:20-21). One cannot have faith without repentance nor repentance without faith; yet most repentance and true mourning over sin comes from first seeing Christ Jesus in his holiness, his power, and his sacrifice. Was this not true of Isaiah? (Isa. 6:1-5) and of Job? (Job 42:4-6).

It is difficult to say which is first, repentance or faith; but one writer said, ‘More repentance is produced by faith than faith by repentance.’ The more we see of Christ, the more we see of ourselves; and this sight produces true worship, true repentance, true faith, and true salvation (John 6:40). He is worthy of the adoration and worship of those who have never sinned (as the angels). When we make him only the saviour from sin and praise him only because he saves us from sin, we do not properly understand his Lordship. He is Lord of heaven and earth! When Isaiah saw

his glory, he spoke of him (John 12:41). Let's look at five divisions in these two verses of scripture.

1. *'I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication.'* (12:10)

As I stated in the introduction, this prophecy first not only refers to the nation of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also to the seed of Abraham by faith. 'He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart and spirit' (Rom. 2:28-29). The promise of grace and salvation was to Abraham and his seed, which is Christ and all who are in Christ by Divine purpose and God-given faith (Gal. 3:16). In Christ the Father has chosen and blessed a people of every tribe, nation, and tongue (Eph. 1:3-6; Rev. 7:9). All 'true Israel' shall be saved (Rom. 11:26). All that the Father has given to Christ shall be called, justified, and glorified (John 6:37-39; Rom. 8:29-30). He will indeed pour out the Spirit of grace, regeneration, supplication, and mercy (sure mercies) on the House of David and the inhabitants of the 'heavenly Jerusalem' (Heb. 12:22-23; Gal. 4:26).

2. *'And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.'* (12:10)

Our Lord said in Isa. 45:22, 'Look upon me; look unto me, all the ends of the earth! Look unto me and be saved! Look unto me for I am God!'

I suppose when we say, 'Look to Christ,' or 'Look upon Christ,' this puzzles a lot of people. One will say, 'If Christ were in Jerusalem, I would sell out and go look upon and listen to him.' Another might say, 'If Christ were here today, I would sit at his feet and look upon him.' Oh, my friends, like Nicodemus, we are bound to the flesh. 'How can I be born again, shall I enter my mother's womb?' Our saving connection with Christ has nothing to do with our natural eyes, ears, and hands, but with the mind and heart. It is to hear him in the mind, look to him in the will, love and believe him in the heart.

One does not need a college degree to look! You may not be able to read, but you can look; you may be destitute of virtue, but you can look; you may have no merit, but you can look. Looking only requires my

personal interest and attention. Another can pray for me, but no one can look for me. I must look to him myself. I look not to his disciples, his church, nor his law; I am exhorted to look to him (Jer. 29:13). Salvation is in him (1 John 5:10-12).

3. *'Whom they have pierced.'* (12:10)

Who sent our Lord to the tree? What held him on the cross? It was not the nails, nor human weakness, nor the soldiers.

‘Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
his chief tormentors were;
each of my crimes became a nail,
and unbelief the spear.’ (Isaac Watts)

He knew no sin, not merely that he had no sin. He was acquainted with grief, but not with sin.

He was made sin for us and treated by the Father as if he were sin itself. ‘Nail him to the tree, for sin must be punished; and he is numbered with the transgressors!’ So when the charge is brought, ‘Who crucified Christ?’ I reply, ‘It pleased the Father to pierce him for my sins’ (Isa. 53:4-6).

4. *'And they shall mourn.'* (12:10)

True mourning for sin has a distinct and constant reference to the Lord Jesus. If I hate sin because I am exposed, I have not repented; I merely regret that I have been found out. If I hate sin because of judgment and hell, I have not repented; I merely regret that God is just. But if I see sin as a hateful offense against my Lord, and I see my sin as crucifying him, then I mourn with a truly broken and repentant heart (Psalm 51:3-4). True mourning is a great bitterness, as one mourns the death of his firstborn. Someone said,

‘Lord, let me weep for naught but sin

and after none but thee;
then I would—oh, that I might
a constant weeper be.’

A broken heart over sin is a work of the Spirit of God and will be healed (Psalm 51:17; 34:18).

5. ‘In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.’ (13:1)
Could this be the verse which inspired William Cowper to write that great and blessed hymn?

‘There is a fountain filled with blood
drawn from Immanuel's veins;
and sinners plunged beneath that flood
lose all their guilty stains.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
shall never lose its power
‘til all the ransomed church of God
be saved to sin no more.’

The phrase ‘in that day’ can refer to several times.

That fountain was opened when God purposed to save us.
That fountain was opened to all Old Testament believers.
That fountain was opened when our Lord died.
That fountain was opened when we believed.

Thank God, that fountain will still be open in the great day of our Lord; for we have been saved, by his grace are being saved, and our salvation is nearer than when we believed; and the whole of the redemptive work is because he loved us and gave himself for us (Rev. 5: 9-10).

The messenger of the covenant

Malachi 3:1-6

The preceding chapter (Malachi 2) is filled with rebuke and judgment against both the priests and the people for their sins. The priests were apostates from the way of the Lord and caused the people to stumble (Mal. 2:8-9). The chapter closes with these words, ‘You have wearied the Lord with your wicked words, it saying that the Lord takes delight in your evil ways and that there is no judgment and righteousness in God. You ask, ‘Where is the God of judgment?’ Chapter Three begins with the answer of our Lord to this question.

v. 1. ‘Behold I will send my messenger.’ This is John the Baptist, called the last of the Old Testament prophets, who was sent to ‘prepare the way before him’ (Isa. 40:3; John 1:6-9). The allusion is to kings and great men sending ambassadors before them to give notice of their coming. John said, ‘I am not the Christ! I am not that prophet! I am not Elijah! I am the voice crying in the wilderness—behold the Lamb!’ All of the prophets have written and preached of the Messiah's coming (Acts 10:43). Now the last of their number declares that the Messiah has been born of woman and is in the midst of them (John 1:29-34).

‘And the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple.’ The Lord Jehovah is speaking of himself, the Son of God, the promised Messiah and Christ, the Lord and head of the church, the Redeemer of true Israel (John 4:25; Matt. 2:2-6). Some were seeking him as a temporal deliverer, to free them from national bondage and to restore the earthly glory to Israel; but some, like Simeon, believed the word and waited for ‘thy salvation’ (Luke 2:25-32). When the Lord speaks of coming to his temple, he is actually talking about coming to the material temple in Jerusalem (the second temple—Haggai 2:1-9). The temple was built to be HIS, devoted to his worship, to reveal his glory and his mercy to sinners through the sacrifices and the mercy-seat. He came to that temple on

several occasions (Luke 2:22-27; Mark 11:15-17). 'He was in the world and the world knew him not,' and 'He came unto his own (temple, priesthood, nation) and his own received him not' (John 1:10-11).

'Even the messenger of the covenant.' This is the covenant of grace, the everlasting covenant of which our Lord Jesus is not only the surety and mediator, but called here the messenger. He is called the messenger of that everlasting covenant of grace (Heb. 13:20-21; 7:22; 8:6) because it is revealed, made known, and manifested in and through him (John 1:14; 1 John 5:20; Eph. 1:8-10). As our king he reigns, as our priest he perfects us, and as our prophet he reveals the mysteries of God's covenant.

'In whom ye delight; behold he shall come.' All believers delight in him. 'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory' (1 Pet. 1:8); and all believers delight in his covenant. David's last words on earth were words of joy and confidence in the Lord's covenant of grace (2 Sam. 23:1-5). We rejoice in the messenger of the covenant and in the covenant—its antiquity (2 Thess. 2:13), its sureness (Rom. 4:16), its immutability (Rom. 11:29), its fullness (Col. 2:19-10), its beloved messenger, surety, and advocate (1 John 2:1; 1 Tim. 2:5).

v. 2. 'Who shall abide the day of his coming?' Who shall stand when he appears? Who shall listen when he speaks? 'Who hath believed our report?' Is this not only Isaiah's question but the question of every prophet?

When he says, 'I and my Father are one,' who shall abide?

When he declares, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' my kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy, who shall abide?

When he says, 'All that my Father giveth to me shall come to me,' and 'No man can come to me except my Father draw him,' who shall abide?

When he preaches the gospel of the cross, the tomb, and the glorious resurrection as our substitute and saviour, who shall hear?

When he talks of the new birth, eating his flesh and drinking his blood, of persecution and division caused by him, who shall abide?

‘He is like a refiner’s fire and like a fuller’s soap.’ His word is called a fire (Jer. 23:29). When it comes in power, it separates the gold from the dross, truth from error, genuine faith from false faith, and will try the works and preaching of men (1 Cor. 3:13-15). These women would boil the garments in hot water. Then they were rubbed with fuller’s soap, which whitened them and took out the spots. We are sanctified by his word of truth.

v. 3. ‘And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.’ One can see the old refiner of precious metal. He made the fire; he knows how hot it should be; he knows when to put the metal into the fire, how long to leave it, and when to take it out. All the time he sits (unalarmed and untroubled) and waits for the purifying process to do its work. Our Lord Jesus Christ has come to this earth and finished the work given to him. He is exalted at God’s right hand, seated until his church is called out and his enemies are made his footstool. This verse denotes his constant care over his church from the cradle to the grave. His eye is upon them in all their ways. He will purify these ‘sons of Levi,’ for they are all priests; and he will purge them that they may believe him, worship him, and offer sacrifices of faith, love, praise, and thanksgiving in righteousness; that is, in the righteousness of Christ (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:16). He began the work of purifying and purging, and he shall finish it (Phil. 1:6).

v. 4. All spiritual worship, faith, praise, and offerings are acceptable to God through the Lord Jesus Christ if such are offered in the faith of his righteousness imputed and his atoning sacrifice. Without Christ, nothing we do or say is acceptable to God (Rom. 8:8; Heb. 11:6).

vv. 5-6. The Lord declares that he will be a swift witness against all ungodly men and women and ‘their foot shall slide in due time’ (Deut. 32:35). But as he is unchangeable in his judgments against sin, he is

unchangeable in his love and mercy to his people! Our confidence and assurance is based not upon our faithfulness but upon his! We are often called 'the sons of Jacob' because, as Jacob was loved, chosen, called, and blessed by the sovereign grace of God, so are we!

'All that I am, even here on earth,
All that I hope to be,
When Jesus comes and glory dawns,
I owe it, Lord, to thee.' (H. Bonar)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

A Work
of
Henry Mahan

Come now and let us reason together

Isaiah 1:1-20

Isaiah was one of the sixteen prophets whose writings are contained in the Holy Scriptures. There are more testimonies and quotations in the New Testament taken out of Isaiah than out of all the other Prophets. Isaiah so fully describes the person, offices, sufferings, and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ that some have called him ‘the fifth evangelist,’ and his book, ‘The Gospel According to Isaiah.’

v. 1. His prophecy is called a ‘vision’ because the truth that God revealed to him was as clear to his mind as bodily objects are to men's eyes. He foresaw and he foretold (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:10-11).

v. 2. Isaiah calls upon the whole creation to hear the Lord's charge against Judah and Jerusalem. The Lord said, ‘I have made them my people (Deut. 7:6-8), I blessed and sustained them above all nations, I gave them the law and the prophets, and they have rebelled against me.’

v. 3. They are more stupid and ungrateful than beasts. We hear the sayings, ‘Stubborn as an ass,’ and ‘Dumb as an ox;’ but even these dumb beasts acknowledge and obey their masters and benefactors. But my people do not know me, consider nor think upon me, reverence nor obey me.

v. 4. ‘They are laden with iniquity.’ The word ‘laden’ means heavy, full and thick, as full of sin as an egg is full or a sponge is full (Rom. 3:12-18). ‘A seed of evildoers;’ children of rebels (Rom. 5:12) who have forsaken the Lord and gone their own way (Isa. 53:6). God is angry (Psalm 7:11; Heb. 10: 30-31).

v. 5. They are so depraved and rebellious that even afflictions and the judgments of God have no effect upon them (Amos 4:6, 9-11). ‘Why

should I chasten and correct you?’ You are so mentally warped (head is sick) and spiritually dead (heart is faint) that even correction brings out rebellion. Judgment will not produce repentance in a depraved sinner (Rev. 16:9; Rom. 2:4).

v. 6. Here is the result of Adam's fall, a description of total depravity, the true condition of fallen flesh! From the very sole of our feet to the top hair on our heads there is no life, no truth, no light, no goodness in us (Rom. 7:18, 8:8; Eph. 2:13). These wounds and sores of sin are open and ugly and have no remedy.

v. 7-8. Because of your rebellion and disobedience you lie desolate, destroyed by the enemy, bruised, broken, and afflicted. You have no peace, rest, nor happiness. Men without God are without hope in this world or in the world to come (Eph. 2:12).

v. 9. If the Lord of hosts, by his infinite grace and goodness, had not chosen a people from Adam's race, defeated our enemies in the person and work of his Son, and called us effectually by his Spirit, no one would be saved. We would have all been cut off as the people of Sodom (Rom. 9:27-29). ‘Salvation is of the Lord’ in its origination (2 Thess. 2:13), in its execution (Gal. 4:4-5), in its application (Gal. 1:15), in its sustaining power (Jude 24-25), and in its ultimate perfection (Rev. 21:3-6).

vv. 10-15. Here is a startling revelation! Believe it or not, these ungrateful, irreverent, totally depraved people make a pretence of being religious! They are inwardly wicked and outwardly religious (Matt. 23:25-28). They kept the outward forms, ceremonies, and holy days; yet they did not love, obey, nor worship God in their hearts. It is so often true that the less a man knows of God and the farther he departs from the true and living God, the more of the outward form of religion he adopts. The less internal devotion, the more emphasis is placed on the external ceremony and the outward rules and regulations. Their outward show of piety, prayer, sacrifice, and sabbaths was an abomination to God (Luke 16:15).

v. 16. 'Wash ye, make you clean.' Notwithstanding their sacrifices and ceremonies, they were unclean (as all men are) and needed to be washed in the blood of Christ (Psalm 51:7; 1 John 1:7). The blood of animals cannot put away sin, nor can the deeds of the law nor religious works, 'Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes.' Not only put away the doing of evil, but also the evil of doing, which is an attempt to be justified before the eyes of God by our doings (Rom. 10:1-4).

v. 17. 'Learn to do well.' These are the true works of righteousness that are produced by a right relationship with God in Christ Jesus (Gal. 5:22). Observing the ceremonies, sacrifices, and sabbaths outwardly are meaningless; but a regenerated, renewed, and cleansed heart will find delight in serving God and others.

v. 18. God in grace proposes a conference, not to determine if we are sinners nor the extent of our sins, but what is to be done about the matter. *We are* sinners and our sins are double-dyed, as scarlet and red like crimson. Only Christ can put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself (Heb.9:26; Heb.10:12-14, 19-20). If you be made willing to come to Christ in repentance and faith, you shall eat the good of God's great land; if you refuse him, you shall be devoured, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

1. Are we willing to own and confess our sins?
2. Are we willing to repent of dead works and personal merit?
3. Are we willing to call on God in Christ for mercy and grace?
4. Are we willing to confess him and bow to him as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10)?

Then you shall be saved!

Here am I – send me

Isaiah 6:1-8

Isaiah was a prophet of God who lived about 700 years before Christ came to earth in the flesh. He lived about 120 years and preached about 85 of those years. He was a prophet in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah-kings of Judah.

v. 1. ‘In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord. ‘ Is there some connection between the death of King Uzziah and Isaiah's vision of God's holiness? Perhaps! Uzziah was a great and successful king whom Isaiah probably admired (2 Chron. 26:22). He did many great and notable things, but he became proud and presumptuous. His pride led him to the temple to offer incense to God, not through God's priest but by his own hand. This is a denial of the holiness of God and the work of Christ, our great High Priest (2 Chron. 26:16-20). Christ is God's priest (typified by the Old Testament priesthood), and not even a king can come to God except through him (John 14:6). God judged Uzziah and he died a leper. When Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord.

