
The Read, Pray and Grow
(RPG) is a daily Bible
reading material
published by
Reformation Banner
Publishers, Singapore.

It is freely downloadable
from
www.truthbpc.com

If you have been blessed
by this material,
do let us know at
admin@truthbpc.com.

**January to
March 2009**

**“The Blessed
Promises
of God”
(Part 2)**

by
Rev Errol D Stone

About the Author



Rev Errol D. Stone is a graduate of the Far Eastern Bible College Singapore (1994-97) and continues with the “In Ministry Degree Programme” through FEBC and is the founding Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church (Perth, Western Australia). He has been teaching the Pentateuch, the Gospels and the book of Romans at the Aboriginal (AEF) Bible College in Perth for 7 years, and lectures in Cambodia every second year.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

LUKE 1:26-38

DANIEL 2:36-45

“... the God of heaven
set up a kingdom.”

A MOST REMARKABLE MESSAGE

After four hundred years of silence, God, through the Archangel Gabriel, announced a remarkable message to a godly priest named Zechariah, whose wife, Elizabeth, was barren. A child would be born to this couple in their advanced years, whose ministry would be like Elijah's, preparing the way of the Lord (Luke 1:5-17; cf. Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8). Zechariah expressed doubt at this remarkable message, which resulted in the angel striking him dumb (Luke 1:18-22) and this prophecy was fulfilled (Luke 1:23-25).

Six months later, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to a virgin named Mary (who was betrothed to Joseph) with a more remarkable message, that she would have a child while still being a virgin (Isa. 7:14) and the child would be named Jesus (Luke 1:31). Although Mary was perplexed she accepted it. Since Jesus existed before His mother, He was not conceived in a normal way. Mary was the mother of the humanity of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:18-25; 2:13-23; 12:46; Mark 3:21; Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-52; 8:19-21; John. 2:1-5; 19:25; Acts 1:14), not the mother of His divinity or divine nature as that came from God. As the eternal Son of God had no beginning (Micah 5:2; John 1:1). Mary cannot be called the “mother of God.”

A most remarkable message was then given that He would be Israel's long-awaited Messiah (Luke 1:32, 33), fulfilling the Davidic Covenant of 2 Sam. 7:13-16, and of the Messianic Reign (the Millennial Kingdom) described in Isaiah 9:6, 7, Jer. 23:5, 6; Micah 4:1-8 to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ ruling and reigning over the earthly Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6). This Kingdom on earth will be set up at the conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon, when the Roman Empire will be destroyed as predicted in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:40-44).

THOUGHT: The coming of the Son of God to earth involved personal salvation and the fulfilling of God's promises to His people Israel.

PRAYER: (Pray that those who willingly confess their sin and Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour will treasure God's most remarkable messages.)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2

GENESIS 6:1-8

HEBREWS 11:6, 7

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet.”

NOAH SAVED BY FAITH

Noah found grace in the eyes of God, which is the first occasion the word is recorded in the Scripture. Grace is unmerited favour, of which the Apostle Paul speaks as being free, unmerited eternal salvation of God (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Other than by the good pleasure of His will (Eph. 1:5), there is no means by which a person can be justified, which is being declared righteous. Saving grace is by trusting in the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24, 25). When a person has saving grace, as did Noah, then a serving grace is enabled through the indwelling Holy Spirit's power, with the infilling received by prayer and walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:7; Gal. 5:16; Heb. 4:16).

The difference between all who perished and Noah is that he and his family were saved from the “Great Flood” (Gen. 6-9; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5). This universal (worldwide/global) flood was a judgment sent by God upon mankind in the days of Noah (Gen. 6-9; Isa. 54:9; Matt. 24:38,39; Luke 6:48; 17:27; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5).

Noah's faith was as an obedient response to the Word of God with a 120-year commitment to building the Great Ark despite ridicule, never having seen rain (Gen. 2:5, 6). God is concerned with the salvation of families, and made a covenant with Noah, saving him, his wife, his three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth) and their wives (Gen. 6:18). After they were on board, plus a pair of all animals and seven pairs of clean animals, God shut the door (Gen. 7:16). The great flood destroyed all the living, except of the sea and in the Ark (Gen. 7:23).

THOUGHT: If Noah did not have a saving faith through the grace of God, his name would not have been recorded in Heb. 11:6, 7.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the grace that I may continue to exercise faith during trials as Noah did for 120 years whilst constructing the Ark.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3

GENESIS 9:8-19

REVELATION 4:1-8

*“there was a rainbow round
about the throne.”*

THE PROMISE OF THE RAINBOW

Due to the wickedness of man on earth at the time of Noah, God said he would destroy all living (Gen. 6:1-7; cf. 11:13). Not all the living would be drowned, as some were frozen. Although rain had never been previously experienced, God instructed Noah to make an Ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). The exception to the destruction was all the life of the sea, and all of the animals that were in the Ark, along with Noah and his family, (cf. Gen. 6:18-22), as Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8).

God made the promise with Noah and his descendants that He would never destroy the world again with a “Universal Flood,” establishing the rainbow as the sign of His promise (Gen. 9:13-16). The rainbow was appointed as a witness of God’s Divine faithfulness (Gen. 9:12-17), and was established after the Great Flood, in the post-Flood atmosphere, that God’s everlasting covenant with every creature of all flesh that is upon the earth may be remembered.

The flood prevailed 40 days and covered the entire earth and after 371 days Noah and his family left the Ark with every living thing (Gen. 8:15-19). Noah made an altar and sacrificed to God (Gen. 8:20-21), and seasons began (Gen. 8:22). God blessed Noah and his sons, commanding them to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth. Animals were tame before the flood. After the flood, God instructed that animals could be eaten, but not the blood, as there is life in the blood (Gen. 9:3-5; cf. 6, 7). God established the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:11, 12) and gave the rainbow as the sign for remembrance of that covenant.

THOUGHT: There is also a rainbow around God’s throne (Rev. 4:3), signifying God’s eternal promises in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks for Your promises, and understand that the rainbow is Your reminder of Your covenantal promise.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 4

GENESIS 14:17-24

HEBREWS 7:1-10

*“the patriarch Abraham gave
the tenth of the spoils.”*

A THANKSGIVING TITHE

In Gen. 14, an invasion of Canaan by a coalition of four Mesopotamian kings, led by king Chedorlaomer of Elam (Gen.14:1-3), conquered five cities in the plain of the Jordan, including Sodom (Gen.14:5-11). Abram's nephew Lot, who was living at Sodom, was among those taken captive (Gen.14:12), as the cities were plundered and many people were taken away as slaves. After learning of Lot's capture, Abram gathered his 318 specially trained servants to rescue Lot (Gen. 14:13, 14). Abram divided his men and at night initiated a surprise attack (Gen. 14:15). King Chedorlaomer was defeated, and subsequently Lot was rescued (Gen. 14:16). As God is sovereign over the nations, Lot was saved because of his relationship to Abram (cf. Gen. 12:3).

As Abram was returning from battle to Hebron, he met Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem) and high priest of the Most High God (cf. Psalm 78:35) who blessed him (Gen. 14:18-20). As a thanksgiving tithe, Abram gave to Melchizedek one tenth of the goods of war that he recovered from king Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:17-20). To the contrary Abram would accept no goods from the godless, wicked and perverted king Bera of Sodom who came to show his gratitude (Gen. 14:21-24).

Consequently Abram commenced the practice of tithing and Jacob continued the practice (Gen. 28:20-22) 500 years before the Mosaic Law when Moses confirmed it (Deut. 12:6). Malachi commanded tithing (Mal. 3:8-10), Jesus Christ Himself commended tithing (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42), God commissioned tithing (1 Cor. 9:14) and the Apostle Paul taught and conformed to tithing (1 Cor. 16:2).

THOUGHT: Abram did not take anything from the wicked king of Sodom, lest he should say he made Abram rich, but he gave a thanksgiving tithe to Melchizedek.

PRAYER: Lord, I pray that I may be obedient to the precepts and commands and give my thanksgiving tithes to You with a heart of gratitude.

MONDAY, JANUARY 5
DEUTERONOMY 31:1-8
PSALM 27:1-14

*“...Wait on the LORD:
be of good courage...”*

THE KEY TO VICTORY

When Joshua was commissioned to lead Israel into the land that the Lord swore to give their ancestors, Moses reminded the people of his advanced age (120 years) and that God had appointed and anointed Joshua to succeed him as their leader (Num. 27:18-23). God promised His unfailing presence with Moses (Num. 31:6), which was extended to Joshua (Num. 31:7, 8, 23) and although God has not forsaken Israel, the principle still belongs to the Church today (Heb. 13:5).

Each time the Word of God speaks of being “strong and courageous” (cf. Num. 31:6, 7, 23; Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18; 10:25), the exhortation is linked with God’s promises, as God will be with Joshua and will surely enable Israel to conquer the “Land of Promise.” Likewise other similar verses also contain a promise (1 Chron. 19:13; 28:10, 20; 2 Chron. 32:7; Psalm 27:14; Isa. 35:4; 41:6; Dan. 10:19; Haggai 2:4; etc.),

As Joshua was encouraged by God and Moses, so did David express confidence and praise to God during conflict when surrounded by his enemies (Psalm 27:1-3), desiring to be in the Lord’s presence (in the Temple) to save, strengthen and sustain him (Psalm 27:4-6). David also pleaded that even if his parents did forsake him, that God would remain close to him (Psalm 27:7-10). David also asked for guidance and deliverance, encouraging himself to be patient and courageous, knowing and convincing himself that God would always help him (Psalm 27:11-14).

THOUGHT: Although God has given promises to Israel, He has also given us promises. Like Joshua, we must be strong and courageous and rely on God’s promises.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the strength and courage that as a true believer, I may be victorious in relying on Your promises.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6

JOSHUA 1:5-9

2 TIMOTHY 2:11-16

*“Study to shew thyself
approved unto God...”*

THE PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

Moses, was Israel’s great leader, and after his demise, Joshua, who had been prepared as his understudy for 40 years, was ready to take the leadership of Israel. In Joshua 1:8, God encouraged Joshua to “meditate upon” and obey the book of the Law, i.e. “read and heed.”

A summary of the book of Joshua is given in Joshua 1:2-6 as follows: God renewed the promise with Joshua (Joshua 1:3) that He had given to Moses (Deut. 11:24) concerning and establishing Israel’s borders, that all the land of Canaan (the Promised Land) on which the sole of Israel’s feet would tread would belong to them.

God reminded Joshua that the success of Israel in entering (Joshua 1:2), conquering Canaan (Joshua 1:3) and dividing the Promised Land (Joshua 1:6) would not be a result of any strategic or military advantage, but purely from meditation on and obedience to the Law. It was not enough for the Priests to carry and guard the precious “*book of the law.*” They had to read it too. Joshua was exhorted to take time to read it daily and make it a part of his inner being by meditating on it (cf. Psalm 1:2; 119:97; Deut. 17:18-20). Tyndale’s Concise Bible Commentary says, “The word ‘meditate’ (Josh. 1:8) means to speak in an undertone, and it involves recitation as well as memorization.” This is supported by Deut. 6:6-9; Acts 8:26-40 where they would read God’s Word to themselves and to one another.

THOUGHT: The principle of success was to meditate on God’s Law both day and night, which is also the exhortation to Timothy by the Apostle Paul.

PRAYER: Lord, may You grant me strength to exercise prayer continually (Divine Sovereignty) and meditate on Your Word (Human Responsibility) both night and day that I may be obedient to the principles of success in You.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7

JOB 5:17-27

PSALM 34:8-22

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth.”

NOT FORSAKEN

In Job 5:19, the number “*six*” is followed by the numerical increase “*seven*,” maintaining an emphasis upon the seventh object.