1. Isaiah saw the supreme glory of Christ. It was the enthroned Christ, the sovereign Christ of all authority and glory; for John wrote of it in John 12:41, ‘When Isaiah saw his glory, he spoke of him.’

2. Isaiah saw the victorious Christ, for he was sitting on a throne. Men and nations rush to and fro; we pace the floor and fret and worry. He sits amid complete order and purpose (Isa. 46:10-11; Psalm 110:1).

3. Isaiah saw the infinite glory of Christ, for ‘he is high and lifted up.’ His name and throne are above every name and throne.

‘None can stay his hand or say unto him what doest thou?’ (Phil. 2:9-11).

4. Isaiah saw the universal glory of Christ. His glory and presence ‘filled the temple.’ ‘Christ is all and in all.’ Every revelation of God to human eye, ear, or heart is Jesus Christ (John 1:18). Isaiah saw Christ, the Lord, exalted King of kings and Lord of lords!

v. 2. Around the throne Isaiah saw the seraphims. Who are these seraphims? There are many opinions, such as heavenly creatures, or angels, or perhaps (in figurative language) the true ministers of Christ.

1. They cover their faces in modesty and humility before the Lord; for they are less than the least, unworthy to be ministers, and the chief of sinners.

2. They cover their feet, conscious of the imperfection of their walk, conduct, and ways. ‘O wretched man that I am.’

3. With two wings they did fly in haste to declare the truth of his glorious person and work.

vv. 3-4. What is their cry? ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.’ The chief attribute of God is his holiness. God is love, God is just, God is merciful; but ‘holy and reverend is his name.’ All that God is and does must be in agreement with his holiness. Nowhere is the holiness of God revealed more than at Calvary, when his holiness demanded and carried out the death of his Son to redeem a people (Rom. 3:25-26). The whole earth is his; all that is in it and all creation shall serve his glory (Rev. 4:11).

v. 5. What was Isaiah's response to this revelation of God's presence and holiness?

1. He saw *himself*. ‘I am undone and ruined; I am a sinful man; I am reduced to silence.’ A man may look at others and say, ‘I thank thee, I am not like other men.’ He may look at the written

law and say, 'I am blameless.' But when a man is exposed to the absolute holiness and righteousness of God, he must cry, 'Woe is me.'

2. He saw the *evil of his heart and mouth*. Unclean lips speak from an unclean heart. The lips are the outlet of the heart.

3. He saw the *total ruin of the human race* (Rom. 3:10-19; Psalm 14:2-3).

The two-fold cry of the word, of the gospel, of those who have seen the Lord is 'All flesh is grass' and 'Behold your God' (Isa. 40:6-9). The sinfulness of sin, the inability of the flesh, and the need of sovereign mercy are only discovered in the light of God's holiness. Job experienced this (Job 42:5-6) and so shall all whom God is pleased to bring to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus.

vv. 6-7. God revealed to Isaiah, the sinner, his mercy and grace. When he saw the holiness of God, realized his corruption and evil, and confessed his sinfulness and inability, there follows the application of mercy and grace in Christ. Self-judgment always precedes forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10). Grace is only for the guilty; Christ died only for the ungodly (1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 5:6-8).

1. The seraphim which came to him is the minister of the gospel, who comes to men sent of God (John 1:6-7). God sent Philip to the eunuch (Acts 8:29-30).

2. The live coal in his hand is the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—his word of grace, the good news of mercy (Rom. 10:13-15; Eph. 1:13). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17).

3. The altar of fire from which the live coal was taken is the sacrifice of Christ, our Lord. The Passover lamb was roasted on the altar of fire as our Lord Jesus (who is our Passover) was sacrificed for us. He endured the fire of God's wrath for our sins (2 Cor. 5:21). The pardon of sin, the cleansing, the power of God to

redeem come from the blood of Christ at Calvary (Heb. 10: 12-17) .

4. He laid it on my mouth. That cleansing, purging fire of Calvary, the blood of the Son of God, actually met our sins, came in contact with all our iniquity, engaged to purge, burn out, and eradicate all our transgressions (Isa. 53:4-6). ‘He bore our sins.’

5. ‘Your iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged.’ Your sin is completely atoned for and forgiven. God said, ‘I will remember their sins no more.’ How can this be? Only in Christ, our substitute! God can be holy, just, and righteous and justify us in Christ only. He obeyed the law, giving us a perfect righteousness (Rom. 5:19); and he died (the just for the unjust) to bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). ‘Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace kiss at Calvary’ (Psalm 85:10).

v. 8. ‘Who will go with the message of substitution and satisfaction through the person and work of Christ?’ Only the man whose lips have been touched by experience with that fire from the altar. ‘Here am I, send me.’ I know, have experienced, and love that gospel.

Immanuel – God with us

Isaiah 7:1-14

The nation Israel, and especially the kingdom of Judah, shall be kept from destruction from its enemies and preserved by God until the Messiah shall come to earth. Jacob declared this in Gen. 49:8-10. In spite of Israel's backslidings, idolatry, enemies, and ignorance of true worship and true redemption, the temple shall stand, the Passover shall be observed, and the law of ceremonies, circumcision, Sabbath, and sacrifices shall continue unchanged until the Messiah shall come to fulfill all things and redeem true Israel by his blood and righteousness. The tribe of Judah, the house and lineage of David, must continue until he comes to Bethlehem, city of David (Luke 2:1-4, Micah 5:2). That is what this seventh chapter of Isaiah is all about!

vv. 1-2. It was in the days of King Ahaz (king of Judah) that the enemies of Judah besieged Jerusalem but could not prevail. Fear and dread gripped the hearts of the people of Judah when they learned that the ten tribes of Israel were allies of Syria against Judah. Fear of the enemy, distrust of the power and care of God, and guilt because of their sinfulness made their hearts tremble like trees sway in a hurricane.

vv. 3-9. The Lord spoke to the Prophet Isaiah and sent him to meet King Ahaz in a certain place with the Lord's message. The Lord instructed Isaiah to comfort Ahaz and exhort him to be quiet, fear not, and neither be faint-hearted; for the conspiracy formed against him by Syria and Ephraim would be fruitless, and the rival kingdom of Israel in 65 years would be broken.

vv. 10-11. Although Ahaz was not a godly king, but was a wicked man, yet the Lord said to him, 'Ask for yourself a sign (a token or proof) of the

Lord your God.’ The Lord was his God, as he is every man's God! And God will use every man to accomplish his divine will for Israel and the world (Rom. 9:17, Prov. 16:4). Knowing Ahaz's unbelief and hesitancy to follow God's prophet, the Lord says, ‘Ask of me a sign that will be convincing to you that God has spoken and will keep his word.’ Ask what you will—a miracle to be done on the earth or in the heavens. Examples: the dividing of the sea for Moses or the sun standing still for Joshua.

v. 12. But Ahaz (unwilling to hear God's prophet, unwilling to be quiet and wait on God, unwilling to rely on the promise and power of God, unwilling to depend on God and not seek the help of others) now refuses to obey the prophet and ask God for a sign. He pretended religion and a reverence of God by saying, ‘I will not tempt the Lord.’ To ask a sign of God, when he offered one, is not irreverence; but to refuse one when offered is great stubbornness and ingratitude!

v. 13. Isaiah addresses the king; but also his words of rebuke apply to the whole house of David, the entire nation, which, like their king, pretended religion and reverence for God only to openly disobey him and refuse his words. ‘It is a small thing to you to weary, vex, and disturb the prophets of God by your obstinacy and unbelief; but will you weary and vex my God also?’ Read Matt. 10:40-42. Unbelief is the sin of all sin, the damning sin, the sin that plagued Israel all their days and robbed them of blessings innumerable (Heb. 3:17-19).

v. 14. Therefore (whether you ask a sign or no!), ‘The Lord himself shall give you a sign.’ How was this birth from a virgin (many years later) a sign of the deliverance of the nation Judah at that time?

1. The power of God to cause a virgin to give birth to a son, and the promise of God that it will come to pass should give them assurance (Num. 23:19). On these two things Abraham's faith rested (Rom. 4:20-22).

2. The promise of the Messiah, made often before and repeated here, who must come from the root of Jesse, the tribe of Judah, and the loins of David, guarantees the preservation of this people.

3. The seed of woman (Gen. 3:15), the priest like Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18), the Passover lamb (Exo. 12:13), the prophet like Moses (Deut.18:18-19), and the King (son of David (Psa. 132:11) is this virgin's son; and in him are all of God's mercies and promises. Of him the prophets wrote, for him the ancient believers waited, to him they all looked; and he shall come and not tarry (Isa. 46:13).

The virgin shall call his name Immanuel, which signifies God with us, God dwelling among us in our nature (John 1:14), God and men meeting in one person (2 Cor. 5:19), one mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). The virgin knew that she had not known a man, and this is indeed the Son of God (Lk. 1:34).

He was called Jesus! This is the name given him by Joseph, according to God's command (Matt. 1:20-21); the virgin called him 'Immanuel;' Isaiah 9:6 called him 'wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting God, the Prince of Peace;' Jeremiah called him 'the righteousness of God.' But the design of these words and names is not so much to relate the names by which Christ should commonly be called, as to describe his nature and office. 'To be called' is often put for 'to be!' Example: Jer. 33:16.

The incarnation of our great God and Saviour is called by Paul 'the mystery of godliness' (1 Tim. 3:16); and he is our hope, our peace, and our salvation. Isaac Watts put it in these words:

'Til God in human flesh I see, my thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred three are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appear, my hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear; his grace removes my sin.'

Jesus Christ-the mighty God

Isaiah 9:6-7

We have before us the greatest of all subjects, yet the most difficult and mysterious—the incarnation of God! God became a man. God took on himself ‘the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men’ (Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 3:16). The gift of Christ is called ‘unspeakable’ and the riches of Christ are called ‘unsearchable’ (2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:8).

The Ancient of Days became an infant of days; he who made woman was made of a woman; God who is spirit actually became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

In the same breath that the Prophet calls him a child, he calls him counsellor. In the same breath that the prophet calls him a son, he calls him the everlasting Father. The warrior's garments are rolled in blood, yet he is the Prince Of Peace. He is a ‘Man of sorrows’ (Isa. 53:3), yet he is the mighty God. He is ‘Rejected of men’ (Isa. 53:3), yet the government is on his shoulders. There are no contradictions here. Every word is true, but it is not learned by research and reason - only by revelation (1 Cor. 2:9-10, 14) . As scripture is only interpreted in the light of scripture so,

1. There is no seeing Christ except in his own light (John 1:18).
2. He is the lesson learned, yet he, himself, is the teacher.
3. He is the one to whom we look and the light by which we see.
4. He is not only the tabernacle, the priest, and the mercy-seat, but he is the sacrifice and the one to whom it is offered.

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

There is no repetition here. The careful student knows that the Spirit does not waste words.

1. 'A child is born,' a man-child made of a woman, who lay nine months in the womb and came forth as all children are born, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Jesus Christ, the man, was born of a woman just as all men come into the world.

2. 'A son is given.' This Son was not born but given, sent from heaven. He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:3-4).

When the angel announced to Joseph the coming of Christ in the flesh, he quoted Isaiah 7:14, 'A virgin shall be with child and she shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.' The virgin birth is not simply a matter for argument or amazement but of necessity. Jesus Christ is not only man and called the son of man, but he is God and the Son of God. The Son of God can have no human father but is conceived by the Holy Ghost. If he were the seed of man and not the seed of woman, he would be born in sin: but he is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners' (Heb. 7:26).

Is it true that God became a man? If it is true, then we have a righteousness, a redeemer, a mediator, and a hope of eternal glory. If it is not true, if there is no man in glory called Jesus Christ, then no other man will ever be in glory, then we stand alone before God's awful throne with no mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

The government shall be on his shoulder

The government, not only of the universe and the world in general, but of the kingdom of God in particular.

1. All things in heaven and earth were made by him, for him, and are held together by him (Col. 1:16-17).

2. He has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18) and all authority over all flesh (John 17:2).

3. He reigns as King and surety over the kingdom of God. This government is delegated to him from the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

4. He is head of the church, has all pre-eminence (Col. 1:18-19), and a name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9-11).

His name shall be called wonderful

We carelessly call many things wonderful that are unworthy of such distinction. He alone is wonderful. He is wonderful in his eternality (Prov. 8:24-31); wonderful in his person—the Godman; wonderful in his everlasting, infinite, and unchanging love; wonderful in his perfect, holy life; wonderful in his substitutionary death; wonderful in his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:1-4).

His name shall be called Counsellor

The world is full of people who want to be counsellors and advisers, but there is but one counsellor—Jesus Christ. Would you know God? Christ reveals him! Would you know the will, way, and purpose of God? They are all found in Christ! He is both the wisdom and the power of God (1 Cor. 1:30). Someone asked Mr. Spurgeon, ‘What is the best body of divinity?’ He replied, ‘There is but one body of divinity—Christ Jesus.’ (Col. 2:9-10). Religious people say, ‘Are you in trouble? Do you need the Lord? Then call us.’ Don’t do it! Call on Christ; he is the Counsellor!

His name shall be called the mighty God

The disciples said, ‘Show us the Father.’ Christ replied, ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father’ (John 14:8-9). ‘I and my Father are one’ (John 10:30). Jesus Christ is God (Acts 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:19; Heb. 1:8). Every attribute of deity is found in him—omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. The disciples asked, ‘What manner of man is this that even the waves obey his voice?’ He is the mighty God!

His name shall be called the everlasting Father

No man can explain the trinity; we can only believe. Our God is one God, yet three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7). He that hath the Son hath the Father (2 John 9; 1 John 2:23). When Moses asked

God, 'What is thy name?' the Lord replied, 'I AM THAT I AM.' On how many occasions did our Lord Jesus use these words, 'I AM'? (John 8:58).

His name shall be called the Prince of Peace

He is the author of peace between God and sinners (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20). He is our peace of heart and conscience (John 14:27). He brings to us everlasting peace; for his government, his peace, his kingdom are established on principles of judgment and justice (Isa. 9:6). This is no temporary peace; for Jesus Christ, the God-man, effectually, sufficiently, and once for all honored God's law and satisfied justice for all who believe (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Acts 13:38-39).

The Messiah – Rod and Branch of Jesse

Isaiah 11:1-16

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, a Rod and Branch out of Jesse (house of David), endued with the Spirit of God, is the promised Messiah. As prophet, priest, and king, he shall establish his kingdom of peace and gather Israel from the four corners of the earth. The people of his church shall be victorious over their enemies, and ‘to him shall the Gentiles come.’

v. 1. Jesse is the father of David (tribe of Judah). Though this family and house were very prominent and illustrious during the reign of King David and Solomon, from the Babylonian captivity until the coming of Christ it was very low, like a tree cut down with nothing left but a root in the ground—a stump! (Gen. 49:10; Micah 5:2; Heb. 7:14; Matt. 1:6-16; Luke 3:23-31). ‘The Branch’ is a well-known name of the Messiah (Jer. 23:5-6; Zech. 3:8, 6:12).

v. 2. The Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh; yet he was a man, made of a woman, made under the law, subject to every temptation (as we are), and dependent upon the Spirit of God which was upon him. He was conceived by the Spirit of God (Luke 1:35); the Spirit descended upon him at baptism (Matt. 3:16); the Spirit anointed him to be our prophet, priest, and king (Luke 4:18-19). He had the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and reverence without measure (John 3:34). The human nature of our Lord is difficult to define, but he was truly a man of flesh and blood (Luke 2:51-52); and the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to fulfill all required of us (Rom. 5:19).

v. 3. The word ‘quick’ refers to scent or smell, because the sense of smell is more sure in judging whether something is good or bad than the senses of seeing or hearing (meat or milk, for example). Our Lord has perfect understanding and knowledge of those who fear (truly reverence) the Lord

and those who merely profess to know him. He knew Nathaniel (John 1:47), and he knew the Pharisees (Matt. 22:18). He does not judge by outward appearance (Luke 16:15), nor does he need the testimony of men (John 2:24-25, 6:64).

v. 4. 'But with righteousness shall he judge the poor'—his righteousness! He came to preach good news, salvation, and redemption to the poor in spirit (1 Tim. 1:15). The poor sinner who knows it, confesses it, and seeks righteousness in Christ shall be accepted in him (1 Cor. 1:30). The poor, meek, and humble shall find pardon; the Lord shall take their part and deal with their enemies (Matt. 5:3-5).

'The rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips.' By his word he is pleased to reveal Christ and save some; so by his word he shall destroy his enemies (2 Thess. 2:8).

v. 5. It is said of our Redeemer, 'Holy and reverend is his name; he loveth righteousness and righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom.' By his active and passive obedience, he imputed to us an everlasting righteousness! He is faithful to his Father, to his word, to his work, and to his church. These two attributes give us hope—'faithful and just' (1 John 1:9); 'just and justifier' (Rom. 3:26).

vv. 6-9. These verses are not to be understood literally at this time, but the prophet speaks spiritually. The meaning is that many sons of Adam of fierce, cruel, and evil dispositions shall be changed, transformed by the grace of Christ and the preaching of the gospel; and they shall become most humble, gentle, and kind servants of God and his church, as cruel Saul of Tarsus and the rugged jailer in Philippi (2 Cor. 5:17).

But one day there shall be a new earth on which shall dwell the creatures of God in perfect peace and tranquility (Rom. 8:19-21; 2 Pet. 3:13).

v. 10. An ensign is a signal, a banner displayed for the gathering of soldiers for battle—where they shall stand, whom they shall follow, and the certain identification of the company. Christ, the son of Jesse, is our banner (Exo. 17:15)! Our Lord Jesus 'lifted up' is our banner (John 12:32,

8:28). Both Jew and Gentile are one church in him (Eph. 2:14-15, 3:6)—chosen in him, redeemed in him, accepted in him, and seated in him. To him we come, and his rest is glorious.

vv. 11-16. ‘The Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people.’

1. The first time was (as most believe) the deliverance out of Egypt.

2. It may be (as Rom. 11:11-15 seems to indicate) that in the days of Messiah, national Israel will be visited in grace. We shall have to wait to see; but Verse 16 says, ‘Like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.’

3. Rom. 11:25-32 seems to indicate the future conversion of many Jews. Some say this refers to spiritual Israel (Jew and Gentile believers), but it does not fit the context.

The day of divine visitation

Isaiah 12:1-6

This chapter contains a song of praise and thanksgiving for redemption and salvation in Christ Jesus. This is strictly ‘family fare’ and cannot be appreciated, understood, nor sung by any but the redeemed of the Lord.

v. 1. ‘And in that day.’ This is a phrase used repeatedly by Isaiah to indicate a particular time of divine visitation. It may not be a twenty-four hour day, but rather a time when the Lord is pleased to reveal to his elect his grace and mercy in Christ.

1. It is a day of *conviction* (Isa. 2:10-11), for judgment precedes justification, emptying precedes filling, and repentance precedes comfort.

2. It is a day of *revelation* (Isa. 25:8-9) when, like Simeon of old, the believer cries, ‘I have seen thy salvation!’

3. It is a day of *assurance* (Isa. 26:1-4) when his rest, peace, and joy settle upon the heart and mind, and we are enabled to trust him with complete confidence.

‘I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.’ The Lord's anger toward his elect is difficult to explain in the light of the fact that ‘He has loved us with an everlasting love,’ and he declared, ‘Jacob have I loved’ before Jacob was born. But the scripture says, ‘We were children of wrath, even as others’ (Eph. 2:3-4), and, at that time, we Gentiles were without Christ and without God’ (Eph. 2:11-13). Whatever it means, we know that in Christ Jesus his anger and wrath are turned away (Rom. 8:31-33, 38-39). ‘God was in Christ reconciling us to himself’ (2 Cor. 5:19); and we are comforted by his promises, by his love shed abroad in our hearts, and by his indwelling Spirit (John 14:16-18; John 16:13-14).

v. 2. ‘Behold God is my salvation.’ This may read, ‘God is my saviour.’ Christ, who is God, is my saviour (John 1:1, 14). He is a just God and a Saviour (Isa. 45:21-22). He was appointed by the Father, provided in the covenant, promised in the word, sent in the fulness of time, and became the author of my salvation by his obedience, death, and exaltation (Acts 13:38-39; 1 Peter 3:18).

‘I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.’ I will trust him for all things needed and required—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). I will rest confidently in him and believe that, in him, I am secure from all wrath and condemnation (Rom. 8:1, 33-34). I will not be afraid of sin, Satan, death, hell, nor the wrath to come (Isa. 26:3-4).

‘He also is become my salvation.’ In the light of our weakness, failure, and flesh, how can we have such confidence and assurance of our security and acceptance before God? Because he is our salvation! He is our strength! He is our song! God set him forth to be a mercy-seat. God laid on him our iniquities; God made us accepted in the Beloved. ‘How shall he not with him freely give us all things’ accomplished by our Redeemer-God? (Rom. 8:32). It would be nothing short of blasphemy to reckon that God would renege on his promises to Christ and his church (Isa. 46:9-11; Rom. 11:29).

v. 3. ‘Therefore with joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation.’ The Father is called ‘the fountain of living waters’ (Jer. 2:13). The Lord Jesus is ‘the giver of living water’ (John 4:10, 14). The Holy Spirit is the source of ‘rivers of living water’ (John 7:38-39). These are the wells of salvation, and from them with joy we draw water (grace) for every need. Our needs go beyond a once-for-all justification and acceptance; our needs are daily needs. He taught us to pray, ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ which is not only food for the body but comfort, faith, joy, peace, strength, and love. I must always remain at the fountain ‘drawing water’ for my thirsty soul.

v. 4. ‘And in that day shall ye say. . . .’ If there has indeed been for you a day of Divine visitation, of conviction, of revelation, of mercy, then shall you say—

1. ‘Praise the Lord,’ for mercy to this chief of sinners, for all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3-7).

2. ‘Call upon his name,’ which takes in the whole of worship. To worship God is to call upon his name. Whether in faith, for mercy, in prayer, in thanksgiving, in trial, or in a daily walk, we constantly ‘call upon his name.’

3. ‘Declare his doings among the people,’ not only his works of creation, of providence, and miracles, but especially his doing and dying to redeem a people. ‘I have finished the work thou gavest me to do’ (John 17:4). That work of redemption is the doings we especially declare.

4. ‘Make mention that his name is excellent’ (Phil. 2:5-11).

‘There's none other name given among men,
There's none can with him compare;
All others are marred, by sin they are scarred;
He's fairer than all the fair.’

v. 5. ‘Sing unto the Lord for he hath done excellent things.’ Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, vocally and together, as gospel churches, to the glory of God. Let him be the subject of our songs, for he hath done great things for us and in us and will yet glorify the riches of his grace to us! He is worthy to be praised by all his creatures (Psalm 150).

v. 6. ‘Cry out and shout all ye who are in Zion (his church) for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.’ Christ Jesus is the Holy One of Israel, the head of the church; and he has promised and grants his presence to his church; wherefore, he is worthy of our praise—for his greatness, for his mercy, for his grace.

Our Lord's return

Isaiah 25:1-12

Most of the prophecies concerning our Lord Jesus, written by Isaiah, have to do with his coming to earth in the flesh to redeem his people. However, this chapter seems to fit his victorious and triumphant return and the glory which shall be ours eternally (John 14: 1-3; Acts 1: 9).

v. 1. 'O Lord, thou art my God.' O, Jehovah (Saviour-God), thou art my God, not by creation only, but by covenant grace. Whatever others may say and do, I answer with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.'

'I will exalt thee.' How can such a worm exalt and glorify God? God is who he is and where he is, and he is glorified in himself. We can exalt God by (1) ascribing all glory and deity to him, (2) by attributing the whole of salvation to him, and (3) by believing his word and bowing before his Son, our Lord.

'I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things.' Read the final words of David's prayer in Psa. 72: 17-19. He has done wonderful things (1) in creation and the universe, (2) in providence and purpose, (3) in redemption and salvation, and (4) in things yet to behold (2 Pet. 3: 13-14).

'Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.' The covenant, counsel, and purpose of God in Christ Jesus are all done in truth and righteousness and will be faithfully performed (Acts 15:18; Isa. 46: 9-11; Psa. 85: 10-11).

vv. 2-3. When our Lord returns, he will fulfill his promises and purpose concerning his people (John 6: 37-49). But he will also destroy all who oppose him, no matter how many nor how strong (2 Pet. 3: 10; Rev. 19: 11-16). There will be only two reactions to his glorious return.

1. The strong in faith—in Christ, in his power and grace, to whom the Lord is their strength—will welcome and glorify him (Heb. 9: 28).
2. The rest shall meet his return in fear and hopelessness (Rev. 6: 15-17).

v. 4. Is not this a fulfillment of Isa. 61: 1-2? God's people are poor and needy lost and undone, children of wrath even as others, and without hope and without God until he comes in grace, strength, and power to redeem us. He is our refuge from the storm of God's wrath and from the trials of life and evil forces. 'A shadow (or shade) from the heat,' from the cradle to the grave (Isa. 32: 1-3). 'All our need he doth supply.'

v. 5. But he will bring down the strangers! Those who by their evil works, will, and ways are strangers to God, to the gospel, and to godliness and grace, he will bring down, as the sun parches the dry earth, until not one blade is left standing. If we will not hide in him, we surely will not be able to hide from him. The scripture describes the Lord Jesus as 'him with whom we have to do' (Heb. 4: 13).

vv. 6-8. Here is the good news!

1. 'In this mountain.' This is Mt. Zion (the church) (Isa. 2:2-3; Heb. 12: 22-23).

2. 'Shall the Lord make a feast.' (Rev. 19: 6-9). 'A feast of fat things,' of abundant promises fulfilled, 'of wines on the lees,' the best wine kept on the lees a long time.

3. He will remove the covering of darkness and ignorance spread by the fall over all creation. He will take away the vail from Israel (2 Cor. 3: 13:16) and the vail of dimness over his people, and we shall 'know as we are known' (1 Cor. 13: 12).

4. 'He will swallow up death in victory.' Death is so cruel, so grievous, so final on earth; but our Lord will, at his coming, turn it into victory and a cause for rejoicing (1 Cor. 15: 55-58).

5. 'He will wipe away all tears from their faces,' like a mother soothes the hurt of a loving child (Rev. 21: 3-5).

6. 'The rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth.' True believers are not loved nor appreciated by the people of this world. They are despised, ridiculed, and made fun of. The gospel is foolishness to natural men. Our dear Redeemer is rejected and despised. Our way of worship and our way of life are rejected and misrepresented. But one day the people of God will be vindicated. When the Lord returns, when the feast is served on Mt. Zion, when the vail of ignorance and darkness is removed, when death is swallowed up in life, when all tears are gone, then shall the Lord, his gospel, and his people be vindicated; and then shall it be said, 'Lo, this is our God!' (1 John 5: 20).

v. 9.

1. 'This is our God.' Not the idols of men nor the lesser god of free-will, but the Lord Jesus Christ is our Lord and our God!

2. 'We have waited for him' (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Our confidence, trust, and faith have been in him, and our life lived waiting for his return.

3. 'He will save us.' He has and will save us (Phil. 1: 6). 'By grace have you been saved' (Eph. 2: 8). 'To us who are being saved, he is the power of God' (1 Cor. 1: 18). Now is our salvation completed (Psa. 17: 15).

4. 'We will rejoice and be glad in his salvation' (Rev. 5: 9-10).

vv. 10-12. Then it shall be in that day that everything and everyone who has not glorified him shall be reduced to nothing (Rev. 21: 27).

Enter into the Rock Of Ages

Isaiah 26

v. 1. 'In that day' is the last days, when the Christ shall come to redeem his church. 'That day' is from his coming to redeem until his coming to raise them from the grave. 'The land of Judah' is his church, his kingdom, which is often signified by the titles of Judah, Jerusalem, and Zion. His church is a strong city (the gates of hell shall not prevail against it); for he founded it, established it, and defends it. But its strength and security are not in walls, moats, and towers. Salvation in Christ Jesus—his blood and righteousness, his love and peace, his will and covenant—is their bulwark and wall against Satan, sin, death, and judgment.

v. 2. 'Open ye the gates.' This is talking about Christ, the door, without which no one can enter into God's kingdom, presence, nor glory (John 10:1, 9). This word is addressed to all concerned—angels, law, justice, ministers. Let it be known that there is one way, one door into his presence; and that way is not for, all the world, but for 'the righteous nation' (Jew and Gentile), made righteous by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them—sanctified by his Spirit and justified by his blood. These 'keep the truth' in that they hear his gospel, believe his gospel, embrace and continue in his gospel (Col. 1: 19-23; Psa. 24:7-10).

v. 3. Those who are redeemed and righteous in Christ have access into his grace. They 'ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in his Holy place' (Psa. 24:3-5); and they are kept in true, real, and perfect peace in him. Faith in Christ is not a passing fad with the believer; but his mind and heart are 'stayed on Christ,' fixed on Christ, rooted and grounded and firmly persuaded of his salvation, and cannot be separated from him (Rom. 8:29-35). This peace is his peace and comes from a confidence in his promises, his person, his power, and his covenant (2 Sam. 23:5).

v. 4. Christ is the Lord Jehovah, which is and was and is forever (Micah 5:2). He is 'The Rock of Ages.' In him is 'everlasting strength,' a sure refuge for all who trust in him'. 'Enter ye into the Rock' (Isa. 2:10; Exo 33:21-22). Our eternal Lord is the refuge of his people (Isa. 32:1-2), and his promise is that 'they shall never perish nor shall any pluck them out of his hand' (John 10:27-29).

vv. 5-6. These verses speak of another city which he calls 'the lofty city.' 'He lifteth the poor and needy sinners out of the dust to set them among princes;' but he will bring down the proud and haughty, who trust in themselves that they are righteous and need no mercy (1 Sam. 2:6-10). God will make the enemies of Christ to be his footstool and one day shall vindicate his persecuted church by putting the proud under the feet of his despised people (Mal. 4:2-3).

v. 7. Having spoken of God's wrath and judgments against the proud unbeliever, Isaiah returns his thoughts to the church. Their way, walk, and tenor of life are in the Spirit, unto the Lord, and 'the way of uprightness,' because 'thou, most righteous' appointed their way. 'He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake' (Psa. 23; Eph. 2:8-10).

v. 8. This can be said of all the Old Testament believers who had some understanding of 'the way of God's judgment' and holiness—'we have waited for the Messiah' (Heb. 11:13-15). The desire of our souls is to thy name (Isa. 9:6); to God himself, in his perfection and covenant; to Christ, whose name is Emmanuel; to his gospel, which is our hope. 'Now unto him...' (Jude 24-25).

v. 9. 'With my soul (sincerely, deeply, and affectionately) have I (and the prophet speaks for all of God's people) desired thee in the night' (in time of trouble and affliction, which is often called night or darkness). 'Yea (night and day), with my spirit within me will I seek thee.' I will continue to seek thee with intenseness and eagerness of spirit, for thou art the fountain of all mercy (Psa.130:5-8; Isa. 45:20-22). When his judgments (present or future) are in the earth, believers learn better what a righteous

God he is and how wicked man is; and all the inhabitants of the world will see his holiness and justice and learn of his righteousness.

v. 10. Judgment and affliction will not bring wicked men to repentance, and neither will the good things of this life bring them to faith in Christ. Sometimes the most evil people seem to be favored providentially, yet they do not learn the gospel of righteousness and go on dealing unjustly with others. They will not behold nor bow to the majesty of God from whom comes all goodness (Rom. 1:19-22).

v. 11. ‘Though your hand is lifted high to strike them, Lord, they do not see it. But they shall see one day your love for your people and be ashamed for their evil toward thy people.’

v. 12. Thou hast ordained peace for us, for all your works are for us and in us.

v. 13. Other masters once ruled us, but now we acknowledge only your name.

v. 14. The former idols are dead; you have destroyed them and made us forget them.

v. 15. You have increased the nation a number no man can number, and you are glorified.

vv. 16-18. We have met with troubles and sought thee at the throne of grace.

v. 19. Your dead shall live, O Lord; the saints shall be rewarded.

vv. 20-21. Come, the Lord's people, enter into the secret place, the Rock; abide in him until the storm passes by (Isa. 4:6; 25:4-5).