The suffering of Job resulted from Satan suggesting to God that Job would only remain righteous and faithful to Him as long as he was financially profitable. Consequently the Lord permitted Satan to test Job’s faith and he could touch any of his possessions, but could not take his life. One after another Job lost his ten children, servants, and his livestock and was made penniless. *“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly”* (Job 1:22), but his wife was bitter toward God and said, *“curse God, and die”* (Job 2:9).

On this occasion, Eliphaz (one of the three friends of Job) unwittingly sides with Satan, and rather than encourage his friend Job, he discourages him. Eliphaz believed that Job’s problem was of a disciplinary nature, and that rather than despise God’s correcting, he should endure it. On most occasions, this assessment may be correct, but on this occasion the observations of Eliphaz were completely incorrect.

Eliphaz promised Job that if he would simply accept his suffering as discipline from God, and not despise it, he would eventually be restored to health and prosperity. Although this is a valid principle (cf. Heb. 12:5-11), on this occasion Eliphaz wrongly applied it to Job’s situation. Even though Job suffered a great loss and was afflicted with sores that he sat on the edge of a dung heap scraping them with a broken piece of pottery, God restored his possessions to more than the former, as He delivereth the righteous (Psalm 34:19).

THOUGHT: Job is noted for his perseverance (James 5:11) and his unwavering faith in the Living and True God, in spite of his extreme suffering.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the strength to endure the trials I encounter. I give thanks that those who believe in You are not forsaken.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8

2 PETER 2:1-9

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

*“...but will with the temptation
also make a way to escape...”*

DELIVERING THE RIGHTEOUS

It is God’s desire that all be saved, but in His wisdom and according to the good pleasure of His will He saves some (Eph. 1:4, 5), and not others, but those who willfully reject Him are still culpable for their actions. In 2 Pet. 2:1-3, false teachers and false prophets were bringing damnable heresies, even denying the Deity of Jesus Christ, and many who followed their ways will one day be judged. False teachers will be judged, but God will rescue the righteous (2 Pet. 2:9).

God spared not the angels that sinned (fallen angels, 2 Pet. 2:4). The Word of God says they are called *“the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation”* (Jude 6). God rescued Noah whilst He judged the wickedness of the world with the water of a universal flood (2 Pet. 2:5).

Likewise, God rescued Lot whilst He judged the wickedness of Sodom with fire (2 Pet. 2:6-8). Throughout God’s Word, Sodom is used as a symbol of wickedness and a stern warning to sinners that God judges evil (Deut. 29:23; Isa. 1:9,10; 3:9; Jer. 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Ezek. 16:46-56; Amos 4:11; Zeph. 2:9; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). Although it may be difficult to conclude from Genesis 13, 14, 19 that Lot was *“righteous”* (2 Pet. 2:8), however, *“the Lord knoweth them that are his”* (2 Tim. 2:19).

Although trials and temptations will be proportionate to our strength, the tragedies that befell the Israelites were recorded as lessons and warnings, lest we also fall (1 Cor. 10:6-11). We should always be on guard against temptation.

THOUGHT: God has not promised to shield us from trials (1 Cor. 10:11, 12), but He has promised to see us through trials (1 Cor. 10:13).

PRAYER: May my trust be in the Lord during all trials in my life.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9
EPHESIANS 4:17-32
MATTHEW 6:9-15

*“For if ye forgive men their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive
you.”*

THANKFULNESS FOR FORGIVENESS

Christians must put away anger and walk in newness of new life, as anger is a result of pride. *“An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression. A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit”* (Prov. 29:22, 23). God’s Word says, *“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds”* (Col. 3:8, 9).

Although the Word of God says, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Ex. 20:13), which is the act of murder, the Lord Jesus Christ closely connected anger with murder, as anger is the root cause of violence and murder, and warned about calling a person a fool (moron/ stupid), lest they fall into the danger of hell fire (Matt. 5:21-22).

If anger is expressed between individuals, it must be dealt with during that day with a conscious plan of resolution, lest Satan be allowed a foothold (Eph. 4:26). In the evening Psalm of trust, the Psalmist urges sinners to reconsider their actions each night upon their pillow and repent of sin (Psalm 4:4).

Jesus Christ taught the disciples to pray and said, *“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Matt. 6:15).

THOUGHT: A person walking in the newness of life after salvation, must put away bitterness, wrath, complaining, evil speaking and a vicious disposition of character and be kind and compassionate and exercise forgiveness.

PRAYER: May I forgive others as You have forgiven me (Matt. 6:9-15).

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

MATTHEW 6:19-34

*“...But seek ye first
the kingdom of God.”*

GOD’S UNFAILING POWER

Philippians 4:13 is often taken out of context to justify a person being strengthened in everything, which is far from the truth. The analogy of Scripture is that Scripture interprets Scripture, and this verse must be taken in context with the previous verses, as Scripture is of no private interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20).

The Apostle Paul knew how to be content and strengthened in both feast and famine. In whatever circumstances, he was not disquieted nor disturbed, but satisfied. He knew how to live both abased and live humbly in circumstances of poverty in prison and in chains in want and in hunger, and how to enjoy times of prosperity. The Apostle Paul could be content in all situations because Jesus Christ abided in and empowered him (Phil. 4:13).

In Phil. 4:10, 14 the Apostle Paul acknowledged the latest compassionate gift from the Philippians and his joy was not in the gift itself, but in the Lord because of the gift. In Phil. 4:15, 16, he recalled all their past generousities and expressions of love and thoughts behind those gifts given (Phil. 4:17, 18). The Apostle assured them of blessings in return for their generosity and committed them to God’s grace.

Whilst there are Christians whose contentment is totally dependent on circumstances, there are others whose contentment is totally independent of circumstances and they are not affected by their condition. By giving, the Philippians displayed that the Word of God was not impeded by the deceitfulness of riches, that they were just content in their own circumstances, that they were not careless about the needs of others, and they were not unfaithful in their obligations in stewardship, exhibiting God’s unfailing power.

THOUGHT: Jesus Himself is the source of the Apostle Paul’s strength.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the secret of contentment with outward circumstances, whether I have little or much as this is Your unfailing power.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 11

REVELATION 2:1-7

REVELATION 22:10-17

*"...that they may have
right to the tree of life."*

THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

The letters to the seven churches in Revelation came some 60 years after the Gospels, and were written to seven existing churches, dealing with problems of the time, as they were active churches with trouble within.

The risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ addressed the Church at Ephesus in the first of the seven letters of Revelation.

The Church at Ephesus was commended for being, patient, opposing evil, exposing false teachers, sound teaching, remaining steadfast, and opposing the Nicolaitans, of whom Wiersbe said, "...refers to the development of a priestly caste (clergy) in the church that throws aside the common believers." However, the Church at Ephesus became an organization rather than an organism and the people were so busy working for Jesus Christ that they neglected time with Him, they were condemned because they had left (not lost) their first love.

To those who repent and overcometh is given to eat from the "*tree of life*" being the joys of the celestial paradise. If Adam and Eve had eaten from this tree, they would have lived forever, instead of suffering death (Gen. 3:19; cf. Gen. 2:8-17; 3:1-21) and being banished from the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22-24).

THOUGHT: The "Tree of Life" was placed by God in the midst of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8, 9), a tree whose fruit represented eternal life.

PRAYER: (Pray that we be repentant and be faithful until the end, living for eternity in Heaven and eating of the "Tree of Life.")

MONDAY, JANUARY 12

REVELATION 2:8-11

MATTHEW 10:26-28

“...fear not them
which kill the body.”

SAFE FROM THE SECOND DEATH

There was no condemnation for the Church at Smyrna. The Christians were commended for their faithfulness and encouraged to persevere during their suffering. They were made poor as a result of persecution, but were a model Church and remained faithful.

The persecution of the Christians at Smyrna resulted from their rejection of the pagan cult worship of Roman Emperor Tiberius, which John described as the “synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9). Christians refusing to bow to and worship the Roman Emperor were branded as rebels and their rejection seen as treason.

The Word of God promises that Christians will suffer persecution (Matt. 13:21; Acts 8:1; 11:19; 13:50; Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 12:10; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; 2 Thess. 1:4; 2 Tim. 3:11, 12). The risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ having once shed His blood and died for our sins, purchased salvation for us. He rose from the dead for our justification and is alive.

The faithful Christian’s reward unto death is a “*Crown of life*,” but the second death is the final and complete separation of the unsaved from God (2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:14; 21:8), unto eternal death, destruction and torment in Hell.

THOUGHT: Evil and malicious men throughout history, may have been able to destroy the body of true believers, but they were never able to destroy the soul.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for salvation in Jesus Christ and that all who have willingly accepted You are saved from the “Second Death” of eternal torment.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13

REVELATION 2:12-17

JOHN 6:31-58

“...I am the living bread which came down from heaven.”

MANNA, A WHITE STONE AND A NEW NAME

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev. 2:17).

The Church at Pergamos was a church that was commended. However, it compromised the Word of God, having followed the doctrine of Balaam (idolatry) and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. It was a church that did not understand the doctrinal necessity of Biblical separation, consequently it was a “Compromising Church.”

Jesus Christ knew of their works and commended them for holding to the faith and not denying Him in persecutions. The Apostle John described Pergamos as the location of Satan’s throne (Rev. 2:13).

The sword in His mouth represents a divine discipline and judgment through His spoken Word as recorded in Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 2:8. When Jesus Christ returns physically to establish His one thousand year reign on earth, He will finally destroy all unbelievers as recorded in Matt. 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9; Rev. 19:21. Knowing that Jesus Christ will return should promote a living that is righteous, sober and godly.

Speaking of the three blessings promised for the victorious person who remains faithful and overcomes, Nelson’s KJV Commentary says, “Manna in the Old Testament represents sustenance and life (cf. John 6:48-51). Christ is sufficient for all the believer’s needs. The white stone with its new name symbolizes acceptance and approval by God.”

THOUGHT: To repent of an errant way is to enjoy eternal life, whilst to persist in tolerating evil is to invite God’s anger.

PRAYER: (Pray that true believers look forward to the manna from heaven, give thanks for acceptance from God, and rejoice in their new name.)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14

REVELATION 2:18-29

PSALM 2:5-12

*“...Thou shalt break
them with a rod of iron.”*

A MILLENNIAL RULE

The sin committed at Thyatira was that of Jezebel, who seduced those in the Church to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols (Rev. 2:20). Thyatira received the strongest words of condemnation addressed to any of the churches. This false female teacher, called herself a prophetess and Jesus Christ called her Jezebel because she resembled the Jezebel of the Old Testament. She was a domineering woman, as was Jezebel the infamous wife of King Ahab who brought great tragedy to Israel (1 Kings 16:30-33; 1 Kings 21:25-26). Punishment was due to Jezebel and her followers (Rev. 2:21-23).

The Apostle John in Rev. 2:26, 27 quoted Psalm 2:9 indicating that all who are faithful and victorious will be associated with Jesus Christ in His (Millennial) Kingdom reign (1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 12:5; 19:15). True believers (Psalm 2:7) will share in power and authority reigning with Jesus Christ. The “*morning star*” (Rev. 2:28), the KJV Commentary says, “is probably a reference to the eternal presence of Christ Himself” (cf. Rev. 22:16).

Timothy Tow writes, “In every corrupt church there are, by God’s grace, remnants of the faithful. Can you say that of yourself, coming from an apostate church? The remedy in fact is to separate from them (2 Cor 6:14-18).”

THOUGHT: A severe judgment is upon errant teachers (James 3:1).

PRAYER: Lord, may I not be involved in either spiritual or physical adultery as it leads to sure punishment. May I worship You in love and truth.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15

REVELATION 3:1-6

MALACHI 3:16-4:3

“...and a book of
remembrance was written.”