Christ – a sure foundation

Isaiah 28:7-20

The nation Israel was blessed above all nations. A careful reading of Rom. 9:1-5 will confirm this. Yet even with such advantages and revelations, they departed from God, from truth, and from true worship.

v. 7-8. 'For all their tables are full of vomit and filthiness.' (1) The tables of the priest, where the Passover is supposed to be served, (2) the table of the prophet, where the children's bread should be prepared, (3) the tables around which the king and leaders sit are defiled. And from all these tables comes not the word of the Lord, but that which spews forth from bellies of men drunk with worldliness and evil. No place is clean, godly, nor honoring to him. Human will, wisdom, and ways command the day.

v. 9. 'Whom shall God (or his true prophet) teach knowledge?' Who is there among these rebellious people who are capable or willing to be taught the true gospel of God's glory? 'Whom shall he make to understand the doctrine of Christ (ruin, redemption, and regeneration)?' One may as well attempt to teach infants as to teach these people. But, thank God, he does teach infants (spiritual babes—Matt. 11:25-26), those who are not too wise in man's wisdom. Those who hunger and thirst for the sincere milk of the word, he will teach (1 Cor. 1:26-30).

v. 10. When the reference is to these rebellious Israelites, because of their dullness and unwillingness to hear, it says that they have to be taught like little children, slowly, the same things being repeated over and over; but still they will not hear (1 Cor. 14:20). In the case of his true children, the reference is to teach them one thing at a time, to write and learn one precept, one line at a time, until all is learned. Repetition here is desired, not avoided (Phil. 3:1).

v. 11. This seems to be judgment and punishment upon these people, that God would subject them to hear teachers with stammering lips and strange languages, whom he will bring upon them and into whose power he will deliver them. Seeing they will not hear him nor his prophets, God will speak to them with a strange and rough language. Some writers believe this refers to the day when the Jews will hear the gospel from Gentiles and from men not considered to be educated and gifted.

v. 12. The gospel was preached to them, (Heb. 4:2; 1:1). The Lord himself, by his prophets, said to the people (pointing to Christ in promise, prophecy, and picture) ‘This is the rest!’ ‘All who are weary, distressed, laden with sin, come to the Saviour and find in him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption’ (Matt. 11:28; Heb. 4:9-11). ‘Yet they would not hear!’ ‘Ye will not come to me’ (John 5:39-47). They had no regard to God, to his prophets, nor his Christ (John 1:11).

v. 13. The message of God was despised and ridiculed. They took the words out of the mouth of the prophet and ridiculed them as being too simple, too plain, and too repetitious! ‘This is all he can say—precept upon precept.’ They repeated it over and over, mocking the simplicity of it; but is this not true in all years and times, that the gospel of Christ crucified is ridiculed for its simplicity? its singleness? (2 Cor. 11:3). The Jews seek a sign, the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ (1 Cor. 1:22-24). Refusing the word of God, refusing the gospel of Christ—the rest of God—they fall backward upon their works, religion, and ceremonies, and so perish (Ezek. 33:30-33).

v. 14. Now hear the judgment of the Lord, ye scornful men (scoffers and those who make fun of his message and messengers), ye that rule in religion and lead the people in error (Rom. 10:1-3).

v. 15. This is what you have said: ‘We believe there is a God! We believe that men will die! We believe there will be a judgment and there is a hell! We believe that the flood of judgment will one day descend upon the sons of Adam! But it will not come to us because we have a covenant which we

made among ourselves concerning these things. This is what we agree to be true. We have a refuge, a hiding place from the storm, and a foundation upon which we build our house and hope. This covenant is our religious denominations and organizations, our refuge is our professions of faith, and our foundation is our works, self-righteousness, and faithfulness to our religion!’ God says it is ‘a refuge of lies,’ based on false doctrine and ignorance of the truth of Christ (2 Thess. 2:7-12).

v. 16. But there is an everlasting covenant the Lord has made (Heb.13:20-21; 2 Sam. 23:5). There is a refuge, a true hiding place from the storm (Isa. 32:1-2). There is a foundation which shall stand eternally and support all who build thereon. It is our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:3-8).

1. A stone—not sand—a Rock in a weary land (Matt. 7:24-25).
2. A tried stone—tried by Satan, the law, men, and the Father; ‘yet without sin’ (Heb. 4:14-16).
3. A precious cornerstone;
Precious to the Father who delights in him;
Precious to angels who worship him;
Precious to believers who love and look to him;
Precious for value and durability;
4. A sure foundation—one that cannot fail (John 6:37-40).
5. He that believeth shall never be ashamed here nor hereafter!

vv. 17-20. True judgment, according to the line and plummet (not by the eye and tongue). The exactness of God's holiness, and faced with that test, the refuges of men and foundations of religion shall fall.

The Rock higher than I

Isaiah 32:1-4

Most all agree that while these words apply to King Hezekiah, who reigned over Judah 29 years, who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, who was indeed a good king and a blessing to the people, this is a prophecy of the Messiah. It only has its full accomplishment in him and his kingdom.

Christ is *the hiding place* from winds of sin, trouble, and sorrow.

Christ is *the only shelter* from the storm of God's wrath.

Christ is *the water of life* in this dry and thirsty land.

Christ is *the great rock*, the tried stone, our only foundation.

v. 1. 'Behold!' Look with wonder, awe, and rejoicing. The scriptures use this word often in reference to our Lord Jesus. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive' (Isa. 7:14). 'Behold, I bring you good tidings, unto you is born a Saviour' (Lk. 2:10). 'Behold, the man' (John 19:5). 'Behold, I come quickly' (Rev. 22:12).

'A king shall reign.' Our Lord Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords' (Rev. 19:13-16). He reigns over the universe, over the world, and over his church (Psa. 2:6). He is Lord and King because he made all things (Col. 1:16). He is Lord and King by royal decree (Heb. 1:8-9; Phil. 2:9-11). He is Lord and King by his death (Rom. 14:9). He is Lord and King by his resurrection (Acts 17:31).

'He reigns in righteousness.' Of course, 'the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom' (Heb. 1:8; Psa. 45:6-7). His laws are just and right; his ways and rule are just and holy. But in the kingdom of the Son of his love, in the everlasting covenant of mercy to sinners, 'God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare God's righteousness' (Rom. 3:25), 'that God may be both just and justifier of

believers' (Rom. 3:26). Our King may show mercy; he must be righteous! Our Lord may lift the beggar from his dunghill of sin and make him a prince; but he must do it in the only way his law can be honored and his justice satisfied—by his own obedience and death as a man! (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4-5).

‘And ‘princes shall rule in judgment.’ Are these his faithful ‘prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers’ (Eph. 4:11-12) who are set over his church, who rule well (Heb. 13:7) in the word, in the gospel, and in the ordinances?

v. 2. ‘And a man’—the God-man! (1 Tim. 3:16; Isa. 9:6), the King-Messiah (Matt. 22:41-45), the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-49). It was promised and prophesied that Christ should come (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14); and this he willingly did and has become, for his elect, all that God requires for their eternal salvation (Eph. 1:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:30).

‘A hiding place from the wind,’ from the wrath of God raised by our sin. Only in Christ can we be sheltered from his wrath (John 3:36). Christ has borne the wrath of the Father for us (Isa. 53:4-6); he has endured the full penalty for sin and turned away the wrath (Rom. 8:1). He is our refuge. Like the cities of Refuge protected the man-slayer from the avenger, we dwell safely, peacefully in him.

‘A covert from the tempest,’ or a shelter from all storms, from Satan's temptations. He is our shelter in all trouble, trial, sickness, and sorrow. Someone said, ‘He who reckons on a peaceful calm from the cradle to the grave is a fool or a dreamer.’ We may set sail on a sea as smooth as glass; but before the journey is over, our ships will reel to and fro, the fury of life's storms will be felt from the rudder to the topmost sail, and you will think that it shall surely sink; but he is the haven, the port, and the one who calms the storms. ‘Hide me, O my Saviour, hide, 'til the storms of life be past.’

‘As rivers of water in a dry place.’ Isaiah is speaking of the fullness and abundance of grace in Christ. His grace is rich, free, and sufficient; for it flows from the boundless ocean of divine love! David knew something of the dry places (Psa. 63:1-2). All of the Lord's people experience the dry places and stand in need of comfort and refreshing in this dry and barren

world. Oh, the times when study is a chore, when the heart is cold and depressed, when the flesh is weak and pain is great, when sorrows like sea billows roll over us and prayer seems like nothing but words! That's when he said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'

'A shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' David in Psa. 61:2 gives us help on this high Rock.

1. 'From the end of the earth' is any place of absence from the temple where God dwelt above the mercy-seat, truly a weary land everywhere.

2. 'I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed.' Troubles are of various kinds (provoking, perplexing, or gnawing), but these are overwhelming troubles, for life and death. 'My sins are ever before me' (Psa. 51:3).

3. 'Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.' If we would find the Rock of Ages, we are dependent upon his hand to lead us. We are so blind we can never find it, but his hand is powerful and tender. This Rock is *The Rock* (none other like it) which our God has laid (Isa. 28:16). It is 'higher than I' because he is God; it reaches to heaven as Jacob's ladder. 'It is deeper than hell' (Job 11:7-9); as a man he descended to the deeps. It is a *foundation* (Lk. 6:48), a *fountain of water* (John 7:37-38), a *shade from the heat* (Isa. 4:6), a *strong tower* from the enemy (Psa. 61:3).

vv. 3-4. 'The eyes of them that see shall not be dim.' Believers who have been enlightened by the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 4:6) to see Christ shall have a clear revelation of him in his person and work, and not dim as in the types and shadows, nor shall their sight ever be lost.

'The ears of them that hear shall hearken.' Those who hear his voice shall hear effectually, attentively, and affectionately. 'They shall come to Me' (John 10:14-16).

'The heart of the rash shall understand knowledge.' Those who have been ignorant and hasty in judging things too wonderful for them shall be taught of God, as was Saul of Tarsus (Phil. 3:6-8).

‘The stammerer shall speak plainly.’ Those who used to speak of the things of God foolishly and with no understanding shall now preach and teach plainly the good news of Christ (as we are doing now), who at one time had nothing of any value to say (2 Cor. 4:7).

The joyful flourishing of our Lord's kingdom

Isaiah 35:1-10

This lesson must begin with the closing verses of Chapter 34.

(Isa. 34:1-2) The Lord will visit his enemies with great judgment; his Son shall triumph over all that oppose his kingdom; he will avenge and vindicate his church.

(Isa. 34:14-15) Where there is great slaughter, the wild beasts, the owls, and the wolves gather together to feed upon the slain. They will all be there, everyone with her mate.'

(Isa. 34:16-17) 'Seek ye out the scriptures,' the word of the Lord, and you will find that all of the prophecies, promises, and judgments shall exactly come to pass as he has said. 'None shall want her mate,' meaning that the prophecies shall be exactly fulfilled, even in the smallest circumstance! He has purposed it; he has commanded it; his Spirit shall fulfill them (Isa. 46:9-11; Acts 15:18).

vv. 1-2. 'The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them'—glad for his prophecies, promises, and judgments. 'They shall rejoice and be glad' when he comes to fulfill his purpose, for they who were a wilderness and a desert shall blossom as a rose. They are described in Psalm 107:1-8, 14-15. His church (called out from every tribe, nation, tongue, and kindred of the world) shall be glorious as Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon, which were eminent parts of Canaan. Consider the glorious results of God's goodness to his people in Christ. Those who were strangers, wilderness dwellers, and once without God shall see the glory of the Lord.

v, 3. 'Strengthen the weak hands, confirm the feeble knees.' Ye ministers and prophets and servants of God, comfort God's people, encourage those who are weak and ready to faint (Isa. 40:1-2). Give them his word of promises in Christ, which are faithful, sure, and steadfast (2 Cor. 1:20). Encourage them with the hope of salvation, which is theirs in Christ. Hands and knees are mentioned because that is where the strength or weakness of any man appears.

v, 4. 'Say to them that are of a fearful heart.' Is this not all of us on occasion? (a) We remember our sins and wonder how he could love and save us; (b) we consider the mysteries of Christ and the gospel, the miracle of resurrection, conformity to Christ, and eternal glory and are overwhelmed; and (c) we observe the unbelief of men and the weak and corrupt state of most churches and have a fearful heart or a hasty heart ready to flee from the enemy.

Say to them, 'Be strong and fear not.' Be strong in the faith of Christ! Fear not Satan, the world, nor any enemy. Do not doubt the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ relating to the world (he will avenge) or to his church. 'He will come and save you.'

1. He came in the flesh, took our nature; and by his obedience and death, he took vengeance on Satan, his works, principalities, and powers, which he destroyed (Isa. 61:1-2; Rom. 8:1).

2. He will come again and take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

vv. 5-6. When our Lord walked this earth, he opened the eyes of the blind, made the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the dumb to speak. But these miracles which he performed were not only evidence of his power, authority over demons and disease, and proof of his deity, but these miracles were types of spiritual healing and life. We, who were spiritually blind, who had no knowledge of God, nor of our deadness, nor of the way of life in Christ, do now see (2 Cor. 4:3-6). We, who were deaf to the voice of God, now hear him speak by his spirit through his word. We, who were lame and dead, do now live and walk in the Spirit of God. These

tongues, which were dumb to his praise and glory, do now speak of things heavenly, give thanks, and rejoice in him whom we once despised.

‘Streams in the desert.’ The most dry and barren souls and hearts now flow with living water (John 7:37-38).

v. 7-8. This is the Lord's church—his kingdom—the congregation of the redeemed.

Once a parched ground (barren and unfruitful, a thirsty land, but now righteous in Christ, filled with the grace of God) has become a pool —‘springs of water.’

We were the habitation of dragons, especially that great red dragon (Rev. 12:3-4; Eph. 2:1-2). Now the powers of evil are gone and ‘He maketh us to lie down in green pastures . . . beside the still waters’ (Psa. 23:1-2).

And there is a way of life in that church and kingdom called ‘the way of holiness,’ and the way is common to all his people. All walk in this way from the beginning of the world. ‘He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake’ (Psa. 23:3). The unclean do not love this way, but it shall be for the redeemed. The way of holiness is Christ, who by his obedience and death makes us holy and righteous before God; and the way of holiness is the way believers live and walk. This way we preach plainly so that the wayfarer, though simple men and fools, shall not be misled.

v. 9. It is not only a holy way and a plain way, but it is a safe and a sure way, free from all danger and death. ‘He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ’ (Phil. 1:6). ‘No man shall pluck them out of my hand’ (John 10:28-29).

v. 10. The ransomed of Christ Jesus shall all return to the Lord in repentance and faith. ‘They shall come to Mt. Zion with songs of joy and gladness; all sorrow and sadness shall flee away.’ The salvation, joy, and happiness purchased by Christ for his people, which is begun and entered into here on earth, is continued in glory to all eternity.

The believer's comfort

Isaiah 40:1-9

v. 1. 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.'

1. Who speaks? It is the Lord God of hosts. Do we have ears to hear what the Lord says?

2. To whom does he speak? He speaks to his prophets, preachers, pastors, teachers--all who are bond-servants of the Lord.