THE BOOK OF LIFE

This Church at Sardis appeared from the outside to be a busy church and alive, but it was dead in its sin (dead orthodoxy), being complacent and resting on its previous accomplishments and achievements. Along with the Church at Laodicea, they were given no commendation (only a few faithful) by the LORD.

Timothy Tow writes, “Sardis is like a flickering lamp running out of oil. So she is called to strengthen the things that remain, that are ready ‘for I have not found thy works perfect.’ Not only has she left her first love, she is on the verge of extinction herself.

Yet there is a remnant, by God’s grace, in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, who have not backslidden into sin. These shall be received into the Lord’s company of a holy walk, for ‘they are worthy.’ How good to maintain our integrity and to be thus honoured. Faith must be proven by good works. We are saved by grace, but we must walk by faith, trust and obey. Then we will be assured of our salvation. We are saved not by a complacent faith but by a consuming faith. ‘Faith without works is dead.’”

The future rewards to the victorious, include being announced by Jesus Christ before God the Father (cf. Matt. 10:32). The “*Book of Life*” (Rev. 3:5) is the book of the “*Redeemed*,” showing eternal security (cf. Rev. 20:15; 21:27), who shall be “*clothed in white raiment*” which represents the faithful ones as the garments of the faithless are defiled (Rev. 3:5; cf. 3:18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:14).

THOUGHT: People whose names are in the “*Book of Life*” enter the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27).

PRAYER: (Pray that those in leadership are not put there because of their accomplishments of this world of the unsaved, as their garments are stained, but that they be faithful men of God.)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16

REVELATION 3:7-13

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

*“...there is laid up for me
a crown of righteousness.”*

A PLACE OF HONOUR

Timothy Tow writes, “While Smyrna, representing the churches under persecution, is the Church fully commended by our Lord, Philadelphia is that which represents the churches not under specific persecution. She is commended for her faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord and patience in following in His Word: her reward is a door of opportunity in His Service opened by the key of David, the true Steward of God who is Jesus, that no man can shut ... (Read Isaiah 22:20-22).

God will also make those who are Jews, the exclusive Judaising party in the Church, which to God is the synagogue of Satan, come to *kowtow* before Philadelphia. Truth must subdue error. God will also preserve the Philadelphians from the hour of temptation as our Lord has promised to give the disciples wisdom to confound their persecutors (Matthew 10:20). Philadelphia though not under immediate persecution is prepared for the worst to come. Every true servant of God must be prepared for any eventuality. Now while salvation is freely given, reward in service can be given only to overcomers. ‘I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway’ (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27).”

The pillar in the Temple is a reminder of the two at the porch-way entrance of King Solomon’s Temple (cf. 1 Kings 7:21), denoting stability, strength, and permanence. The risen Lord and Saviour did not pronounce any condemnation upon the Church at Philadelphia, but encouraged them not to let go of what they had as evidence of their salvation, for those who remained faithful would receive a crown, which is a reward (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

THOUGHT: The genuine believer will be given a place of honour and service before God in His coming Kingdom.

PRAYER: May I exercise brotherly love, reaching out to others with God’s love.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

REVELATION 3:14-22

MATTHEW 25:31-46

*“...When the Son of man shall come...
then shall he sit upon the throne of his
glory.”*

KINGDOM PARTICIPATION

*“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”
(Rev. 3:21)*

The Church at Laodicea did not receive any commendations, but was rebuked by the risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for its insipid lukewarm spirit. It consisted of lukewarm Christians who were neither hot nor cold. They were mildly warm and were lacking in genuine conviction, true Biblical enthusiasm and faithful commitment. They also lacked sincerity as they were sincerely wrong.

The serious charge of severe reproofs against the Church at Laodicea, resulted from the wealth of the leaders and the people, who were self-conceited, self-satisfied, self-deluded and secure and apostate. Pride and complacency were the sinful characteristics of the people of Laodicea, which influenced the moral condition of the Church. Although the Church thought it was perfect, it was condemned, as it lacked genuine faith and there was nothing good about it in God's eyes, as neutrality towards God is unacceptable.

Genuine wealth and fellowship can only be experienced if Jesus Christ abides within the heart. The KJV Bible Commentary says, “To sit with Christ on His throne is indicative of royal authority, power, and glory. Kingdom participation is in view here. Christ will have His throne (cf. 2 Sam. 7:13; Luke 1:31-33; Matt. 25:31). He is now sat down with my Father in His throne (cf. Psalm 110:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2). The overcomer will reign with the victorious Christ on His blessed glorious throne.

THOUGHT: The end times will experience an insipid lukewarm spirit and there will be many heading for hell, who thought they were going to Heaven.

PRAYER: Lord, may I not be deceived concerning the condition of my soul.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 18

LUKE 1:26:38

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

*"he hath made him to be sin for us,
who knew no sin."*

THE HOLINESS OF JESUS CHRIST

When Jesus Christ was born, He brought with Him an attribute of pre-existence Holiness, as Holiness in the highest sense belongs to God (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 15:4). The Angel described the nature of the child that Mary bore as holy because He would be born without sin. His sinless nature was not inherited from Mary, as she was a sinner, but inherited from God the Father. Consequently, the Devil had no foothold on the child when He was born, or throughout His life.

Jesus Christ is the only person to have been born without original sin. To the contrary, every other person has been born with the old inherited nature of Adam. Moses spoke of His glorious Holiness saying, *"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"* (Ex. 15:11).

Luke spoke of the fulfillment of His glorious Holiness saying, *"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together"* (Acts 4:27). Jesus challenged the people about Abraham being their physical father but not their spiritual father, and also as to whether they believed He had sinned (John 8:46). They sought to kill Him, because they were children of the Devil (John 8:37-47). Jesus knew no sin, but our sin was imputed upon Him, that His righteousness, may be imputed upon us (2 Cor. 5:21). He triumphed gloriously over the Satanic foe, because there was no sin in Him.

Although Christians are not sinless, they should sin less as holiness is intimately connected with righteousness and moral purity (Jer. 31:23; Luke 1:75; Rom. 6:19; Eph. 4:24).

THOUGHT: Holiness is connected with the Blood of Christ (Heb. 9:12, 20-25).

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks that after positional holiness comes practical holiness because of the Holiness of the Messiah.

MONDAY, JANUARY 19

ISAIAH 53:10-12

ROMANS 1:16, 17

*“...therein is the righteousness of
God...”*

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus was punished for the sins of humanity but most onlookers would have assumed that He was dying for His own sin and crimes committed (Isa. 53:4-6), believing His death was justifiable punishment for His supposed blasphemy of claiming to be God (cf. John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7).

Even though He was sinless (Isa. 53:9), Jesus Christ would not make any attempt to defend Himself, being led to die for the sins of others (Isa. 53:7, 8; cf. Matt. 26:63; 27:12-14). He is perfectly righteous and by His active obedience to the law of God, He fulfilled all righteousness (Matt. 3:14, 15; cf. Heb. 1:8, 9; Rom. 3:25, 26; 1 John 2:29; 3:7). God intended this event to take place, as Jesus Christ would be the final, perfect offering for sin, which seemed unjust (Isa. 53:10-12; cf. Luke 22:37; John 1:29; Rom. 5:18, 19; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The Word of God says, *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God”* (Rom. 3:10, 11; cf. 3:23). The depravity of man is also seen throughout the Old Testament and is summarized in Psalm 14:1-3. Righteousness is a key word in the epistle to the Romans, and is the criterion by which sin is judged. Sinners do not seek the Lord Jesus Christ because they are unrighteous, but are drawn by God unto repentance and confession (John 6:44).

The Cruel Cross of Jesus Christ was a public demonstration of the righteousness of God. God imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to those who trust in Him (Rom. 4:3-22; Gal. 3:6; Phil. 3:9) as *“the just shall live by faith”* (Rom. 1:17).

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ died for the sins of humanity and was raised from the dead to see His mission accomplished (Isa. 53:11, 12; cf. Phil. 2:5-11).

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks for the righteousness of Jesus Christ and for the gift of salvation, knowing that self-righteousness is worthless and condemns me.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20

PSALM 25:8-15

MATTHEW 19:16-30

*“Why callest thou me good?
there is none good but one...”*

THE GOODNESS OF JESUS CHRIST

*“Good and upright is the LORD:
therefore will he teach sinners in the
way”* (Psalm 25:8).

The Psalmist David asked the Lord to deliver, guide, and forgive him and in His mercy, forgive him of the past sins of his youth (Psalm 25:1-7). David expressed his belief that in His goodness, God does deliver, guide, and forgive those who fear Him (Psalm 25:8-15). He concluded with a plea for deliverance from outward enemies and inward affliction and that God would protect His people (Psalm 25:16-22).

Goodness is an attribute of the Lord. Consequently, as He is good, He will not abandon sinners. Those who are His, He will claim, purge, and show them the way of the Cruel Cross that they may live righteously. In keeping with His covenant, as with David, the Lord will no more remember the sins of their youth and their transgressions. David's appeal for pardon is for the sake of the Name of the Lord, being for the honor of His name.

When the rich young ruler approached Jesus Christ, he called Him good and His response was, *“Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments”* (Matt. 19:13-30; Mark 10:17-3; Luke 18:18-30). The Messiah challenged the rich young ruler but was not denying His own deity. Instead He was impressing upon him the seriousness of the implication, and whether he really meant what he was saying. The rich young ruler thought that he had some good in him and that he may do some good works for salvation unto eternal life. He did not understand that only God grants eternal life and that he was in need of God's grace.

THOUGHT: The Lord is good and ready to forgive (Psalm 86:5) and He went about doing good (Acts 10:38).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the gift of salvation and goodness of Jesus Christ, knowing those who wilfully reject You will endure Your severity (Rom. 11:22).

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21

JEREMIAH 10:1-18

MATTHEW 22:15-22

“Master, we know that thou art true.”

THE TRUTHFULNESS OF GOD

“But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation” (Jer. 10:10).

Jeremiah contrasted the worship of Judah’s false gods (Jer. 10:1-5, 8-16) with Judah’s true God (Jer. 10:6, 7, 17-25). Jeremiah preached that it is idolatrous to worship man-made gods (impotent idols), and it is worthless, foolish and destructive. Such practices will incur the pouring out of the wrath of God, as it displays a refusal to recognize the truthful God as LORD. Jeremiah declared that denying the Living and True God, the Creator of the universe, for false gods, who are dead and temporal idols, is the height of insanity.

Likewise Isaiah considered men making the very idols they worship, and trusting the impotence of false gods, as polytheistic pagan idolatry and the emptiness of false religion (Isa. 44:6-28).

The Pharisees were unable to kill Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 21:45, 46) so they tried to ridicule Him (Matt. 22:15). *“And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men”* (Matt. 22:16). They sent the Herodians to enquire about paying taxes to Caesar. If He had responded that it was not lawful, the Romans would have been angry. To the contrary, if He said it was lawful, He may have been labelled a traitor to His own nation. Jesus Christ answered by taking a coin with Caesar’s picture on it, wisely responding that Jews should give to Caesar what was his (taxes) and give to God what was His (worship and obedience).

THOUGHT: Many recognize that God is true (truthful) but willingly reject Him. The Word of God says, *“...This is the true God, and eternal life”* (1 John 5:20).

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks for the truthfulness of You and Your Word which says, *“let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Rom. 3:4).

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22
LAMENTATIONS 3:21-39
2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13

*“yet he abideth faithful:
he cannot deny himself.”*

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, recalls his afflictions (Lam. 3:1-20; 52-66) and the afflictions of Jerusalem (Lam. 3:43-46). Despite his groaning, he finds hope in the Lord and rejoices that the Lord’s unfailing love keeps his people from complete destruction.

Despite the anguish that Jeremiah experienced, he humbly recalled God’s unfailing mercies and great faithfulness (Lam. 3:21-24). Jeremiah admonished the people to wait patiently for the Lord to respond, *“The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him”* (Lam. 3:25; ff. 26; cf. Isa. 25:9; 40:27-31), accept the Lord’s discipline (Lam. 3:27-30, 34-39) and repent of their sin (Lam. 3:40-42). And he asked the Lord to vindicate him by punishing his oppressors.

God’s faithfulness is a constant theme expressed throughout the Bible. Moses said, *“...the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments...”* (Deut. 7:9). Isaiah said, *“...the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel...”* (Isa. 49:7). Jeremiah said, *“...great is thy faithfulness”* (Lam. 3:21-23). The Apostle Paul called Him a *“faithful High Priest”* (Heb. 2:17; 3:2). The Apostle John referred to the Messiah as the *“faithful witness”* (Rev. 1:5; 3:14), and Him sitting on the white horse as the *“Faithful and True”* (Rev. 19:11).

The source of the Christian’s deliverance from temptation is God’s faithfulness (1 Cor. 10:13), assurance of salvation is declared in Heb. 10:23, and He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9). God is faithful to His children because He is faithful to Himself (2 Tim. 2:13).

THOUGHT: God is faithful, but the notorious sin of this world is unfaithfulness.

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks for salvation, deliverance from temptation, assurance of salvation and the forgiveness of sins because You are faithful.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

ISAIAH 50:4-11

MATTHEW 26:36-46

*“nevertheless not as I will,
but as thou wilt.”*

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE MESSIAH

“The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isa. 50:5).

The Lord Jesus Christ was obedient to God the Father’s plan and obediently followed even when He suffered for doing so (Isa. 50:5-7).

God punished disobedience by exiling Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22-24). In the Old Testament, obedience was the basis for experiencing God’s blessing and favour (Ex. 19:5; 24:1-8), and Samuel emphasized that God’s pleasure was in obedience, not in sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). Even the promise of a new covenant (a better covenant) emphasized obedience as God’s gift (Jer. 31:33).

In the New Testament, the obedience of Jesus Christ to God the Father is expressed in Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8. In the terrible anguish of that moment, as the sin of the world was poured on Jesus Christ, He became *“sin for us”* (2 Cor 5:21). As He was in total submission to the will of the Father, the result was His obedience unto a substitutionary death. This is His ultimate humility and exaltation as Lord (Phil 2). *“And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt”* (Matt. 26:39).

Consequently, Christians are called to an obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), also an obedience to Jesus Christ (John 3:36; Heb. 5:9), and obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ unto salvation (Rom. 10:16; 1 Pet. 4:17).

THOUGHT: In the New Testament, the obedience of Jesus Christ to life is contrasted to the disobedience of Adam unto death.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Your only begotten Son enduring the wrath of sin on my behalf, that salvation may be possible for me.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

JOHN 15:1-8

1 JOHN 2:3-6

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

ABIDING IN CHRIST YIELDS FRUIT

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary says to abide is: “to wait for; to endure without yielding; to bear patiently; to accept without objection; to remain stable or fixed in a state.” The main truth that Jesus Christ is teaching in this parable of the vine (John 15:5) is the importance of abiding in Him (being united with Him) in order to bear fruit. In John 15:1-9, the word “fruit” is used six times, and “abide” (and its various derivatives) at least fifteen times. The main point of the teaching here is the fruitfulness of fellowship.

Jesus Christ, described Himself as the true vine, and compared believers with branches. God the Father attends to pruning branches like a vinedresser (gardener). At that time of the year in Jerusalem, the vines were budding and for a branch to improve the bearing of fruit, it must have been pruned.

Every branch that does not bear fruit (Gal. 5:22-26) is dead wood which He prunes to prevent the spread of decay, but this is not a loss of salvation (John 10:22-30). Those caught up in an habitual sin are no longer useful to God (1 John 5:16) unless they repent (1 John 1:9). Such wasted effort will be judged and burnt at the Bema Seat of Christ when Christians receive the rewards for faithfulness and fruitfulness in the Lord (1 Cor. 3:10-17; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). Those who are merely professing Christians will be severed from their superficial connection with Jesus Christ, as was Judas Iscariot (Matt. 26:24).

Cleansing comes through God’s Word and bearing fruit is the blessing from genuine abiding in Jesus Christ who said, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”* (John 15:8; cf. 1 John 2:3-6).

THOUGHT: Committed believers will progress in their fruit bearing to yield much fruit (John 15:2, 5, 8).

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to patiently abide in Christ, yielding the fruit of repentance.

LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 25

MATTHEW 6:1-4

PSALM 112:1-10

*“A good man sheweth favour, and
lendeth.”*

OPENLY REWARDED

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:3, 4).

When Jesus was preaching the Sermon on the Mount about the right and wrong way of giving, praying and fasting (Matt. 6:1-18), He was addressing the pride of the Pharisees and the Pharisaical heart. He established the rules for giving which included firstly, giving sincerely, that the giver will receive reward from his Father in Heaven (Matt. 6:1). Secondly, it is important to give secretly as a person creating attention to giving will cause that attention to be the only reward.

Tyndale's Concise Bible Commentary says, “To announce by ‘blowing trumpets’ (Matt. 6:2) was possibly a reference to the noisy manner in which offerings were tossed into the thirteen trumpet-shaped chests in the temple.”

Nelson's KJV Commentary says, *“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth”* (Matt. 6:3) means that one's giving of finances for the work of the Lord should be done so freely and spontaneously that his right hand cannot keep up with his left hand.

Matthew Henry speaking of Matt. 6:4 said “we must not let *others* know what we do... we must not observe it too much *ourselves*: the left hand is a part of ourselves; we must not within ourselves take notice too much of the good we do, must not applaud and admire ourselves. Self-conceit and self-complacency, and an adoring of our own shadow, are branches of pride, as dangerous as vain-glory and ostentation before men.”

THOUGHT: A godly person, being gracious and full of compassion and who deals faithfully with God and man, will be blessed (Psalm 112:4).

PRAYER: Lord, may I give to You with the right attitude, cheerfully and spontaneously.

MONDAY, JANUARY 26

JOHN 15:9-17

HEBREWS 12:1,2

“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.”

OBEDIENCE BRINGS JOY

The Word of God declares that the Father loves the Son (John 15:9b, 10b), that the Son loves the believer (John 15:9a, 10a, 11), and consequently the believer is to love other believers (John 15:12). The believer is motivated by the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is patterned on the Father's love. Obedience to the Father's commands (both hearing and doing) is the same for a disciple as it was for the Son (cf. John 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 2:3; 3:22, 24; 5:3). The proper path for all of God's children is active dependence upon Him and loving obedience to His commandments.

The purpose of the teaching of Jesus Christ is to give man an abundant life, not a joyless existence (John 10:10). The commands for His disciples to obey are for their joy (cf. John 17:13). Although a Christian ought to have a cheerful disposition, joy is not just an outward expression. The Apostle Paul said, *“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,”* (2 Cor. 6:10a), and the Apostle Peter said, *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations”* (1 Pet. 1:6).

Jesus Christ had great joy in pleasing His Father by living a fruitful life and exercising both an active obedience in fulfilling the Law and a passive obedience enduring the “Cruel Cross” of shame. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb. 12:2).

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness (Heb. 1:9) and was *“a man of sorrows (severe pains) and acquainted with grief”* (Isa. 53:3).

PRAYER: Lord, as You first loved me (1 John 4:9, 19), may my love for You be expressed by obeying Your commandments that I may receive joy.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27

2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-24

HEBREWS 6:13-20

“it was impossible for God to lie.”

THE PROMISES OF GOD

The desire of the Apostle Paul in planning his schedule was to visit the Christians at Corinth on his way from Ephesus en-route to Macedonia. He qualified *“if the Lord permit”* as he was always subject to the will of God (1 Cor. 16:2-8). As his plans did change, he wrote to them advising them of such (2 Cor. 1:15, 16). Some who were fickle minded were just waiting for an excuse to discredit his credibility (cf. 2 Cor. 10-13). This was an opportunity his opponents used to accuse him of inconsistency and of being double-minded (2 Cor. 1:17, 18).

God cannot be glorified if deception is practised at the same time, otherwise your conscience is violated and your character eroded. Whilst explaining his change of plans, the Apostle Paul interrupted his explanation to speak of God’s faithfulness regarding salvation, sanctification, and eternal security (2 Cor. 1:19-22; cf. John 10:22-30) and that He is constant and there is no variableness in Him (James 1:17), for it was impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18; Rev. 3:14).

Although it is important to know to whom promises were given, Kistemaker said, “The entire New Testament is a testimony that God’s promises have been and are being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17-18), to remove the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), to grant the gift of righteousness (Matt. 6:33), to give eternal life (John 17:3), and through the Father to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26). In Jesus Christ God’s promises have been realized, and the Corinthians will have to acknowledge the truth of this matter.”

THOUGHT: The promises of God throughout the entirety of God’s Word bring balm to wounds, comfort in infirmities, rest in weariness, and encouragement.

PRAYER: (Pray that we may know that salvation promised by God is as an anchor connecting our souls on earth with Jesus in Heaven who has gone before us.)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28

MATTHEW 7:24-29

LUKE 6:47-49

*“Whosoever...heareth my sayings,
and doeth them...”*

A FUTURE FOUNDATION

In Matthew 7:24, commencing with the word *“Therefore,”* Jesus Christ is concluding what He has been previously speaking of in His sermon, illustrating either doing God’s will or doing the opposite by introducing such concepts as good and bad fruit (Matt. 7:16-20); or phrases like *“doeth the will of my Father”* (Matt. 7:21), the work of iniquity (Matt. 7:23), and *“doeth them”* (Matt. 7:24). These illustrations were the application to the *“strait (narrow) gate”* (Matt. 7:13) being the way of faith in Jesus Christ (inward righteousness). On the other hand, the wide gate is representative of the way of Pharisaism (outward righteousness).

Jesus Christ spoke of two builders (Matt. 7:24-27) and two structures (Matt. 7:24, 26). One man built his house on solid rock (Matt. 7:24), whilst the other built his house on shifting sand (Matt. 7:26). When the storm pounded the houses, the house on the rock stood firm (Matt. 7:25), but, to the contrary, the house on the sand was destroyed (Matt. 7:27).

Those who put the words of Jesus Christ into practice build on a solid foundation. Those who hear the truth but fail to apply it to their lives build as it were on sand (cf. James 1:22). As the storms of life occur, so they will demonstrate which direction man has chosen. His sermon stressed the importance of doing God’s will by keeping His commandments which is reflective of the blessings and curses given in Deut. 11:26-29.

THOUGHT: The wise and foolish hear the Words of Jesus Christ but only the wise, putting them into practice, display a genuine relationship with Him.

PRAYER: Lord, I pray that I may exercise permanence and obedience of the wise builder who built his house on a firm foundation, being a future foundation.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29

GALATIANS 4:1-7

ROMANS 8:5-17

“...ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

CHILDREN WITH AN INHERITANCE

Whilst servants have no inheritance, sons and daughters can expect to inherit all things. Jesus Christ was God’s “*only begotten son*” (John 3:16), consequently, Christians become God’s children by adoption (Gal. 4:5). As adopted children, Christians can affectionately call God “*Abba, Father*” (Gal 4:6; cf. Rom. 8:15), as their adoption is secure, for God “*chose*” them for adoption (cf. Eph. 1:4, 5), and they have wonderful privileges and responsibilities.