3. What is his commandment? 'Comfort ye my people.' There is a time to rebuke, reprove, and correct, and there is a time for examination; but the command here is to comfort!

4. Who are his people? We cannot comfort where God has not converted. We cannot cry 'peace' when there is no peace. We cannot give false assurance to rebels. Who are his people? They are a *chosen* people, a *called* people, a *redeemed* people, and a *believing* people.

5. Why do they need comfort? They are saved sinners who are conscious of their infirmities; they are a tried people who have troubles in the flesh; they are a persecuted people who are hated by the world.

v. 2. What shall I say to his people to comfort them? What is the believer's source of greatest comfort? It is the good news of the gospel!

1. 'Cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished.' The battle is over and 'thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 15:55-58). All of our enemies have been engaged by our captain, and they are conquered and shall soon be under our feet as they are now under his: sin (Heb. 10:17-18), self (Gal. 2:20), Satan (John 14:30, 16:11), world (John 16:33), death (John 11:25-26).

2. 'Her iniquity is pardoned.' All of our sins (past, present, and future) are blotted out, cleansed, atoned for, and are remembered no more. The redeemed have no sins. 'With his spotless garments on, they are as holy as God's Son.'

3. 'Double for all her sins.' This denotes the sufficiency of his blood and the complete satisfaction made by Christ for all our sins. Not that more was required than was due; but his offering, being infinite, fully answers more than double what can be demanded. 'Where sin did overflow, grace did much more overflow.'

v. 3-5. John the Baptist is the voice crying in the wilderness of Judea. There is a threefold effect of his office: the humiliation of some, the exaltation of others, and the revelation of the glory of Christ Jesus.

1. 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' The Messiah comes and John called upon men to repent, to lay aside all thoughts and ways contrary to his gospel and kingdom and to embrace him when he comes.

2. 'Every valley shall be exalted.' When Messiah comes all who are depressed and bowed down with the guilt of sin, laboring and heavy laden, low and humble in their own eyes, shall be raised up and comforted.

3. 'Every mountain, and hill shall be made low.' The proud and haughty shall be brought down. Those who are elated with themselves and their own righteousness shall be humbled.

4. 'The crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.' Could this be that those types, patterns, and pictures of the Old Testament should become clear in Christ, and prophecies, not so well understood, would be now plain and easy? (Luke 24:27, 44-45).

5. 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.' Christ, himself, who is the brightness of the Father's glory (Heb. 1:1-3), reveals his redemptive glory (Exo. 33:18-19), which is his chief glory.

6. 'All flesh shall see it;' not the Jews only, but Gentiles also, and not with bodily eyes, but with the eyes of their understanding, even the salvation of the Lord and his glory displayed in it. The everlasting gospel is called the gospel of his glory (1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

vv. 6-9. I prefer to look at these verses together, for I see the twofold, actually the three-fold, message of evangelism. Here is a command, 'Cry!' and a question, 'What shall I cry?' What shall I preach? What is the message men need to hear?

1. 'All flesh is grass, and all its glory and comeliness is as the flower of the field.' All flesh (young and old, Jew and Gentile, religious and profane) is as worthless, withering grass. We are born spiritually dead and worthless; nothing we can do in life improves the condition, and the death of the flesh only confirms its corrupt condition. 'In the flesh dwelleth no good thing' (Rom. 7:18), and 'in the flesh no man can please God' (Rom. 8:8). This must be preached in order to humble the pride of men and to show the necessity of Divine power in regeneration (John 3:5-7). Not only is all flesh grass, but even man's so-called righteousness (that which is comely and commendable compared to others) is as worthless as a fading flower (Isa. 64:6). 'Man at his best state is altogether vanity.' We find this out 'when the Spirit of God blows upon it,' for he makes us to know the truth about ourselves in the light of God's holiness (Isa. 6:5; Job 42:5-6).

2. 'The word of our God shall stand forever.' (v. 8) This may be applied to the recorded word of our God, which is sure and certain, forever settled in heaven and always fulfilled, or rather Christ the word, who stands forever in his office, in the efficacy of his blood, in the fulness of his grace, and in the glory of his exaltation (Col. 1:16-18).

3. 'Behold your God.' (v. 9) Get up on a high mountain, lift up your voice, be not afraid, and say unto the people, behold your God!' John Gill said it best, 'Behold your God! That Divine person

is come that was promised, prophesied, and expected; even Emmanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God manifest in the flesh, God your Saviour; and who, being God, truly God, is able to save to the uttermost. Look to him with an eye of faith and be saved. Behold your God! Behold the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who has borne our sins and taken them away. Behold him now, as your King and your God, on the throne, made and declared Christ and Lord, crowned with glory and honor, on the same throne with his heavenly Father, having all power in heaven and earth, and let the echo of your faith be, 'My Lord and my God.'

The holy one of Israel

Isaiah 41:8-14

In the closing verses of Chapter 40, the Lord speaks to afflicted people who are groaning under troubles and sorrows, even complaining that the Lord took no notice of their calamities and sufferings.

(Isa. 40:27) ‘What are you saying, O Israel?’

1. ‘My way is hid from the Lord.’ Since the Lord has not delivered us from these troubles, he must take no notice of them.

2. ‘My judgment (my cause and case) is ignored by God.’ He allows my enemies to oppress me and does not avenge me nor take my part.

(Isa. 40:28) The answer follows in these verses. Have you not known? Have you not heard? From the scriptures, from the history of the church, from the prophets, from all creation that the everlasting God—Jehovah—is the creator of all things, upholds all things, is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient! He does not change, faint, nor grow weary! No one can understand his majesty, his wisdom, nor his ways (Rom. 11:33-36). He knows and cares for his people at all times, though they do not understand his mysterious ways.

(Isa. 40:29) ‘He gives power to the faint and strength to those who are weak.’

1. This is the good news of the gospel! ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come to the water; he that hath no money’ (Isa. 55:1). ‘Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden’ (Matt. 11:28; 1 Cor. 1:26-30; Eph. 2:1-5).

2. This is why Christ came; ‘To seek and to save the lost’ (Lk. 19:10), to die for the ungodly and those without strength, without hope, and without God (Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 2:12).

3. This is the experience of all of the Lord's people! ‘When we are weak in ourselves, we are strong in him’ (2 Cor. 12:9-11; 4:6-7). His grace, mercy, and strength are most glorified in our need, our weakness, and our inability. Gideon's experience is a picture of this; his army had to be depleted for God to have all glory.

(Isa. 40:30-31) ‘All who trust in and depend on the flesh shall utterly fall.’

1. Even young men who have pride in their strength and ability shall one day grow weary and utterly fall. This is a warning to those who trust in their spiritual strength, morality, and works; they shall utterly fall (Matt. 7:22-23).

2. But those who wait upon, look to, and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ—shall grow in grace, faith, patience, and understanding; shall be as eagles who fly higher out of danger and closer to God; shall walk in the spirit, continue in faith, and not quit.

Isaiah 41:1-7 is a warning to the idolators of the world. Verses 6-7 talk about them encouraging and assisting one another in making and worshipping idols.

v. 8-9. ‘But thou, Israel, art my servant.’ While the nations of the world are servants of their idols and they own idols to be their gods, ‘thou, Israel, art my people, and I am thy God’ (Exo. 11:7; Deut. 7:6-8). The reference is to spiritual Israel, represented by the nation of Israel.

1. ‘Jacob whom I have chosen.’ Often in scripture believers are referred to as ‘sons of Jacob.’ (a) Like Jacob, God loved us from the beginning; (b) like Jacob, God chose us from the beginning (Rom. 9:10-13); (c) like Jacob at Bethel, God revealed the way of life to us also and promised to be with us; (d) like Jacob, God gave us a new name—Israel, ‘a prince with God;’ (e) like Jacob, God

keeps us in all our journey and always brings us back to Bethel-his house!

2. 'The seed of Abraham, my friend.' A person is not of Israel because he is born a Jew, neither is he a son of Abraham by natural generation. We are true Israel who have been born of the Spirit of God, the word of God, and given faith to believe, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Redeemer (Gal. 2:7-9, 16, 29; Rom. 2:28-29).

3. 'I have taken you out of many nations, tribes, and tongues' (Rev. 7:9). 'I have chosen you and I will never cast you away' (John 6:37-39).

vv. 10-13. The people of God (the objects of his love, affection, and choice) are encouraged with the promises of grace, help, and strength from the Lord.

1. 'Fear not for I am with thee.' By purpose, providence, ordering, and overruling all things for your good, I am with you in special grace to provide for you, keep you, and comfort you.

2. 'Be not dismayed, I am thy God' by an everlasting covenant (2 Sam. 23: 5).

3. 'I will strengthen thee, help thee, and uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' All of these mercies of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the man of his right hand—our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30).

4. 'I will deal with your enemies'. That battle is not yours but mine, saith the Lord (2 Chron. 20:15; Heb. 10:30).

We are held in his hand as a child in the hand of a loving parent, and we need not be afraid (John 10:28-30).

v. 14. 'Fear not, thou worm, Jacob.' By nature, birth, and practice we are worms.

1. We came from the earth, we dwell in it, are supported by it, and go back to the dust when we die. (Job 25:4-6).

2. We are impure as worms, weak and impotent as worms, mean and despicable as worms; and even our Lord himself was content to be called a worm and no man (Psa. 22:6). He was one with us to redeem us.

‘I will help thee, saith the Lord (Jehovah) and thy redeemer the holy one of Israel.’ This is our Kinsman Redeemer. This is our Messiah—our Substitute and Saviour (Isa. 47:4). Over 24 times in this book of Isaiah, our Redeemer is called the holy one of Israel! We are holy in him; Israel is holy in him! He is called ‘the Lord our Righteousness’ (Jer. 23:5-6). In him we are called, ‘The Lord our righteousness’ (Jer. 33:16).

The Messiah

Isaiah 42:1-21

This is one of the many places in the book of Isaiah which absolutely cannot be applied to anyone but the Messiah. It is evident that the prophet speaks of the Christ, for our Lord Jesus confirmed it in Matt. 12:14-21. Time and space will not permit us to comment on every word, so we will try to touch the high points.

v. 1. His condescension.

‘Behold my servant;’ the Messiah, who was with God, who is God, and ‘who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant’ (Phil. 2:6-8). He is the servant, not of angels and men, but of the Divine Father, who chose him, called him, and sent him to accomplish the redemption of his people.

‘Whom I uphold,’ strengthen and help as man and mediator so that he did not sink under the weight of the sins of his people and the wrath of God.

‘Mine elect.’

1. God chose men and not angels (Heb. 2:16).
2. Christ is chosen, and we were chosen in him (Eph. 1:3-4).
3. God delights and is well pleased in him and with us as we are considered in him (Eph. 1:6-7).
4. God put his Spirit upon him, not as a divine person, but as a man for the work he would do (John 3:34-36).
5. By himself he shall bring forth righteousness, truth, and justice to the nations.

vv. 2-3. His humility and tenderness. Earthly kings and rulers cry out in defense of their programs, strive with others, lift up their standards, and campaign in the streets. They have no use for the weak and weary nor the frail and the faint, and their means are justified by their goals. But our Messiah is ‘meek and lowly in heart, a tender plant, a man of sorrows, who openeth not his mouth.’ He does not strive nor contend to know profit. His kingdom is not of this world, so he does not boast and try to rally support for himself in the streets. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom; his enemies are principalities and powers, rulers of darkness who are conquered and defeated by himself alone; his people are made willing in the day of his power by his Spirit and his gospel call. He came by his identification with us, his obedience and death to save sinners, weak and unworthy, frail and fainting; so he does not break the bruised, weak reed, but strengthens it! He does not quench the flickering lamp, but gives it oil to burn brighter. The bruised reed and the flickering, dimly burning lamp are his weak and frail people who are not cast off but comforted and cared for tenderly. His work is judgment and justice. The courts of heaven shall receive his people, for he justifies them on the basis of truth and righteousness (Rom. 3:25-26).

v. 4. His success. ‘He shall not fail nor be discouraged.’ What the Father purposed, the Son purchased and the Spirit applied. How can it even be imagined that our God should fail to accomplish his redemptive will and work? (Isa. 46:9-11; 53:10-11; John 6:37-39). ‘Till he have set judgment in the earth.’ He fully satisfied the justice of God for the sins of his people, settled and sent his gospel to call out his people, and sat down at the right hand of majesty till all that he purposed and performed shall be done. ‘The isles (islands, distant countries, and all nations) in hope wait for his word of grace,’ for he shall have a people from them all (Psalm 110:1-3).

vv. 5-7. His assignment. How often our Lord Jesus referred to ‘the work thou gavest me to do’ (John 4:34; 9:4; 17:4).

1. The greatness of our God, who called and sent the Messiah, is set forth. He has the power, greatness, and authority to do what he will.

2. 'I have called and sent the Messiah in righteousness,' or in a righteous manner consistent with God's perfections (Psalm 85:10-13). Christ came a holy person (Heb. 7:25-26) and fully obeyed God's law (Rom. 5:19).

3. Christ was held, kept, sustained, and given to us as the surety, mediator, sum and substance of God's everlasting covenant of grace (Heb. 13:20-21). All the blessings and promises of the covenant are in him, by him, and given through him (Heb. 10:14-18).

4. 'He came to open blind eyes,' spiritually blind, to enable them by his gospel to see the sinfulness of sin, their need of a Saviour, and who he is! 'To set the prisoners free;' prisoners of sin, shut up to unbelief, and under the judgment of the broken law, in the darkness of spiritual death and ignorance (Luke 4:17-18). 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.'

vv. 8-9. His name and knowledge. 'I am Jehovah. His name expresses his eternity, his immutability, his redemptive character. It is the name by which he made himself known to Israel of old. 'The just God and Saviour' (Isa. 45:21). His name expresses his character and his redemptive glory (Exo. 33:18-19), which he will not give to another. Men who truly believe his name, call upon his name, and glorify his name shall be saved (Rom. 10:13-14). He declares the former things and the new things before they come to pass (Isa. 46:10).

vv. 10-12. His praise. These verses are summed up briefly in one phrase, 'Let them give glory unto the Lord and declare his praise' (Psalm 150).

vv. 13-15. His victory over his enemies. The Lord, for many ages, has permitted Satan, idolators, and rebels to go to and fro. He will one day roar, destroy, and devour them at once. The last enemy, death, shall one day be destroyed, and righteousness shall reign universally.

vv. 16-21. His redemptive glory. Verses 16-18 are spoken of the Gentiles, who shall be made to see and hear what they have never seen and heard; and Verses 19-20 refer to the Jews, who are called the servants and messengers of God and who claim to see and be perfect. But none are so blind and deaf as those who think they see and hear but do not! 'But the Lord is well pleased!' (Vs. 21) for the obedience and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, who in life and death magnified God's law and made it honorable. There is nothing so important to any who would know God as to be taught by God's spirit three things: (1) The holiness of our God, (2) the sinfulness and inability of our flesh, and (3) the righteousness of God effectually and sufficiently displayed in, and wrought out by, our Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 10:1-4).

The believer's confidence

Isaiah 43:1-13

The first thing to be established in studying this awesome yet comforting scripture, with its positive promises and covenant mercies, is to whom does the Lord speak?

v. 1. 'O Jacob ... O Israel.' He is not speaking to national Israel nor to the Jews which are natural descendents of Abraham. The Lord is speaking to his elect of all nations, to all who have been redeemed by Christ, called by his spirit, and who believe on him. In several places in scripture these believers are called 'sons of Jacob' or the 'seed of Jacob' (Isa. 44:21-23, 45:19; Mal. 3:6).

True Israel and true sons of Abraham and Jacob are only those who are in Christ (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:7, 29).

We are sons of Jacob because, like Jacob, the Lord loved us, chose us, and gave us the birthright and a new name, 'Israel,' which means 'a prince of God' (Gen. 32:28).