In the Roman world, at the time of the writing of this epistle, the children of wealthy people were looked after by slaves (servants). No matter how young the children were, they were still the heirs to their father’s inheritance. Nelsons KJV Commentary says, “A Roman father appointed guardians to manage his child’s affairs until 25 years of age, at which time the heir came of age.”

The Greek word for adoption of sons denotes sonship conferred. Through Jesus Christ, believers have become God’s sons by adoption, “*To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*” (Gal. 4:5). Every true believer of God is divinely given the Holy Spirit at the moment they were adopted by Him (at conversion/justification) (Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 14-16; cf. Acts 16:7; 2 Cor. 3:17). Therefore they are obedient to His will (John 7:17).

In this world, there will be loving fathers who conduct themselves in a just manner. There will also be unjust fathers and siblings that lack integrity and unjustly claim the inheritance of another. To the contrary, Christians are heirs of God (who is a loving and just Father) through Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:14-17).

THOUGHT: Christians are not slaves in bondage but adopted children of God who can call Him Abba Father, being careful to obey His revealed will.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for all who have received Your Spirit, as adopted sons of Yours, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, as children of inheritance.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30

ROMANS 8:18-27

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-18

*“For our light affliction,
which is but for a moment.”*

GLORY BEYOND SUFFERINGS

In the previous verse believers are assured of being heirs of Jesus Christ's coming glory. The Apostle Paul then considered the great suffering and pain, trials and grief that he was going through for the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as not just being today's grief, but tomorrow's glory. Although he suffered greatly, his sufferings are no comparison to that which was to come. As he observed the storms, famines, floods, sickness and death, which were characteristic of the fallen world, so he declared that they did not compare to the glorious future that awaits God's people.

Christians are subject to the normal afflictions of this sinful world, and are promised that they will also suffer for their faith (John 15:20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:18; 1 Thess. 3:3, 4; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12). The difference between humanity and the world, groaning together (Rom. 8:19-23) as a result of Adam's sin, is that believers have the victory over death and have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit being an assurance of their future glory (Rom. 8:23-25; cf. Eph. 1:13, 14). The time will come when today's groaning will be exchanged for tomorrow's glorious liberty.

Suffering with Jesus Christ and the privilege of His future glory allow present trials to pale into insignificance. Believers will be included in the radiance of the coming glory of Jesus Christ, when the present sufferings will be but a shadow. As the glory is forever, but the suffering is temporary and light (2 Cor. 4:17), this truth helps believers endure afflictions. Suffering tests the Christian's faith, produces spiritual growth and reward (James 1:3, 4; 1 Pet. 1:6, 7; 4:12, 13). And is to perfect the future reward of the Christian (Rom. 8:35-37; 2 Cor. 4:17).

THOUGHT: The true believer is able to focus beyond today's suffering, looking forward to tomorrow's glory (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:15-18).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the blessed indwelling of the Holy Spirit which gives believers the hope of full and final redemption of all things.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

ISAIAH 32:15-20

HOSEA 10:12-15

*“till he come and rain
righteousness upon you.”*

WORLDWIDE JUSTICE

Isaiah spoke of the coming King who will reign in righteousness. He called his generation to look beyond their present troubles to the triumphant Messiah. The Messianic government will put an end to all injustices of the world and usher in an age of peace and complete justice. In the Messiah's day, God's Spirit will be poured down from heaven (Isa. 32:15; cf. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21).

Dr. Paul Lee Tan's "Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations" speaks of Richard Speck's Trial saying, "Some years ago Richard Speck allegedly murdered eight student nurses in Chicago in cold-blooded deliberateness. He was tried and sentenced to death. Acknowledging his guilt, the Supreme Court of the United States later ruled that the death sentence was illegally passed upon him because there was no one on the jury opposed to a death penalty! Therefore the imposition of the death penalty was illegal." A failing of the legal system in technicalities of the Law causes innocent to be charged and guilty to be released. Such is the lack of integrity, godliness and justice.

To the contrary the justice of God is impartial, as God is the God of justice (Isa. 30:18). As He is a God of fairness and all truth is in Him, His decisions are righteous (Job 34:12; Rev. 16:7). The demands of God's justice extend beyond the nation of Israel (Psalm 9:7-9; cf. Dan. 4:27). Despite the inadequacies in the legal system, God demands individuals and nations look after victims of oppression (Psalm 82). Inward peace (the indwelling of righteousness) is expressed in Isa. 32:17, whilst the outward peace of God and justice of God is in Isa. 32:18; cf. Hosea 10:12.

THOUGHT: God is the supreme Judge of the earth and the wicked, unjust, and oppressor, lacking honesty and integrity, will be justly treated to their detriment, but God's just action is reason for those unjustly treated to have hope.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the strength to endure unjust legal systems.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 1

PSALM 84:8-12

PSALM 34:1-10

"but they that seek the LORD shall not want (lack) any good thing."

THE BLESSINGS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

Psalm 84 is a "Pearl of Psalms" with the inscription "blessed are they that dwell in thy house." The psalmist yearned for refuge near the altar, like the sparrows and swallows which had entered the Temple courtyard and nested and established their young there. How happy are they that spend their lives serving the Lord (Psalm 84:1-4). He thought of the pilgrims who the Lord helped through the valley of Baca (sorrow/weeping), who grew stronger approaching the Holy City (Jerusalem) (Psalm 84:5-7; cf. 23:4).

His final contemplation (Psalm 84:8-12) was the desire to be a day in the house of the Lord rather than a thousand elsewhere, with a preference to be a lowly doorkeeper in the house of his God than dwell in the tents of wickedness, which was to live a good life with the wicked. The psalmist acknowledges that God is light in times of darkness and that He is a protector from all evil, and He will give grace and glory, and no good thing (cf. Psalm 34:10) will He withhold from those who walk righteously. The Lord will not allow His faithful servants to lack in any of the necessities of life.

This is a blessed promise, being a great assurance for the saints of the present, that whatever they need, God will provide according to His will. God gives grace in this world to prepare for His glory, to glorify His name in the present, preparing believers for the future glorification and the perfection of grace. To the contrary, those who do not have the grace of God in this life, will not have grace in the life to come. As a result of God's grace, blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord.

THOUGHT: God abundantly blesses those who walk uprightly, as righteousness yields peace and confidence.

PRAYER: Lord, may I always walk in light that I be sheltered from all evil.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2

EPHESIANS 2:11-22

LEVITICUS 17:10-17

*“...it is the blood that maketh
an atonement for the soul.”*

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

In Eph 2:13, Paul was speaking about the believers prior to their salvation experience when they were without Jesus Christ. At that time, they were destitute, desolate, unregenerate, lost and having no hope without God. They were devoid of life (John 14:6), without light (John 8:12), lacking salvation (Acts 4:12), and lacking the peace of God (Col 1:20). Gentile believers were once alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, but when called to God, they came to share the same intimacy in God's family as the Jewish believers in Jesus Christ. The precious blood of Jesus Christ allowed both Jewish and Gentile believers to stand on the same common ground of grace (cf. Eph. 2:15).

The precious blood of Jesus Christ justifies the believer (Rom. 5:9), unifies the believer (1 Cor. 10:16), provides eternal redemption and forgiveness for the believer (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Heb. 9:12). The precious blood of Jesus Christ brings the believer near to God (Eph. 2:13), grants peace to the letter (Col. 1:20), and purges the conscience of believers (Heb. 9:14). The precious blood of Jesus Christ also grants the believer access into the presence of God (Heb. 10:19), sanctifies the believer (Heb. 13:12), cleanses the believer from all sin (1 John 1:7), frees the believer from sins (Rev. 1:5), and gives the believer victory over Satan (Rev. 12:11).

In the Old Testament, the Word of God says that the life of man is in the blood (Lev. 17:11, 14) and that God's law demands both the shedding of blood and death, being justified by His blood and reconciled by His death (Rom. 5:9, 10) for the transgression of sin (Lev. 17:11, Ezek. 18:4). Likewise in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:22).

THOUGHT: The Old Testament depicts how Jesus Christ would pay the price for the penalty of sin through His atoning sacrifice (Heb. 9-10; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the precious blood of Jesus Christ unifying believers.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

PSALM 136:1-9

PSALM 33:1-9

*“the word of the LORD is right...
his works are done in truth.”*

ENDURING MERCY

The psalmist gives thanks for God’s marvelous works in creation, and His enduring mercy (Psalm 136:1-9) and on each occasion there was a response concerning that which occurred in six days some six thousand years ago.

God created from general to specific, creating the heaven and the earth, a supernatural light and darkness (night and day) on day one (Gen. 1:1-5); God created the firmament separating the heavenly waters on day two (Gen. 1:6-8); God created the seas, land and vegetation, on day three (Gen. 1:9-13); God created the heavenly luminaries of the sun (greater luminary) for ruling the day and the moon (lesser luminary) for ruling the night on day four (Gen. 1:14-17); God created the sea creatures and bird life on day five (Gen. 1:20-23); God created the animal life and man and woman on day six (Gen. 1:24-28).

The work of God’s marvelous creation is attributed to the Godhead (Gen. 1:1, 26); being God the Father (1 Cor. 8:6), God the Son (John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17), and God the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30).

That which God created is recorded in Genesis 1-2 (cf. Mark 10:6; 13:19; Rom. 1:20; 8:22; 2 Pet. 3:4; cf. Psalm 33:6-9). *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear”* (Heb. 11:3; cf. John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:16, 17).

THOUGHT: Psalm 136 is unique as each verse ends with *“for his mercy endureth for ever”* expressing God’s love and loyalty for His covenant people.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for Your love to the covenant Jewish people and ingrafted Gentiles, for Your mercies endureth forever.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

PSALM 136:10-26

1 CHRONICLES 16:23-36

*“for he is good;
for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

GOD’S MARVELOUS PROTECTION

The psalmist gives thanks for Jehovah’s marvelous redemption (Psalm 136:10-26) and evidence of God’s mercy. The second line of each successive verse, reciting of His miraculous acts, called forth the repeated response *“for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

God is worthy of thanks as it was He who smote the firstborn of Egypt (Ex. 12:29) and brought Israel out from amongst Egypt (cf. Ex 12:51; 14:19-31) with a strong hand, and a stretched out arm (cf. Ex. 6:6; Deut. 7:8, 19; Neh. 1:10). The almighty God divided the Red Sea and allowed the children of Israel to pass through (Ex. 14:21-31). The Almighty God whose mercy endureth forever led His people Israel through the wilderness and smote great kings, including Sihon, king of the Amorites (Num. 21:21-30) and Og, king of Bashan (Num. 21:31-35) who were no match for the God of Israel and God gave Israel their land (cf. Josh 12:1-6; Psalm 136:22) for a heritage.

God remembered Israel in their low estate and protected them from the enemies, humiliating the gods of Egypt. God also gave food to all flesh, being human and animals (cf. Psalm 104:27; 145:15; 147:9; Job 38:41), as God deals in that kind and tender manner, with all His creatures. David also calls the whole earth to recognize God’s glory (1 Chron. 16:23-36).

THOUGHT: In Psalm 136, the psalmist recalls the grace and mercy of Jehovah, expressing 26 times *“for his mercy endureth for ever”* (Psalm 136:1-26).

PRAYER: I give thanks to You, Almighty God, for Your great deliverance of the children of Israel and for Your marvellous protection over all true believers.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5
2 THESSALONIANS 3:1-5
PSALM 91:1-16

*“Thou shalt not be afraid
for the terror by night...”*

PROTECTION FROM THE EVIL ONE

The Apostle Paul encouraged the brethren at Thessalonica to pray that the message would be spread throughout the land and pray for the messengers (Silas, Timothy and himself) that they would be preserved from evil men and the evil one.

Jesus Christ said, *“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil”* (John 17:14, 15).