'O Israel, fear not.' If a person does not fear sin, death, and judgment, he is either ignorant of the fearfulness of these enemies or God has assured him of deliverance from them. That is exactly what we have here!

1. 'Fear not I have redeemed thee.' I have, by my blood and righteousness, delivered thee from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10-13); I have forgiven all your sins (1 Pet. 1:18-19); I have redeemed you from all judgment (Rom. 8:1).

2. 'Fear not, I have called thee by thy name' (John 10:14-16). This call is a divine call—'I called thee' (Rom. 8:29-30). This call is a personal call—'by thy name.' This call is from darkness to the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).

3. Fear not, thou art mine' (John 17:9-10). You belong to me.

v. 2. ‘When you pass through the waters’ of trouble, sickness, and sorrows, I will be with you; and the rivers shall not overwhelm you nor destroy you.

‘When you walk through the fire’ of temptation, persecution, disappointment, and the Lord's ‘trial by fire,’ you will not be burned nor consumed (1 Pet. 1:7).

Two comforting statements support us during these experiences. ‘I will be with thee’ (Psa. 23:4-6), and ‘When you pass or walk through the water and the fire.’ Our way to glory lies through these paths of suffering. Yet these paths, though they seem long, will end in his glorious kingdom. They are temporary!

v. 3. ‘For I am the Lord thy God.’

1. ‘I am Jehovah;’ the covenant God of his people. He is the holy, just, and righteous God of heaven and earth; and he is our Saviour and sanctifier. Here is the very heart of the gospel—‘God was in Christ reconciling us’ (2 Cor. 5:19-21; Isa. 45:21-22; Matt. 1:21-23). In Christ, God is just and justifier (Psa. 85:10).

2. Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba were all the enemies of God's people. He is saying that he will deal with, use, and even sacrifice all of these enemies to accomplish his purpose and the redemption of his kingdom (Exo. 11:5-7; 1 Cor. 3:21-23).

v. 4. Every believer knows that by our natural birth, carnal nature and walk, we are no different and in no wise better than the greatest sinner. But;

1. ‘You are precious in my sight.’ I chose you, adopted you into my family, and blessed you with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

2. ‘Thou hast been honorable;’ or I have honored you by giving you to my Son to be his bride. I have crowned you with righteousness and glory and will conform you to his image.

3. 'I have loved you.' This love is the source and spring of all mercy and blessings from our God (Jer. 31:3). This is everlasting, infinite, and unchangeable love in Christ (Rom. 9:38-39; 1 John 4:10).

vv. 5-7. The promise in these verses is that 'his seed' (Gal. 3:16), 'his sons and daughters' (Heb. 2:10-12), and everyone who is 'called by my name' (John 6:37-40) I will bring to glory (1 Pet. 3:18) from all nations, kindred, and people. He created us, formed us, and made us accepted in Christ for his glory (Eph. 2:10; 1:6, 12, 14).

vv. 8-9. The Lord God challenges the heathen nations who have eyes but cannot see his glory, who have ears but hear not his word, who worship idols! Produce your gods who can declare the future from the beginning (Isa. 45:20-21). Give us witnesses and proof of the deity of your idols, or be still and know that I am God and there is none else. 'It is truth.'

v. 10. 'You are my witnesses.'

1. I have chosen you from the beginning.

2. I have given you to Christ and Christ to you in an everlasting covenant.

3. All that I have written, promised, and pictured of him has come to pass as I have spoken (Isa. 46:9-11).

4. I have called you out of darkness, given you eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand me, to know me, and to believe me (1 John 5:20).

vv. 11-13.

'I am the Lord; beside me there is no saviour.'

'I have declared you to be mine and I have saved you.'

'I will work and none can hinder nor reverse it.'

A just God and a Saviour

Isaiah 45:16-25

This chapter contains prophecies concerning Cyrus (the deliverer of the Jews from captivity) and the great things God would do for him and by him (vv. 1-3). The reasons God would do these things were for the sake of Israel and that he might be known to be the only true God, who is the maker and owner of all things (vv. 4-7). A declaration is made of the Messiah as the author of salvation and righteousness (v. 8), and the contention and murmuring of the Jews about the Messiah, son of man (vv. 9-10). Christ is the antitype of Cyrus; and the Lord says, 'Ask of me and expect great things to be done by me through the Messiah, whom I have raised up in righteousness. He shall build my city' (vv. 11-13). The conversion of the Gentiles is prophesied, who shall come over to the church, subdued and conquered by the grace of God, saying, 'God, the only God, is in thee' (vv. 14). God is sovereign in mercy and will reveal himself as Saviour when and to whom he will (vv. 15). But the makers of idols and worshippers of false gods shall be confounded and ashamed forever (vv.16).

v. 17. 'But Israel shall be saved in the Lord.' The word 'Israel' is used in the Bible over 2500 times. Most of the time it refers to the nation Israel, the typical people. But here and in many other places it refers to spiritual Israel—the true people of God among all nations. True Israel are the sons of Abraham in Christ, the seed (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7, 16, 29). He is not a Jew (Israel) which is one outwardly (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:7-8). All who are given to Christ, for whom he died, who are called to repentance and faith are Israel and shall be saved with an everlasting salvation (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29; John 6:37-39). They shall never be ashamed nor put to shame, forever!

v. 18. This is no idle promise! God's creation is not in vain. He created the heavens and the earth; and out of all of it will come his new heaven and new earth, which he formed to be inhabited by a people conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:19-23, 29-30). The end of all things is decreed and determined by our God before one stone was laid in the earth's foundations (Isa. 46:9-11; Eph. 1:3-6).

v. 19. This covenant of grace and plan of redemption is no secret plan! God said, 'I did not whisper the way of life in secret; I did not hide it in a dark place, nor did I say in vain to the sons of Jacob, seek ye the Lord.' God, the Lord, speaks in righteousness and justice to all the earth. He has made known his law, his righteousness and holiness, and his mercy to sinners by his grace through the one great Mediator, High Priest, and atonement, which enables him to be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:19-26). The scriptures (translated into 2000 languages) are clear to all who read, but 'ye will not come to Christ' (John 5:39-40).

v. 20. Men who turn from the Almighty God to their own gods and ways of salvation have no knowledge, for they pray to and preach about an impotent god who cannot save. The god of men cannot do his will but must wait upon the will of the creature. The living God cannot lie and can do nothing contrary to his nature; but he can save sinners, for in his infinite wisdom and power he has provided in Christ a righteousness which enables him to be a 'just God and a Saviour' (Rom. 10:1-4).

v. 21. He has declared this glorious salvation from ancient times, from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Matt. 25:34; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8). Who can do this? Who only can declare the end from the beginning? Only the sovereign, almighty, omnipotent God; and there is none beside him. But here is a key—a truth to be learned—he is a 'just God *and* a Saviour.' In saving sinners God cannot, will not, and does not compromise his holiness. That is why Christ, the God-man, must come, must obey the law, must die on the cross—to enable God to be holy as well as merciful (Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 1:16-17).

v. 22. Then to whom should we look if we would be saved? To whom must we look if we would be saved? To him!

1. The word is look, not work, labor, nor serve. These things are the results of salvation, but salvation and eternal life is the gift of God through the person and work of Christ. Only believe and live! (John 3:14-16, 36; Acts 13:38-39).

2. 'All the ends of the earth.' All men died in Adam, all men are under the curse of sin, and all men (Jew or Gentile) will look to Christ and be saved or they will perish (John 14:6; Acts 4:11-12).

v. 23. Christ, being the true God, can swear by no greater (Heb. 6:13). This shows that what follows is of the greatest importance. 'The word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness,' concerning how men are to be saved, agreeable to truth and justice, 'and will not return' nor be changed. 'Unto Christ Jesus shall every knee bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord' (Phil. 2: 9-11). Men will repent, believe, and own Christ to be their Lord now and be saved (Rom. 10: 9-10); or they will, in the day of judgment, confess it in their utter damnation.

v. 24. This is the confession of all believers, 'In the Lord Jesus Christ we have righteousness, acceptance, and strength.' We came to him; and in coming to him, we came to God (1 Peter 3:18). We were at one time 'incensed against him' and are ashamed of our unbelief, and those who continue to reject him shall eternally be ashamed.

v. 25. All of spiritual Israel, whether Jew or Gentile, given to Christ, represented by Christ, redeemed by Christ, and interceded for by Christ shall be justified in him and shall glory in him, not in themselves, but in him who is made unto us all we need (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

The Messiah – prophet

Isaiah 49:1-16

This is another powerful and encouraging prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ, redemption by him, and his promise never to forget his covenant people. If we consider six points set forth in these verses, it will help us to understand the passage.

vv. 1-4. The nations are exhorted to listen to God's Messiah-prophet.

1. 'The Lord hath called me.' He is the Father's prophet (Deut.18:18-19). He is the messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1). He is the apostle of our profession (Heb. 3:1) and God's last prophet (Heb. 1:1-2). Before he was born, all of the prophets wrote of him (Acts 10:43; John 5:46). They not only told of his coming, but they wrote and preached 'his name,' which fully identifies his work.

2. 'The Father hath put his words in my mouth like a sharp sword.' (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev 1:16). The word of the Messiah is the living, quickening, saving words of God. The word of Christ is like a sharp, two-edged sword, so alive, so penetrating it reaches the most secret places, discerns the thoughts, and reveals the will and purpose of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

3. 'Thou art my servant' (Isa. 42:1; Heb.10:7). 'O Israel' is a name of Christ as the Head of the Israel of God. 'In whom I will be glorified.' This is why Christ came, why he died, and why we are saved—'to glorify God' (John 17:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Eph. 1:3-6).

4. In *v. 4* it appears that the Messiah-Prophet (like all of the prophets) complains that his message and ministry are in vain because the world knew him not and Israel received him not (John 1:10-11; Matt. 23:37). 'Yet, surely' my work of justifying and

judgment is assigned by my Father, and so is my reward promised by him (John 6:37; Phil. 2:9-11; Isa. 53:10-11).

vv. 5-6. The Messiah's call and appointment to his office and his success.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ was ordained of the Father before the world was, in an everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20-21; 7:21-22) to be his servant.

2. 'To bring Jacob again to him.' Jacob is all of his chosen people, loved of God, the Israel of God from all nations (called the seed of Abraham in Gal. 3:7, 29). He will redeem all of them and bring them to God (1 Pet. 3:18; John 6:37-40; 10:27-29).

3. 'Though the Jews be not gathered.' Only a remnant shall be saved (Rom. 9:27; 11:1-5). 'Yet I am glorified and pleasing in the eyes of my Father' (Matt. 3:17; John 8:29).

4. 'It is a light thing.' To redeem anyone is a great thing and can only be accomplished by the God-man, and that by his sovereign power—his perfect life and atoning death. But his Father has given him more than the remnant of Israel; he has given him the world of believers (Psa. 2:6-8; Rev. 7:9-10).

vv. 7-8. He is despised of men, but chosen of God, the victorious head of the church.

1. Isaiah speaks in Isa.53:1-3 of the attitude of both Jew and Gentile toward God's Redeemer and Holy One. But though he is despised of most, he is beloved, believed, and worshipped by those whom the Lord is pleased to call; and among the called ones are even some kings and princes. The Lord said, 'not many' noble; he did not say 'not any' (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

2. 'In an acceptable time...the day of salvation' is the fullness, of time, when God was pleased to prepare for him a body and send him into this world to redeem his people (Gal. 4:4-5). The Father gave him for a covenant of the people, that by him all of his elect shall be fully saved. As the man sent to redeem, the Father heard

him, helped him, preserved him, and accepted him, and accepted all whom he represented in him (Eph. 1:3-7).

vv. 9-12. The full and complete redemption of the entire kingdom.

When Israel left Egypt, Moses said, ‘There shall not a hoof be left behind in Egypt’ (Exo.10:26). Just read carefully these words in Verses 9-12 describing the full and glorious exodus of his church out of all bondage into the glorious kingdom of our Lord Jesus (Col. 1:13).

v. 13. He is worthy of all praise in heaven and earth.

1. ‘The heavens are joyful’—the seraphims (Isa. 6:2-3), the angels (Heb. 1:6; Lk. 15:10), the multitude of redeemed in glory (Rev. 5:9-10). This is the song of praise heard there (Psa. 24:7-10).

2. ‘The earth break forth into singing.’ This is the believers on earth. All men ought to praise the Lord, but they will not. His people will continually praise him; and if they did not, the stones would (Lk. 19:38-40).

3. What is the cause of such praise and rejoicing? Here it is! ‘The Lord Jesus hath comforted his people (Isa. 40:1-2) and will have mercy upon his afflicted people.’

vv.14-16. The church experiences tribulation but is assured of his love forever.

1. Because of heavy and fiery trials, Zion (the church), out of sorrow and heartache, sometimes feels deserted and forsaken of her Lord. David experienced this (Psa. 73: Psa. 77:7-9).

2. But the Lord assured us of his infinite, everlasting, and unchanging love forever! Can a woman forget the child of her womb? Yes, some do! ‘Yet I will not forget thee!’ As the names of Israel's tribes were graven on the breastplate of Aaron, the High Priest (Exo. 29), and upon his heart, our names are on the heart and

hands of our Great High Priest—the Lord Jesus! The walls of his church (the living temple) are continually before him.

The Redeemer describes himself

Isaiah 50:1-11

All scriptures declare and reveal the person and work of Christ Jesus, our redeemer (Acts 10:43). He is the 'key of knowledge' denied by the Pharisees and lawyers (Luke 11:52). When Paul wrote, 'He died, was buried, and rose again according to the scriptures,' he was referring to the Old Testament scriptures such as those before us (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

v. 1. 'Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement?' When a man divorced his wife, he was required to give her a paper stating that he had officially divorced her. Our Lord says, 'You have no such bill; I did not forsake you.'

'Which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?' When a man was so heavily in debt that he could not pay, he would sell his children into slavery to satisfy his debts. The Lord owes no one; he has no creditors.

The truth of the matter is, 'for your sins you have sold yourselves. For your transgressions are you separated from God.' Man's ruin, spiritual death, and slavery lie at his own door. 'Your sins have separated between you and your God' (Isa. 59:1-2).

vv. 2-3. 'When I came, was there no man?' He was in the world and the world knew him not; he came unto his own and his own received him not (John 1:10-11; Isa. 53:1-3). 'When I called, was there none to answer?' He called to peace, rest, and to the marriage feast; and they made light of it. He stretched out his hand, and no man regarded (Prov. 1:24-28). Sinners are not to be pitied, but rather to be blamed; for our condemnation is our own fault.

God is able to save; he is able to redeem all who call upon him. He has power to deliver; nothing is too hard for our God. (1) He dried up the sea for Israel to cross over, (2) he made the river Jordan a wilderness, (3) he

clothed the heavens with blackness (Exo. 10:21), (4) he made sackcloth to cover the sun (Rev. 6:12). Preachers today may make man to be more than he is and God to be less than he is; but when our God describes himself, he declares his majesty, power, and total sovereignty (Rom. 9:15-16). The Bible knows nothing of an impotent God nor a doormat named Jesus. He declares, 'I have spoken it. I will bring it to pass. I have purposed it. I will do it. My counsel shall stand' (Isa. 46:9-11; Rom. 8:29-31).

v. 4. The Lord describes his prophetic office. You are familiar with the fact that our Lord has a three-fold office. He is the King, typified by David. As King he reigns over all by decree, by design, and by the fact that he died that he might be Lord. He is that priest forever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:17-25), and he is that prophet spoken of by Moses (Deut. 18:18-19). 'This is my beloved Son; hear ye him' (Heb. 1:1-2). 'He that heareth me, heareth my Father.' 'No man knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him' (Matt. 11:27; John 17:6-8). Our Prophet reveals and manifests the Father's will, word, and work.

v. 5. The Redeemer declares his submission as the messenger of the covenant and the Father's servant (Isa. 42:1). He is the God-man and servant who was willing to do all that was required to redeem the elect. 'The Lord hath digged or bored my ear.' This comes from the scripture in Exo. 21:1-6 where the slave, who had served his time and was free to go, chooses out of love for his master to remain as a willing, loving bondsman, and has his ear bored before the judges. 'No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down willingly' out of love for the Father's will and love for his people.

v. 6. The Redeemer describes himself as the suffering servant. 'He opened not his mouth' against the witnesses, the charges, nor those who abused him (Isa. 53:7). 'He gave his back to the smiters' (Matt. 27:26) and his face to those who spit upon him and pulled out his beard (Matt. 26:67). The suffering and death of our Redeemer was no accident nor unexpected tragedy. It was decreed by the Father (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28), prophesied in scripture (Isa.53:4-6; Acts 13:29), and fulfilled by the Son--willingly.

vv. 7-9. The Redeemer describes the success of his work.