As God promised to supply the needs of believers, the character of God must be the basis for a Christian’s confidence. The faithfulness of God (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 3 Tim. 2:13) is contrasted against the unfaithfulness of men throughout the Pauline epistles.

Man’s frailty is also expressed in Psalm 91 when the promises of God’s protection (Psalm 91:3-13) are recorded. Caution must be exercised in applying the scriptures, understanding that deliverance is according to the will of God, and even though harm may come, the believer is still secure in the Lord (cf. Luke 21: 16 and Luke 21: 18; Rom. 8:28 and Rom. 8:35).

The Lord provides strength and encouragement (cf. 1 Thess. 3:2, 13; 2 Thess. 2:17) and the ability to withstand trials and temptations during attacks from the adversary and his evil workers (cf. Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24).

THOUGHT: God promises security for the true believer who is opposed by the adversary, and his evil workers.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the strength to be secure in Your promises.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

2 CORINTHIANS 11:14, 15

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

GOD’S ARMOUR FOR PROTECTION (1)

The Word of God is the spiritual armour believers are to put on against the spiritual battle that exists with the Adversary and his followers of “evil rulers” or “powers of darkness.” Believers are not engaged in a human, physical warfare of flesh and blood but a spiritual warfare against demonic activity. As a result of such activity, some have suffered physical diseases, mental disorders, immoral practices, idolatry, practicing false doctrines (1 Tim. 4:1), divination, necromancy, magic, sorcery, witchcraft, and astrology (Deut. 18:10-12). No Christian can justify participation in such activity, but when the Christians at Ephesus repented of their involvement with the occult, there was a great revival.

Satan is powerful and resourceful, using every means of deception to ensnare (Eph. 6:11, 12), but let us be cautious and deal with such situations in a manner which is theologically correct. God says Satan fashions himself into an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Cor. 11:14, 15).

The Apostle Paul exhorts the believers at Ephesus, who are involved in front-line fighting, to be strong, finding their strength in God’s mighty power (Eph. 6:10), and prepare themselves by putting on the full armour of God (Eph. 6:11a).

THOUGHT: Spiritual battles require spiritual strength, but not all mental disorders are of demonic origin.

PRAYER: Lord, may I not be ignorant of the wiles of the Devil, who disguises himself as an Angel of light in order to lead men astray.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-6

*“For the weapons of our warfare
are not carnal.”*

GOD’S ARMOUR FOR PROTECTION (2)

God’s Word does not instruct believers to attack the devil, but to the contrary, instructs us to withstand and resist him (Eph. 6:11, 13, 14; cf. 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; Jude 9).

Although the believers walk in the flesh, this is not a physical battle, but a spiritual battle. Consequently no ordinary weapons are used, according to human standards. When confronted with the wiles of a serpent, it is God’s armour that is required for victory. Special equipment is needed to be offensive and defensive. *“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations (arguments), and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

An example of fleeing temptation, as we should do, is that of Joseph when he was tempted to do wrong (cf. Gen. 39:7-23). On the other hand, Daniel and his friends were attacked when doing right in the sight of God and they stood firm against the Adversary (cf. Dan. 3:1-25).

The Word of God emphasizes that we are to stand victorious, girding the loins with truth (a military term), being a band belted around the thighs to hold the tunic in place. It also holds the scabbard which is an armament, not an ornament. The concept is to be girt with true integrity and sincerity, understanding that truth is revealed in God’s Word which dispels darkness, as a light from heaven. The breastplate (cf. Isa. 59:17; Eph. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:8) protects the chest area (heart, etc.) from enemy assaults, so the believer is to be clothed with the breastplate of righteousness in both character and conduct.

THOUGHT: Without girding with sincerity and truth, and without the breastplate of righteousness, a believer will be vulnerable, disgraced and defeated.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the honesty to repent daily, to walk with integrity, sincerity and truth.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 8

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

ISAIAH 52:7-12

*"How beautiful...are the feet of him
that bringeth good tidings,
that publisheth peace."*

GOD'S ARMOUR FOR PROTECTION (3)

As preparation is so important, the believers are to have their feet shod to give them firm footing, that they may take sure steps and be protected (cf. Mark 6:9; Acts 12:8). Proper preparation designates a readiness to do God's will, proclaiming the gospel of peace. When the Roman soldiers prepared for battle, they put short nails (hobnails) in the soles of their shoes to avoid slipping.

Matthew Henry said, "Shoes, or greaves of brass, or the like, were formerly part of the military armour (1 Sam. 17:6): the use of them was to defend the feet against the gall-traps, and sharp sticks, which were wont to be laid privily in the way, to obstruct the marching of the enemy, those who fell upon them being unfit to march." Likewise, Christians are to prepare their hearts, be faithful to God, repent of their temptations to sin and continue to walk regardless of the difficulties and dangers that lurk. Having the gospel of peace indwelling their hearts (cf. Rom. 5:1), they must not be prone to quarrelling but exercise gentleness and long-suffering that they may not step into the trap of the enemy.

The Apostle Paul exhorted believers to prepare themselves for spiritual battle with the "*gospel of peace*" (Isa. 52:7). To be at peace with God and with each other will help defeat the devil (James 4:1-7).

Christians who evangelize will be victorious, described as having "*beautiful feet*" (Isa. 52:7; cf. Rom. 10:15). Although Satan has declared war, Christians are to be ambassadors of peace (2 Cor. 5:18-21) sharing the "*gospel of peace.*"

THOUGHT: Having the "*gospel of peace*" indwelling the heart (cf. Rom. 5:1), believers do not need to fear the attack of Satan or men.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the courage, wisdom, surefootedness and preparation to share the "*gospel of peace,*" and stand in battle throughout this world of sin.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

1 JOHN 5:1-21

*“and that wicked one
toucheth him not.”*

GOD’S ARMOUR FOR PROTECTION (4)

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.... Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph. 6:13, 16).

The Roman soldiers used two types of shields: a smaller shield used by the archers made of wood overlaid with leather and a larger shield that protected the whole body and was carried by the infantry. In Eph 6:16, the Apostle Paul was referring to the larger shield that protected the soldier from spears, arrows, and *“fiery darts.”* He wanted the believers to take up the shield that consists of faith, as faith is dependence on God, His power and His presence and this faith puts God between the believer and the enemy.

The *“fiery darts”* were arrows dipped in combustible material and set on fire, as it is in Satan’s wicked temptations in his efforts to cause deep wounds to the soul and destroy the believer. The *“shield of faith”* will protect the believer and quench every *“fiery dart.”* Although the breast-plate (cf. Isa. 59:17; Eph. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:8) protects the vital organs, the *“shield of faith”* can turn and protect from every angle. Consequently faith is essential in the hour of temptation and gives the victory over the world, that the believer be fully persuaded of the truth of all of God’s promises and threatenings.

As self-confidence is combustible, so Satan attacks through good things from which no evil is suspected. Wiersbe said, “The edges of these shields were so constructed that an entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall. This suggests that we Christians are not in the battle alone.”

THOUGHT: Temptations are the fiery darts which Satan shoots at believers.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the *“shield of faith,”* that is the believer’s protection from temptations of the Adversary.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

ISAIAH 59:17

“...and an helmet of salvation upon his head.”

GOD’S ARMOUR FOR PROTECTION (5)

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand....And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:13, 17).

This devotion deals with believers being called to wear the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17a). *“And take the helmet of salvation...”* The Gentile readers would have been thinking of the Roman soldier when the Apostle Paul was writing (cf. 1 Thess. 5:8) but this description is in terms of God’s armour, for He is wearing the helmet. *“For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke” (Isa. 59:17).*

The soldier’s helmet was either made of metal or leather and was designed to protect his head, being the most vital part of the body. In 1 Sam. 17:5, 38; 2 Chron. 26:14, the helmet was made of iron and brass. As salvation must be the believer’s helmet, the *“helmet of salvation”* is the assurance of salvation (2 Tim. 1:12; I John 5:11-13). These readers were already Christians (Eph. 2:8). The helmet refers to the mind controlled by God, as the helmet protects the mind from false teachings and gives confidence and boldness in times of conflict. Satan wants to attack the mind, and cause doubt and confusion, the way he defeated Eve (Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:1-3).

Genuine salvation purifies the soul and keeps it from being defiled by Satan, comforting the soul and keeping it from being troubled and tormented. The hope (assurance) of salvation keeps the believer trusting and rejoicing in God when tempted to despair.

THOUGHT: When God controls the believer’s mind, Satan cannot lead him astray as the helmet protects from Satan’s lies.

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks that Christian salvation (*“helmet of salvation”*) is a weapon of defence amidst hardship and persecution giving assurance of salvation, both present and future.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

HEBREWS 4:12, 13

*“...the word of God is...
sharper than any twoedged sword.”*

GOD’S ARMOUR FOR PROTECTION (6)

This devotion deals with the “...*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Eph. 6:17a). The sword is a symbol for the Word of God (Eph. 6:7; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21). “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb. 4:12).

A physical sword requires the hand of a soldier, but the sword of the Spirit has its own power for it is “living and powerful.” The truth of God’s Word (Divine utterance) is full of power, cutting into the innermost thoughts in the innermost recesses of man’s heart, exposing the error of the ways of mankind.

The “*sword of the Spirit*” is the Word of God which is quick (living), giving victory, powerful and active. To the contrary instead of using the “*sword of the Spirit*” the KJV Commentary says, “When the church, or the Christian, uses the rotten sticks of culture, science, theories, traditions, or commands of men, defeat is inevitable.”

In Acts 2:37 and 5:33, when the Word was preached the people were convicted in their heart by the power of the Holy Spirit of their sin and 3,000 people repented, confessed Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour and were baptized (cf. Acts 8:12, 36; 9:18; 16:30; John 16:8, 9).

THOUGHT: We need to carefully scrutinize our lives through God’s Word as He is continually scrutinizing the inner recesses of our hearts.

PRAYER: Lord, I thank You for the “*sword of the Spirit*” convicting me of my sins and for Jesus Christ using it against Satan saying, “*It is written*” (Matt. 4:4-10).

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

1 PETER 3:8-12

*“...but the face of the Lord
is against them that do evil.”*

THE FINAL PROTECTION

(7)

Some see the “*whole armor of God*” as a picture of Jesus Christ who is the Truth (John 14:6), the believer’s righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), and the believer’s peace (Eph. 2:14). His faithfulness makes the believer’s faith possible (Gal. 2:20), He is the believer’s salvation (Luke 2:30), and He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14).

Prayer must be used as a buckle on all parts of our Christian armour (Eph. 6:18), as without it, the armour is incomplete. Prayer and the Word should never be separated, and must be without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) and constant, especially when engaging in battle. The searching of the Word must be done with prayer, and prayer will be effectual through knowing the Word.

Prayer involves Acknowledgement, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication, and is conducted through the Holy Spirit who prays in us, through us, and for us (Rom 8:26, 27; Jude 20). Believers are to pray for all saints, and be on guard, vigilant, wide awake (Matt 26:41), praying persistently (Luke 11:5-8), and pray for deliverance from harm (Joel 2:32), especially when the Adversary attacks.

When Amalek attacked Israel from behind, Moses went to the mountain top to pray. Whilst Aaron and Hur held up his hands, Joshua used the sword in the valley (Ex. 17:8-16). It required both prayer and the physical act of fighting to defeat Amalek. Consequently, Moses’ intercession on the mountain, and Joshua’s use of the sword in the valley, was prayer answered.