1. 'The Lord God will help me.' This is no contradiction of the deity of Christ nor any sign of weakness in him, but he was a man with the weaknesses and limitations of flesh and needed the strength and power of his God to effect the greatness of the work of our redemption (Luke 27:42-43).

2. 'I shall not be confounded nor ashamed,' neither of his ministry (which was with power and authority in truth), nor of his obedience (which was perfect and pleasing to the Father), nor of his sufferings (for the sake of his people), nor of his work of redemption (which was effectual) (John 17:4-5).

3. 'I have set my face like a flint (Luke 9:51) for he is near that justifieth me.' The Father designed and decreed his death and sent him into the world. The Father was near him in his whole state of humiliation and justified him from all the false charges brought against him and from the sins of his people laid upon him as evidenced by his resurrection (Acts 13:29-30; Acts 17:31). 'Who shall contend with me and who shall condemn me?' Not Satan, nor the law, nor the justice of God. Satan came and found nothing in him, and he honored the law and satisfied justice.

vv. 10-11. The Lord sets forth two classes of people.

1. Those who fear the Lord and have been given ears to hear the voice of Christ and see the glory of God in the face of Christ. They know they are in the darkness of sin and have no light; therefore they look to Christ, trust him for all truth and righteousness, and stay upon their God. These shall never be ashamed.

2. But there are those who will not come to him, but rather depend upon their own works and righteousness. They 'kindle a fire' and 'walk in the light of their own fire.' These shall lie down in death and eternal sorrow and have judgment at God's hand.

Thy God reigneth

Isaiah 52:7-15

Introduction:

(Isaiah 52:1-6) By Zion is meant the church in the days of the Messiah and following his manifestation in the flesh and his exaltation. ‘My people went down into Egypt; they were oppressed and my name was continually blasphemed;’ but verse 6 is the good news of redemption!

1. ‘My people shall know my name’—Jehovah (Saviour-God). They shall understand my power and goodness in Christ (1 John 5:20; Jer. 31:33-34).

2. ‘In that day,’ when the Lord Jesus is revealed at Bethlehem, the cross, and resurrection. ‘He that hath seen me hath seen my Father’ (John 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:19).

3. ‘That I am he that doth speak.’ All the promises and prophecies are in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20) and are not the words of a weak and deceitful man, but are the words and promises of the unchangeable, omnipotent, and covenant-keeping God who speaks and says, ‘Behold, it is I’ (Lk. 24:36-39).

v. 7. This is Christ, the messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1), the apostle of our profession (Heb. 3:1), who was anointed to preach glad tidings to the meek (Isa. 61:1) ‘upon the mountains’ of Israel and of the Gentile world.

1. This may be applied to all those who preach the gospel and bring the good news of salvation in Christ, to the Lord's sheep. The messenger and the message are both loved and welcomed.

2. ‘That publisheth peace...that publisheth salvation.’ This is the good news to Zion—city of God—church of the firstborn;

permanent peace and salvation, eternal peace and salvation are accomplished by the blood of Christ. And it is full, complete, and free to them because their God, who is sovereign, who reigns, has finished the work (Heb. 10:12-14). It is the published record (1 John 5:10-12).

v. 8. 'Thy watchmen;' perhaps this refers mainly to his apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastor-teachers, bringers of good tidings in Christ.

1. 'They lift up their voices.' It is a public ministry (Isa. 40:9-10). There are many of them who labor together (1 Cor. 3:4-9; Phil. 1:16-18).

2. 'They shall see eye to eye' (2 Cor. 4:5-7). In the Old Testament the Lord refers to his revelations to his servants as being 'mouth to mouth' (Num. 12:8) and 'face to face' (Exo. 33:11) and 'eye to eye' (1 John 1:1-2). They are eye and ear witnesses of the word and works of Christ. Therefore, their testimony of the gospel shall be valuable and essential when 'The Lord shall bring again Zion.' Read Romans 10:13-15! They must and will hear!

vv. 9-10. This calls for joy, singing, and praise; for the Lord God has comforted and redeemed his people. He has 'made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations.' That is, he has revealed the gospel of his power, glory, and righteousness openly in the sight of all nations. Everywhere Christ is preached, his holiness and power are set forth (Psa. 98:3). The sound of the gospel is everywhere (Rom. 10:17-18; Psa. 19:3; Heb. 4:2).

vv. 11-12. These verses will open up to us when we read 2 Cor. 6:14-18. When the Spirit of God reveals the gospel of Christ to us, as he did to religious Saul of Tarsus, we depart from our works religion, our former false gospel, and 'touch not the unclean' and have no more part with them. 'Ye that bear the vessels of the Lord' (his preachers) must be pure from false methods, means, and messages. His servants 'go not in haste or by flight.' They do not hide, flee, nor fear the enemy, but openly, boldly,

quietly, and safely preach his gospel; for ‘the Lord will go before you and will be your reward.’ He will be your captain and gather you up.

vv. 13-15. The chapter is concluded with an account of the humiliation, exaltation, person, work, and office of the Messiah!

1. ‘Behold, my servant.’ This is the title given to our Lord frequently (Isa. 42:1; 49:5-6; 53:11; Phil. 2:7).

2. ‘Shall deal prudently.’ He shall manage the affairs of his kingdom with wisdom and shall prosper (Isa. 53:10-11). He shall give understanding and make men wise unto salvation.

3. ‘He shall be exalted, extolled, and be very high.’ Here are three words which signify the same thing to express the height, glory, and majesty to which the Father has exalted him because of his work (Phil. 2:5-11; Rev. 5:12-13).

4. ‘As many were astonished, amazed at thee.’ The servant of God—the Son of God—became an object of horror. His sufferings of soul were indescribable and beyond our understanding (Isa. 53:10); and ‘his visage (his face, body, and whole appearance) were marred more than any man.’ From the manger to the cross, he was an object of ridicule, contempt, and ‘a reproach of men and despised’ (Psa. 22:6). But his death under the curse of the law and the wrath of God was with sweat and blood, with scourging and intense agony. ‘Astonished’ can not only be applied to how low he became, but to how high he is raised.

5. ‘So shall he sprinkle many nations’ (a) *with his blood*, which is called the blood of sprinkling (Heb. 12:24) and shall justify them (Isa. 53:11; Titus 3:5); or (b) *with his word*, which is compared to rain (Isa. 55:10-11; Deut. 32:2-3) and to water (John 3-5).

6. ‘Kings shall be silent before him’ out of humility, reverence, and admiration for his wisdom. He is the King of Kings! All who are called (1 Cor. 1:26-30) shall be eager to hear of him.

7. ‘That which had not been told or heard shall they see and consider’ (Rom. 15:19-21). This certainly is true of the Gentiles who had not the law, the testimony, or the tabernacle. But all to

whom the Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus have their eyes opened to behold the glory of Christ, and their ears anointed to hear him speak in his word (Matt. 13:16-17).

Our confession of faith

Isaiah 53

Someone asked an old minister of the gospel, 'Is your creed in print?' He replied, 'Yes, you will find it all in Isaiah, Chapter 53.' Here is the gospel of God's grace in one chapter.

v. 1. 'Our report' is our message of the love, mercy, and grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-4). There has never lived a prophet who did not mourn the fact that men would not believe the good news of grace.

'The arm of the Lord' is Christ Jesus, the wisdom and power of God; for the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Natural men do not see, hear, nor understand how God can be just and justifier, righteous and merciful to sinners through the obedience and death of Christ, the substitute (1 Cor. 2:8-14). He must be revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit.

v. 2. 'A tender plant' signifies his lowly entrance into the world. He came not full grown in the pomp and glory of men but as a tiny, frail, helpless infant, born of a woman (Gal. 4:4-5).

'A root out of a dry ground' reveals the condition of David's house and the nation of Israel at this time. There was nothing left of the glory of David's kingdom, only dry ground, its king an unlikely son of a carpenter (John 6:42).

'No form ... no comeliness ... no beauty.' In sending our Redeemer into the world, the Lord God rejected and refused all fleshly, human attraction. Anything that would attract the eye of the flesh or support of the natural mind was refused. 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 1:10-11).

v. 3. ‘Despised and rejected of men.’ Because of the lowliness of his birth, the poverty of his parents, his hometown and vocation, his lack of formal education, the people with whom he associated, his personal habits, the doctrine he preached, his claim to be one with the Father, and his condemnation of their tradition, everybody who was anybody turned from him, esteemed him not, and despised him. ‘A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’ From the cradle to the grave, two words can sum up his pilgrimage through this world—‘Jesus wept’ (Lam. 1:12).

v. 4. ‘He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.’ The grief and sorrows, spiritual infirmities and sicknesses (Matt. 8:17), which he bore were not his own but ours. He *had* no sin, *knew* no sin, and *did* no sin. He was our substitute and representative.

‘Stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.’ The wrath of God and the sword of God’s justice were sharpened to pierce him because he bore our sins and stood in our place. Though he had no sin, he stood before the justice of God as the world’s greatest sinner; for on him were laid all the sins of all the elect of all ages.

v. 5. If you would learn the gospel, then learn the meaning of these two words—*substitution* and *satisfaction*. ‘He was wounded for our transgressions.’ He was literally our substitute before the law and justice of God. In our place, in our stead, bearing our transgressions and all of our iniquities, he took upon himself all that justice could inflict. He made full satisfaction, for ‘by his stripes we are healed.’ God is reconciled, the debt is paid, justice is satisfied. He fully reconciled us to God by his obedience and his death (2 Cor. 5:19-21). The heart of the sinner was not changed toward God in the sufferings of Christ (that is accomplished later by the Holy Spirit and the word), but the wrath of God was removed toward the sinner. Reconciliation is the work of God in Christ toward himself (Rom. 3:24-26).

v. 6. The prophet is careful not to say ‘they’ or ‘them,’ but ‘we!’ ‘All we like sheep’ and ‘the iniquity of us all.’ Read Verses 4-6 and put your name in every place you read ‘our’ and ‘we.’ Someone wrote: ‘My sins, my sins,

my Savior, how sad on thee they fall; when I see them in thy death, I ten-fold own them all. My sins, my sins, my Savior, their guilt I never knew; till I saw them at the cross, the Lord of hosts they slew.'

v. 7. 'He opened not his mouth.' He was a willing Redeemer. 'No man takes my life, I lay it down.' He was brought as a lamb to the altar, as a sheep to be shorn of all dignity, comfort, honor, and even his life. 'Yet he opened not his mouth,' not against his people, his Father, his enemies, nor justice. He was willing to die for his sheep (John 10:14-18).

v. 8. His life was taken away in a violent manner, under a pretense of justice. Wrong charges were brought against him; false witnesses lied. 'He was cut off out of the land of the living.' Who shall declare the wickedness of men? But for the transgression of his people he was stricken (1 Peter 3:18).

v. 9. 'Grave with the wicked' signified the fact that he was assigned to die between two thieves. 'With the rich in his death' denotes the fact that he was laid in the borrowed tomb of a rich man. Such vile and wicked treatment was accorded him, although he had done no violence and knew no sin.

v. 10. 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him.' This is a key verse. (1) The Lord bruised him, (2) the Lord put him to grief, and (3) the Lord made soul an offering for sin. The Father not only permitted him to suffer as our substitute and sin-offering, he purposed it, predestinated it, and willed him to die (Acts 2:22-23; 4:26-28). His soul suffering shall make an offering, an atonement for our sins; and 'he shall see his seed' (every son, sheep, and elect person is seen, known, and loved by Christ); 'he shall prolong his days' (he lives forever and so shall they); and 'The pleasure, purpose, and will of the Father shall prosper, be accomplished, fulfilled in his hands' (John 3:35; Eph. 1:3-14).

v. 11. Our Lord did not suffer in vain. He is 'satisfied,' yea even seated, having finished his work! All for whom he suffered are justified, for he

bore their iniquities (Rom. 8:29-32). 'Payment God's justice cannot twice demand, first at my bleeding surety's hand, then again at mine.'

v. 12. He is exalted above all exaltation (Phil. 2:9-11), and he shall divide the spoil of the strong because:

1. He has poured out his soul unto death—*satisfaction*.
2. He was numbered with the transgressors—*representation*.
3. He bore the sins of many—*substitution*.
4. He made intercession for the transgressors—*mediation*.

Seek ye the Lord

Isaiah 55

Isaiah 53 sets forth the *gospel provided* through the suffering Saviour. Isaiah 54 sets forth the *gospel promises* that are sure and certain (vv. 10, 16-17). Isaiah 55 sets forth the *gospel proclaimed* to the needy. The mercies of God in Christ are a proclamation to all men (Mark 16:15) and an effectual call to his sheep (John 10:27-29).

v. 1. ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth,’ not in a natural sense as the woman at the well first thought; but everyone whose soul thirsts for fellowship with God (for mercy, forgiveness, and life) is called to the fountain of life.

‘Come to the waters.’ Come to the water of life that cleanses and refreshes, to the wine that makes the heart glad and to the milk which gives life and health. It's free to those who are poor and have nothing to pay; it's already paid for by the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:24).

v. 2. Why do men spend time, energy, and strength in pursuing a false religion which is not the bread of life and can never satisfy? Salvation by works is not bread, it is chaff; it is not nourishing, it is harmful; it will not satisfy, only condemn! ‘Listen to me,’ saith the Lord, and feed upon Christ; and your soul shall rest and delight itself in his fulness (Col. 2:9-10).

v. 3. Here are two precepts and two promises.

The precepts

1. ‘Incline your ear.’ Is this asking too much of beggars? of guilty sinners? The body is fed through the mouth, and the soul is fed through the ear. You can hear the error of the world and poison your soul, or you can hear the precious word of God and live. ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’

2. 'Come unto me' (Isa. 1:18; Matt. 11:28; John 7:37-38). Don't turn to religion, to law, nor to men. 'Come to me.'

The promises

1. 'And your soul shall live.' There is power and life in the gospel (Rom. 1:16; James 1:18). All that God has for sinners is in Christ. Those spiritual blessings are ours through a union with Christ; that union with Christ comes by faith; faith comes by hearing the word of truth (Eph. 1:13-14).

2. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' Peter calls these 'precious promises.' This is the everlasting covenant which David (on his dying bed) called 'all my salvation and all my desire' (2 Sam. 23:5). Here are five of those sure mercies of David.

'I will be their God and they shall be my people' (Jer. 31:33).

'They shall all know me' (Jer. 31:34).

'I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more (Jer. 31:34).

'I will give them one heart and one way' (Jer. 32:39).

'I will not turn away from them and they shall not depart from me' (Jer. 32:40).

v. 4. This everlasting covenant is made with our Surety, that great Shepherd of the sheep, Christ Jesus (Heb. 13:20-21). The Lord has given him for a witness, for he is that Prophet who manifests and reveals the Father (Deut. 18:18-19). He is a *leader*, for he is our great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec; he is our *shepherd*, who leads us in the paths of righteousness; and he is *commander*, or King of kings!

v. 5. We do not look to nor follow him in vain, for he shall not fail (Isa. 42:1-4). He shall call and save the Gentiles, who shall willingly run to him because of the power of God (Psalm 110:3). All that Christ is, does, and

will do for his people shall be for the glory of God (John 17:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

v. 6. Are you thirsty? Are you poor? Have you inclined your ear and heard? Have you beheld the great Messiah, Christ Jesus? Then ‘seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.’ Bartimaeus did; the woman with the issue of blood did; the thief did! What is it to seek the Lord?