THOUGHT: Prayers are indispensable and must be submissive to God’s will (Rom. 1:10; 2 Cor. 12:7-10) and in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14, 15).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the perseverance of the saints and the power of prayer and for victory, over the Adversary.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

PROVERBS 10:1

PROVERBS 1:8-10

*“For they shall be an ornament
of grace unto thy head.”*

**THE BLESSINGS OF A
WISE SON**

Commencing from Prov. 10 is a series of antithetical parallelisms declaring blessings that are brought about by a wise son to his parents, involving an attitude of inward rejoicing. To the contrary, a foolish son brings about grief and mental anguish. Although king Solomon mentions the son, the same principle holds true for a daughter.

The wise son departs evil because he has a fear (trust) of the Lord, a filial reverence which is a prerequisite to every attitude that is right, being the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). Such a son hears the father's instruction, and walks in the path of righteousness (Prov. 13:1), and brings gladness and honour to him (Prov. 27:11). On the other hand, the fool hates godly wisdom (Prov. 1:7b, 22), rejects the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7b, 29). The foolish son returns to his folly as a dog returns to its vomit (Prov. 26:11). The rewards of the foolish son will be destruction (Prov. 1:32) and shame (Prov. 3:35). Acquired wealth will bring them down at some stage.

A son who walks with wisdom is a great delight to his parents, and will assist them in their advancing years, while one who rejects instruction and plays the fool is a source of great sorrow. *“the father of a fool hath no joy”* (Prov. 17:21), and is a *“calamity of his father”* (Prov. 19:13), but *“Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father”* (Prov. 29:3).

As the mother gives birth to a child (Prov. 17:25) and often spends much time with the child, there is a bond that is strengthened. Without discipline, *“a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame,”* (Prov. 29:15; cf. 19:26; 20:20).

THOUGHT: The ornament of grace and chains represent qualities of wise parental instruction, enriching the character of an obedient child (Prov. 1:8, 9).

PRAYER: Lord, may parents give godly instruction to their children that they may bring gladness and blessings.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

PROVERBS 10:6

ROMANS 9:19-23

*“he has pity on the people
he has chosen to share in his glory.”*

THE BLESSINGS OF A WISE MAN

“Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked” (Prov. 10:6).

The righteous (just) receive blessings (contingent upon obedience), and the head of the just is crowned with abundant blessings that descend from above. The wise will speak nourishing words with expressions of love capable of dissolving the power of evil (Prov. 10:11, 12, 20, 21, 32).

Although God blessed Adam, he lost God’s blessing by his sin. Noah and his sons received God’s blessing that they might repopulate the world (Gen. 9:1). God blessed Abraham, promising him an everlasting nation (Gen. 12:1-3). There is also an eternal blessing of God through Jesus Christ upon all who believe (Eph. 1:3; cf. Rom. 9:23).

Jesus Christ said, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45).*

The mouth of the wicked is different from the righteous as violence overwhelms the mouths of the wicked. The wicked conceals that which is wrong and deceptively hides violence, but their mouths will be stopped with shame, for the violence they have done and their violent dealings return to their own heads. The words of the wicked (loose-tongued) bring trouble both to themselves and to others (Prov. 10:6, 11, 13, 14, 21, 31), especially where they are manifest from ill-feeling and breed dissension and deceit (Prov. 10:12, 18).

THOUGHT: The righteous are blessed from an eternal perspective, but the wicked will rot, likewise, from an eternal perspective.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me Your wisdom to speak wisely that I may be blessed with the crown of favour and permanent love.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 15

PROVERBS 10:8-32

JAMES 3:2-6

*"If any man offend not in word,
the same is a perfect man."*

THE BLESSINGS OF WISE SPEECH

The heart of a wise person is teachable and has a willingness to become wiser in godly wisdom (cf. Prov. 1:5; 9:9), receiving godly instruction from the father and from superiors. One who walks in moral uprightness before God with integrity has confident self-assurance that wisdom guides his actions.

As the wise have a teachable spirit, to the contrary the hardened fool does not cease prating (chattering) long enough to learn anything and has an unteachable spirit. Throughout the book of Proverbs, needless talking is associated with foolishness. Their talk is frequent, with little purpose, often it is vulgar, mischievous and bitter and their evil ways and loose lips will be exposed.

In the New Testament, evil speaking is recorded as involving: blasphemy, lying, filthy communication and wrath (Col. 3:8, 9); bitterness, wrath, anger and clamour (loud complaining) (Eph. 4:31); filthiness, foolish talking, jesting (Eph. 5:4); cursing (James 3:10). Such a person comes to ruin, *"a prating fool shall fall"* (Prov. 10:8,10), *"he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction"* (Prov. 13:3), *"but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding...but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction"* (Prov. 10:14, 15), *"but the froward tongue shall be cut out"* (Prov. 10:31).

The mouth of the wise will encourage, comfort, and bring forth truth, *"is a well of life"* (Prov. 10:11), *"is as choice silver"* (Prov. 10:20). *"The lips of the righteous feed many"* (Prov. 10:21), *"bringeth forth wisdom"* (Prov. 10:31), and *"know what is acceptable"* (Prov. 10:31). Man theologically trained with a high view of God's Word who handles the Word correctly likewise will be blessed (James 3:2).

THOUGHT: As the mouth and the way of the wicked is perverted, so does the teachable spirit and wise speech of the morally upright believer bring blessings.

PRAYER: May I honour God and His Word in speech, thought and conduct.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16

PROVERBS 10:27-30

ISAIAH 46:4

*“even to your old age I am he...
I will carry, and will deliver you.”*

THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

In Prov. 10:27, king Solomon said it is the fear of the Lord that prolongs the days, which gives believers the fullness of life that God intends them to have. In Prov. 3:2, rewards of obedience unto the commandments of the Lord include the length of days, long life and peace, also indicating that the natural outcome of obedience to God will be a long, full and productive life. This is a general principle and may not apply physically in every specific case.

The Word of God says, *“For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee”* (Prov. 3:2). *“Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour”* (Prov. 3:16). *“Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many”* (Prov. 4:10). *“For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased”* (Prov. 9:11).

Proverbs places a great emphasis upon parent-child relationships and whilst parents have the responsibility of guiding their children, the child’s primary responsibility is to obey the parents as recorded six times in Proverbs (Prov. 2:1; 3:1, 2; 4:4; 6:20; 7:1, 2). When a child obeys the commands of parents, God promises specific blessings which include: peace (Prov. 3:2), fullness of life (Prov. 3:2; 4:4; 7:2), moral purity (Prov. 6:23; cf. 7:5), spiritual growth (Prov. 2:5).

In contrast to the fullness of the days of those that fear the Lord is the shortened lifespan and the debilitating effects of the lifestyle of the wicked which God shortens, *“bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days”* (Psalm 55:23). *“Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?”* (Eccles. 7:17). Their life ceases at their death.

THOUGHT: The fear of the Lord leads to the fullness of life, both temporal and eternal life.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me fear, love and obedience for You and Your Word, that I may live in the fullness of life.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

PROVERBS 10:22-24

ECCLESIASTES 5:18-20—6:2

“God hath given riches and wealth.”

RICH REWARDS

The Word of God tells us that there are rewards for obedience for doing right, but ruin for doing wrong. The blessing of the Lord will be riches to those who are obedient, and properly administered, they will not bring a man sorrow.

Worldly wealth is what most men have their hearts set upon. And they set about to achieve it by a means which brings sorrow and a vexation of the spirit. The Word of God says that the blessing of the Lord gives the increase (bringeth wealth) to the righteous and diligent (Prov. 10:4) and that it is not by chance. Nothing can be added to complete the blessings given by God (Deut. 8:17, 18). It is not accompanied by trouble but is trouble-free wealth. It preserves the soul from turbulent lusts and passions, unlike the anxieties and tragedies of ill-gotten gain. Riches from God are without the sorrow of ill-gotten wealth (cf. Eccles. 2:21-23; 1Tim. 6:9, 10, 17). God’s Word says, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...”* (James 1:17).

Riches made wrongfully come with worries and fear and can never satisfy. King Solomon said that the fool gets his sport (enjoyment) through scheming and execution of his evil plottings. The fear of the wicked is that the mischief they have caused other people will come back to haunt them, being their retribution. To the contrary, the man of understanding gets his enjoyment through the faithful practice of wisdom and diligence (Eccles. 5:18-20), and his spiritual riches are Divine enrichment.

THOUGHT: Those who delight in Yahweh daily are His delight. He giveth the blessing of wealth, with no sorrow, no heavy burden. It does not become a snare.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for those whom You have given the blessing of wealth and may they use it for the advancement of Your Kingdom.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

PROVERBS 11:1-6

PROVERBS 16:16-19

*“Better it is to be of an
humble spirit with the lowly.”*

GOD’S DELIGHT OF HONESTY

During the time of king Solomon, the problem of cheating by using false balances (unjust weights) no doubt occurred as the commercial world was flourishing (cf. Lev. 19:35, 36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 16:11; 20:10, 23; Micah 6:10, 11; Amos 8:5). God hates dishonesty, as it has a lack of fear of His statutes and moral responsibility and lacks regard for one’s neighbour.

It is the sin of pride, and the concern for self-advancement and greed that is the breach of ethics and is devoid of concern for others (Prov. 16:18; 18:12; 29:23). Such callousness is an abomination to the Lord. Sadly this author spoke to a young man who said that if he became a Christian, his father’s business would fail because they could no longer use false balances as it was normal practice.

Pride is the result of a fallen heart of man (Mark 7:22) and pride will bring a man low (Prov. 11:2; 16:18; 29:23). God hates pride and judges it (cf. Prov. 8:13;), but with humility is wisdom. Wisdom is described as a hatred of sin which comes from the knowledge and fear of the Lord, having a love of truth and righteousness (cf. Prov. 1:7; 2:10-13; 9:10; 15:33). God is the source of wisdom (Prov. 2:7) and wisdom must be diligently sought (Prov. 2:1-9; 8:33-36).

The upright in heart will avoid sinful attitudes and activities (which lead away from righteousness) and they will keep from perverseness and from distorting the truth as such shameful actions lead a person to ruin and destruction.

THOUGHT: God hates pride and dishonesty which cause a person to over estimate himself, but He delights in the humble who exercise honesty and integrity.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me wisdom and humility to exercise my daily conduct with honesty and integrity to the glory and honour of Your Name.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

PROVERBS 12:4

1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

"...the head of the woman is the man."

A GODLY WIFE

A virtuous woman is rare and is an excellent wife (cf. Ruth 3:11; Prov. 12:4; 31:10). God in His infinite wisdom made a helpmeet for Adam because He knew that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). God created man from dust and woman from the rib of man. This is the first marriage recorded in the Scriptures and God gave immediate instructions to teach their offspring.

The virtuous woman (worthy wife) possesses a moral power that manifests itself in her godly character and domestic activity. The crown or garland is an emblem of renown and she bestows honour upon her husband. The blessing of a virtuous wife is as a fruitful vine (Psalm 128:3). The reward is a blessed house that comes from a husband who fears God and has a faithful wife. Harmony and happiness is in this household because there is holiness unto God. He that is blessed with a good wife is as happy as if he were upon the throne, for she is no less than a crown to him, giving credit and honour.

The virtuous woman understands the order of headship as God, Christ, man, woman (1 Cor. 11:3). King Solomon contrasts the virtuous woman with the wife who brings shame upon her husband. She is like a cancer that saps his strength and ultimately causes his total collapse (cf. Prov. 2:16-17). The husband that is plagued with a bad wife is miserable, for she is no better than rottenness in his bones, as an incurable disease. She makes him ashamed, is foolish and slothful, wasteful and inconsiderate, ill-tongued and ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband. His head is hung down because his wife's faults turn to his reproach. His heart is sunk and is continually uneasy and burdened by this affliction.