1. It is to discover that by nature I do not have him and I need his grace.

2. It is to desire his mercy and fellowship with him more than all.

3. It is to be made willing to be saved on his terms that he might be just and justifier.

4. It is to be willing to part with all that is opposed to Christ.

5. It is to him, not his. If we have him, we have that which is his.

v. 7-9. Our thoughts are not God's thoughts, and our ways are not God's ways. This is evident in all things. But the main reference here is concerning God's thoughts and God's way of redeeming sinners! Our thoughts and ways, which seem right to the natural mind, are the ways of works and will lead to death. Naaman, when confronted with God's way, said, ‘I thought.’ Do you think that God can accept our imperfect righteousness or pardon a sinner without justice being fully honored? Suppose he did. Suppose that without Christ's righteousness and blood God accepted you. What peace could you have?

1. A god who could pardon without justice may one day condemn without reason.

2. A god who could set aside his righteousness may one day set aside his mercy.

3. A god who could deny his law may one day deny his gospel.

4. A god who could change his character may one day go back on his promises. But the God of glory is never unjust in order to be gracious. He saves and accepts sinners, but not until Christ has honored his law and satisfied his justice. This is God's way, and it is the way of peace and assurance!

vv. 10-11. As the rain and snow falls from heaven in its season and makes the corn, wheat, and vegetables to grow and is not drawn up again into heaven but abides for a time on the earth to do the work for which it is sent, 'so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.' His word of truth, his gospel of Christ, our Lord, and the sure mercies of David, which are contained therein, are sent forth into this world and shall not return until that word has accomplished that which he pleased and that for which he sent it—the salvation of his sheep (Isa. 46:9-11).

vv. 12-13. God's people shall go out of bondage with joy and be led forth in peace without fear of ever being retaken by their enemy. Even the creation shall rejoice with them and for them. Their land, once subject to the same bondage of sin, shall be freed and partake in their redemption (Rom. 8:19-23). In all this his name shall be exalted and glorified.

The person and work of the Messiah

Isaiah 61:1-3 (Luke 4:16-21)

Isaiah 61 should be read along with Luke 4:16-21. Word had come back to Nazareth concerning one whom they knew quite well—one who had been brought up in their town, working as a carpenter. They had heard of some of the great things he had done and said (Luke 4:14-15, 23). Now, he was back in town; so they all gathered at the synagogue on the Sabbath day, knowing that he would be there (Luke 4:16) and would read and speak. Our Lord selected the Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 61:1-3, read it, and declared, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’

If we can discover what this scripture is saying, we will have an understanding of the person and work of our great Messiah. The people of Nazareth did not understand him nor his ministry and sought to kill him (Luke 4:28-30). I pray that we understand the person and work of the Messiah.

v. 1. ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me.’ Even the Saviour's mission and ministry were dependent on the Spirit of God (Mark 1:9-11; John 3:34-35). The Father ordained and anointed the God-Man, Christ Jesus, to be our surety, substitute, sin-offering, and Saviour. He gave him the Holy Spirit without measure. He came from the Father on behalf of his elect to accomplish the Father's will, speak his words, perform his work, honor his law, and satisfy his justice.

‘The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek’ or the gospel to the poor. Our Lord preached (Matt. 4:17) by his words, his miracles, his silence, and his looks. He lived the prince of preachers, he died the theme of all preaching, and he arose the Lord of preachers. He preached good tidings of grace, mercy, and forgiveness of sin to the poor, not necessarily to the materially poor (for even the rich are poor spiritually), but to the poor in spirit. These are those who are sensible of

their sins and humbled because of them. These poor disown any righteousness of their own and stand naked and condemned before God. These poor have nothing, know nothing, and can do nothing acceptable unto God. They are in desperate need of all things and ascribe all that they receive to the grace of God.

‘He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted.’ A broken heart is painful and finds no relief for its distress in the flesh. A broken heart is helpless. We know what to do for a broken arm, but a broken heart needs a transplant—a new heart which only our Lord can give (Psalm 34:18; 51:17; Ezek. 36:25-27).

‘To proclaim liberty to the captives.’ In September, 1862, Mr. Lincoln issued an Emancipation Proclamation effective January 1, 1863, freeing all slaves. It was not a request nor an invitation nor a suggestion, but a proclamation—they were free! Our Lord came to set the captives of the law free from its curse, the captives of Satan and sin free from his dominion and from the penalty of sin (Rom. 8:33-34). By his grace through his offering, we are free forever (Heb. 10:12-14).

‘The opening of the prison to them that are bound.’ Believers, who have been bound by sin and in bondage to the flesh, are set free; but some are set free from the darkness and bondage of false religion, like Saul of Tarsus. False religion, tradition, and legalism are a prison. We are delivered by Christ (Gal. 5:1).

v. 2. ‘to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ This is the fulfillment of the ‘year of Jubilee’ (Lev. 25:8-10). Every seventh year was the Lord’s year and was a Sabbath of rest to the land. But on the year following the seventh of these sevens was the year of Jubilee. Every man sold into slavery was set free, all property and family land was redeemed and returned, all debts were discharged, and a year of rest was proclaimed. Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, has done all of this for us. Our souls are free, our inheritance is restored, our debts are paid, and we have entered into his rest forever.

‘And the day of vengeance of our God.’ I know that many read this to be that awful day of vengeance when God was pleased to visit all the iniquity and transgressions of his people on Christ. It pleased the Lord to

bruise him; he was smitten of God and afflicted. This is true, but the gospel is proclaimed with a two-fold effect! All men do not believe. ‘Some believed and some did not believe.’ The gospel preached is a fragrance of life to those who have life, but it is an odor of death and judgment to those who will not believe. God will visit his wrath upon those who will not believe (John 3:36; Mark16:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:14-16). This is the day of vengeance of our God.

‘To comfort all that mourn.’ Christ is the true comfort for all true mourners. They mourn under a sense of sin (their own sins and the sins of others); they mourn under trial and affliction; they mourn when they cannot repent as they should, believe as they should, nor pray as they should. But they find comfort for all this in Christ, his blood, his intercession, and the precious promises of his word.

v. 3. ‘To give them beauty for ashes.’ Ashes mean the fire has gone out. Our fire of joy, life, and hope is burned out in Adam; but Christ restores the beauty and warmth of spiritual fire. Ashes mean death; ‘Dust to dust and ashes to ashes.’ In Christ we have eternal life, never to die. Ashes represent sorrow. In extreme sorrow there were ashes and sackcloth. But he took our death, our mourning, and bore our sorrows, giving to us beauty, *his* beauty (Ezek. 16:14).

‘Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.’ Here is what Isaiah is saying: The Lord Jesus gives his mourners the beautiful garments of his salvation, the robe of his righteousness, the graces of his spirit, and his gracious presence, together with his word; and these yield joy, peace, and comfort through all of this pilgrim journey.

‘That they might be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.’ Several things are suggested.

1. Trees are planted by someone. These are ‘the planting of the Lord.’ (Matt. 15:13).

2. Trees that live have roots in water (Matt. 13:6; Psalm 1:3). Our root is in Christ, the living water.

3. The life of the tree is the sap within. The Spirit of God dwells in believers (John 7:37-39).
4. Trees which God plants bear fruit (Gal. 5:22).
5. Trees which God plants never wither (Psalm 1:3-4).

And in all of this God is glorified! From Alpha to Omega in the redemption of a sinner, God is glorified (John 17:1-4).

The church prays for the presence of God

Isaiah 64:1-12

vv. 1-2. ‘O that thou would rend the heavens and come down.’ The church prays for the triumphant and glorious return of her Lord to the earth, as promised in John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11, 1 Thess. 4:16 (a) to accomplish his purpose, covenant, and redemption of his people, and (b) to vindicate his church and expose and destroy the antichrists.

‘That the mountains may flow down at thy presence.’

1. Kings, kingdoms, and evil powers so dominate this earth that, like mountains, they seem to be firm and stable and overwhelming.

2. But they shall melt like wax, flow like water, and disappear at the coming of the King of kings. He will consume them in wrath (Isa. 63:3-4).

3. The wrath of God against all enemies is compared to ‘the melting fire’ (that melts metal), to extreme heat ‘which makes water to boil.’ The fire of God described in 2 Kings 1:6-15 illustrates the fierceness of his wrath.

v. 3. The Prophet may refer to the judgments of God upon Egypt, which were unexpected and not looked for, or the giving of the law at Sinai, or other mountains which ‘flowed down at his presence’ (Judges 5:4-5; Psa. 68:7-8).

v. 4. Here is a passage quoted by Paul, the apostle, in 1 Cor. 2:9. The fearful judgments of God against sin and the enemies of God are unheard of, unseen, and beyond the understanding of men. Even so, the glorious, eternal, unspeakable blessing of his grace in Christ to those who love him and wait for him are neither heard by the outward ear, nor seen by the eye of flesh, nor understood by any son of Adam! These include:

1. The present peace of God of sin forgiven that is ours in Christ (Rom. 5: 1).

2. The joy and fellowship of the church with Christ now (1 John 1:3).

3. The future glory and perfect holiness when we are conformed to his likeness (1 John 3:1-3).

These things are purposed by the Father, prepared by the Son, and revealed by the Spirit to those who love him, who certainly will wait for him! And unless the Lord gives men ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand, divine truth will remain unknown to them (1 Cor. 1:10-14). By his sovereign grace and will the Lord has been pleased to reveal Christ in us (Gal. 1:15).

v. 5. This verse and the ones which follow flow from the heart of God's prophet in Israel and from God's preachers in the church today; for the conditions which existed in Israel (who professed to be God's people) exist today! Some know the Lord, rejoice in him, and long for his presence; but most in religion are strangers to grace and workers of iniquity (Matt. 7:22-23).

1. The Lord meets those who rejoice in the person and work of Christ. He meets us at the mercy-seat (Exo. 25:21-22) 'who worketh righteousness.' Our sanctification and righteousness are not ours, but his! Yet those who are righteous before God in Christ do delight to do works of righteousness by faith (1 Thess. 1:3).

2. The Lord communes with those who 'remember thee in thy ways.' They remember him in his ways of grace and mercy (1 Cor. 11:24 - his death for men). They remember him and rejoice in his ways of providence (Rom. 8:28). 'Known unto God are all his ways and works from the beginning' and we rejoice therein!

3. 'Thou art wroth; we have sinned.' We sinned in Adam, by birth and choice, and yet do sin each day; but there is forgiveness with God and we shall be saved from all our sins in Christ (Heb.

10:14-17). There is ‘continuance in his ways’ of grace and mercy. His love is everlasting and endures forever (Phil. 1:6).

v. 6. We are not unclean now; but we have been, as all men, unclean and impure before God. Even our righteousnesses and so-called good works are as filthy rags in his sight. The only righteousness acceptable to God is Christ's righteousness; and any duty, work, or goodness done by men in the best manner possible are filthy rags before God. Without Christ ‘we fade as a leaf falls from the tree;’ in Christ ‘his leaf also shall not wither (fade) and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper’ (Psa. 1:3). Without Christ ‘our iniquities have taken us away’ and separated between us and God (Isa. 59:2). In Christ our sins are all put away (Isa. 53:4-6).

v. 7. This was true of most of Israel (Heb. 3:15-19) and is true today. ‘There is none that call upon thy name, none that seek thy face’ (Rom.3:9-12).

1. There are and always have been men who are religious and pray, but few who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only *mediator* between God and men, the only *way* of access to God, the ‘only name given among men whereby we must be saved.’

2. None stirreth himself to lay hold of Christ; as Paul declared in Phil. 3:8-14; as JACOB who said, ‘I will not let thee go except thou bless me.’

3. Because men will not call upon his name nor seek his face, the Lord has turned away, left them to themselves, and will consume them in his wrath (Rom. 1:19-24).

v. 8. ‘But now, O Lord, thou art our Father!’ There is a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:3-7; Rom. 8:14-17). He is the potter and we are the clay (Rom. 9:16-23). Out of every tribe and nation he has chosen a people, given them to Christ, and adopted them into his family.

v. 9. 'Be not wroth, neither remember iniquity forever.' Not to remember sin is to forgive it (Heb. 10:17). 'We are thy people,' not only by creation but by covenant. All whom God gave to Christ are his redeemed people (Deut. 7:6-8; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

vv. 10-12. The cities of Judah and of David are in ruins, the temple is destroyed, Israel is a wilderness. Almost every remembrance of the true God is gone from Israel, and religion today is a wasteland without a true message! The question! 'How long will the Lord be silent, hold his peace, and not plead his own cause and the cause of his people?'

Addendum

Highlights in the Life and Ministry

of

Henry Mahan

March 1947 – Pastor Henry Mahan and his wife, Doris, moved to Ashland, KY to work with Pastor Donald Wells and the Southern Baptist church –Pollard Baptist.

September 1947 – Realizing that he needed more training and education, the Mahans moved to Chattanooga, TN, where he attended Tennessee Temple College for three years. While there he pastored the Oakwood Baptist Church.

April 1950 – The Pollard Baptist Church called Pastor Mahan to be Pastor Wells' assistant pastor.

Rolfe Barnard came to the Pollard Church to preach a two week meeting, and Pastor Mahan heard (for the first time) how God can be just and justifier of sinners. He read Boettner's, 'Doctrine of Predestination,' Boston's, 'Fourfold State,' the various old confessions of faith and other Calvinistic writers, and the Lord revealed the gospel of Christ to him and to many of the members of the Pollard Church.

August 1951 – Pastor Wells resigned the church and moved to Chattanooga, TN. The church called Pastor Mahan to be their pastor in October 1951.

From that time, he tried several ways, books, and methods to teach Sunday School for the people. He bought John Gill's Commentary and tried to teach his 'Body of Divinity,' chapter by chapter.

Finally, in the late 70's he began to write his own Sunday School lessons, verse by verse through the New Testament; and the teachers used these from that day forward.

Bill Clark, missionary to France, and Pastor Mahan became close friends in 1965. They traveled and preached together in the United States and in England, Ireland, Spain, France, and Africa.

Bill moved his family from France to Welwyn, England and started Evangelical Press in an effort to distribute grace literature worldwide.

By 1983 Pastor Mahan had gone through most of the epistles of the New Testament verse by verse and Bill and John Rubins asked for the copyright on his commentaries. They printed them in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and in 1994 in Russian. Evangelical Press also printed his Gospel of John and Old Testament Pictures of Christ in 2 volumes. The Lord made it possible for these commentaries to be sent to several countries as a missionary effort. Bill Clark was the instrument God used to get these books printed and distributed. He went to be with the Lord November 8, 1998 at age 66. He will be remembered by all of us who knew him so well as one of the Lord's most outstanding and faithful preachers and missionaries.

The Works
Of
Henry Mahan
Volume 1

This entire work, consisting of three volumes, is the result of Pastor Mahan's strident efforts at providing his congregation with sound Christ centered materials for study in their Sunday Bible classes.

After assuming a pastorate in Ashland Kentucky in 1951, he tried several books, ways, and methods of providing materials for the class teachers. In the late 70's he began to write his own Sunday Bible class lessons, going verse by verse through the New Testament.

By 1983 Pastor Mahan had gone through most of the epistles of the New Testament verse by verse, and eventually included lessons from much of the Old Testament. The New Testament *Bible Class Commentaries* have been printed by *Evangelical Press* in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. His *Gospel of John* and *Old Testament Pictures of Christ* were printed in two volumes. *The Gospel According to Isaiah* has never been published.

This three volume set contains all of his works.

ISBN 978-1-4357-0619-4
484 Pages, 6.0 x 9.0 in., Hardback