THOUGHT: The virtuous woman understands the divine order of function that God has established in a marriage and is a crown to her husband.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for godly wives who are virtuous women. I pray that Christian women will marry godly men and be crowns to them.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

PROVERBS 12:5-7

PROVERBS 14:1-4

*“but the lips of the wise
shall preserve them.”*

DELIVERED FROM TROUBLE

Whilst the righteous have plans which are honourable, the plans of the wicked are deceitful and are controlled by a murderous disposition. King Solomon adopts a military phrase “*lie in wait*” which refers to the setting of an ambush for the enemy (Judges 9:32, 43; 16:12). The reference is to the speech of the wicked man who “*lies in wait*” for the blood of the innocent victim by setting a verbal trap to take him unaware.

The wicked “*lie in wait*” with lies, slander, false accusations, etc and endanger men’s lives, even as Jezebel surrounded Naboth’s death with a false witness (1 Kings 21:13). The wicked are overthrown by the chastisement of God’s judgment which falls upon them. “*And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives*” (Prov. 1:18).

To the contrary, the righteous stand and their families avoid judgment likewise and continue to stand. The house of the righteous will stand because it is built upon the fear of the Lord (cf. Matt. 7:24-27). The speech of the righteous “*shall deliver them.*” The mouth of the upright shall deliver the innocent whose blood the wicked seek.

Proper use of speech can bring peace (Prov. 15:1, 26), give wise reproof to the erring (Prov. 25:12; 28:23), deliver lost souls from death (Prov. 11:9; 14:3-5, 25; 12:6), teach things of the Lord (Prov. 15:7; 16:21, 23; 20:15), share the good news of the Gospel (Prov. 25:25), and deliver from trouble (Prov. 12:6).

THOUGHT: The upright deliver the innocent from undeserved slander and judgment of the wicked who seek to destroy them.

PRAYER: Grant me, Lord, the courage to defend the innocent who are being condemned by the wicked.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

PROVERBS 12:11

PROVERBS 28:19, 20

*“ He that tilleth his land
shall have plenty of bread.”*

REWARDS FOR DILIGENCE

Since the Fall of mankind, man has had to labour and sweat for his living (Gen. 3:17-19). King Solomon talks about being industrious and having plenty as opposed to the poverty of idleness (Prov. 28:19).

The principle (promise) is that the person who diligently works, attending to the crops, will reap a bountiful harvest. On this occasion an agricultural illustration is given as it was the main occupation of Israel. He that tilleth the land and works hard day after day is certainly in a better position than the person who dreams and follows after those that are vain, searching for hidden treasure, that they may gain rapid wealth (get rich quick schemes) with little effort. Those following such a course display the character of a man who is devoid of understanding because following such pursuits is worthless.

King Solomon observes that the lazy person will become poor and destitute. In contrast, the diligent will increase in wealth. *“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich...”* (Prov. 10:5).

King Solomon observes also that a lazy man wants to enjoy an abundant harvest, but is not willing to work and will not prepare the fields using the excuse that it is too cold (Prov. 20:4). Although he looks forward to having a good crop, he receives nothing because there was no preparation.

The Christian's attitude to work should be an offering of praise to God (Rom. 9:19-32; 1 Cor. 10:31) and a good testimony unto all (Col. 3:23).

THOUGHT: Diligent work in the keeping of the precepts established by God characterises the person of industriousness. And he will be rewarded.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the diligence to labour as required according to Your precepts.

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 22

PROVERBS 14:29, 30

PROVERBS 19:11-14

"The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."

THE BLESSINGS OF SELF-CONTROL

God's Word is very clear that only a fool gives way to anger (Prov. 10:19; 15:28; 29:11) and an explosive uncontrolled anger is always wrong (Titus 1:7).

It is wise to be cautious but the foolish (naive) person is gullible and believes that gossip is the truth, taking heed of every report. However the wise (prudent) person is discerning and considers carefully what is heard (Prov. 14:15). As holy fear is an excellent guard, the wise will depart from all evil. Presumption is folly. When fools are warned of danger, they rage and furiously push on as they cannot bear to be checked. In their defiance, being fearless of danger, they persist in their rebellion and act against their own reason, but their ruin will be proof of their foolishness.

The Word of God speaking of a hasty spirit says, *"He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated"* (Prov. 14:17). They that are *"soon angry"* (*"is hasty of spirit"*) upon every provocation, deals foolishly, doing that which is ridiculous and exposing themselves to contempt, at which they will be ashamed when their anger is over. Such malicious people are dreaded and detested, for they are dangerous and mischievous, as they will secretly plot to injure the neighbour. The character of such people is pitiable as they disgrace themselves. Spitefully seeking revenge is detestable before God and man.

Exercising patient control (cf. Prov. 16:32; 19:11) under trying circumstances evidences wisdom. Controlling one's temper is always wise, but losing it is never wise. Meekness (not weakness) is wisdom and he who is slow to wrath and excuses the faults of others is wise and has the blessings of self-control.

THOUGHT: We should deal with anger without sinning (Eph. 4:26).

PRAYER: Lord, grant me a humble repentant spirit and the blessing of self-control.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

MATTHEW 5:18

MATTHEW 24:35

*“Heaven and earth shall pass away,
but my words
shall not pass away.”*

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD’S WORD

If the Living and True God said that He created, then He did. Who is mere finite and most often proud and boastful man to deny it? *“Let God be true, but every man, a liar”* (Rom. 3:4). God created the world in six literal 24-hour days some 6000 plus years ago (Gen. 1:1-31). When God spoke, the Word (Jesus Christ) created (cf. John 1:1-3, 10-14; Col. 1:16, 17).

If the Living and True God said that He will destroy what He has created, then He will. Who is mere finite and most often proud and boastful man to deny it possible? *“Let God be true, but every man, a liar,”* (Rom. 3:4). The Word of God says, *“the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...”* (2 Pet. 3:10-13; cf. Rev. 21:1-7).

Jesus Christ stated categorically that until the heaven and the earth pass away neither the minutest letters or marks that distinguish one letter from another in the Hebrew alphabet will pass away until all be fulfilled. Who is mere finite and most often proud and boastful man to deny it? *“Let God be true, but every man, a liar”* (Rom. 3:4).

God’s Word has always been attacked throughout history and always will be attacked especially by those who have a low view of it. Satan, who was originally Lucifer, fell because of his pride and questioned God’s Word and said, *“Yea, hath God said”* (Gen. 3:1). The Adversary lied in Gen. 3:4 and told a half-truth in Gen. 3:5 and tempted, deceived and seduced Eve. Eve was beguiled and fell for the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and pride of life. In disobedience to God, Adam followed Eve and ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6).

THOUGHT: Satan cast suspicion upon God, turning Eve from the only true source of contentment. And Adam in his willful disobedience followed Eve and shamefully sinned against God (Gen. 3:16-17).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for those who love You, maintaining the truth of Your Word and understanding Your preservation of it.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7; 3:14-17

2 PETER 1:21

*“For the prophecy came not in old time
by the will of man: but holy men of
God spake as they were moved by the
Holy Ghost.”*

THE INSPIRATION OF GOD’S WORD

In 2 Tim 3, Paul warned of evil men and seducers who become much worse in their deceit. Speaking of seducers, Webster says they “draw aside or entice from the path of rectitude and duty in any manner, by flattery, promises, bribes, or otherwise; to tempt and led to iniquity; to corrupt; to deprave; to lead away from the truth.” In the New Testament, seducers draw the unwitting from sound doctrine (Mark 13:22; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:13; 1 John 2:26; Rev. 2:20). Paul exhorted Timothy to continue in the Scriptures, which he had learnt as a child from his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).

Timothy had been taught and was using the Apographs as Autographs were no more to be found, but Paul still said they were inspired. This is authenticated by the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the Word of God says, *“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God”* (Heb. 10:7). *“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me”* (Psalm 40:7). Nelson’s KJV Commentary says, “The pages of both testaments are replete with testimony of Jesus Christ. This claim could not be made of David alone, but only of David’s Messiah.”

The human authors that the Divine God appointed were divinely inspired and controlled that they were not left to their human limitations (2 Pet 1:21). God’s Word confirming doctrine and faith, correcting error, and completely equipping true believers. It is profitable for salvation and for sanctifying Christian growth.

THOUGHT: God’s Word is the road map to Heaven and Christian life.

PRAYER: Lord, I pray that those who compromise and attack Your Word for protection of either face, favour or property will repent of their unbelief.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

GENESIS 37:1-11

GENESIS 43:16-30

*“they bowed down their heads,
and made obeisance.”*

OBEISANCE TO JOSEPH

Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37:26-36) who hated him because of favouritism and his dream that they would bow down to him (Gen. 37:5-7). He was then deceitfully cast into prison (where he prospered) (Gen. 40:20-23), and because he interpreted the dreams of the Pharaoh (Gen. 41:14-36) was elevated to the second-highest position in Egypt (Gen. 41:37-53). This position was given to administer the necessities of the country as they were to face seven years of plenty, to be followed by seven years of severe drought. As Joseph's brethren were affected by the famine in Canaan (Gen. 41:57; cf. 42:7), his father Jacob sent them to purchase provisions from the stores in Egypt (Gen. 42:1-15). But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, was not sent.

Joseph's brethren, not knowing who he was, bowed themselves before him with their faces to the earth (Gen. 42:6; cf. 42:9) in fulfilment of the prophetic dream. Joseph, having recognized them, imprisoned his brethren for three days (Gen. 42:16, 17). Simeon was kept imprisoned, whilst his brethren who were given food returned to bring Benjamin (Joseph's younger brother) (Gen. 42:24-38). Joseph tested them, humbled them, and saw that they were regretful of selling him as a slave. Jacob sent the best fruits of the land and presents and they returned to Egypt with Benjamin (Gen. 43:11-27). Again, Joseph's brethren bowed their heads and made obeisance to him (Gen. 43:28). When he saw his brother Benjamin, he privately wept. Again, they fell before him on the ground (Gen. 44:14), seeking Benjamin's release.

THOUGHT: Finally Joseph identified himself and told them not to be angry for God sent him before them to preserve a posterity in the earth, and 66 of Jacob's family went into Egypt.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Your marvellous and sovereign plans for the posterity of Your people.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

GENESIS 48:1-20

DEUTERONOMY 33:13-17

“ten thousands of Ephraim... and thousands of Manasseh.”

THE PROMISE FOR EPHRAIM

Ephraim, meaning “fruitful,” was born in Egypt and was the youngest of Joseph’s two sons (Gen. 41:50-52; 46:20). He was so named as Joseph said, “...*For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction*” (Gen. 41:52). Jacob received his two grandsons (Gen. 48:5) as sons, and consequently gave them the blessings as his sons. Although Ephraim received the greater blessing from his grandfather Jacob (Gen. 48:1-22), both Ephraim and Manasseh were heirs to Abraham’s covenantal promises and blessings. Jacob’s eyes were dim but he knew he was giving the blessing to the younger son saying, “*truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations*” (Gen. 48:19). Moses confirmed Jacob’s blessing (Deut. 33:17).

Even though Joseph was sold into slavery, God preserved him and made him fruitful, being elevated to a high position in the Egyptian government. As time passed, Jacob gave the blessing to Ephraim and eventually Ephraim’s thousands of descendants settled in the “Promised Land,” as one of the most numerous of the tribes of Israel (Gen. 48:19; Num. 1:10; cf. Num. 1:32, 33). In 2 Chron. 25:7, the name Ephraim represents Israel’s 10 northern tribes.

Ephraim’s land was more fertile and easier to protect than Manasseh’s. Bethel, Shiloh, and Shechem, all worship centers, were in Ephraim. Joshua the successor of Moses was an Ephraimite (Num. 13:8; cf. Deut. 34:9), as was Eleazar, who allotted the land portions (Num. 34:17; Joshua 14:1). Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1) was an Ephraimite, as was king Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26).

THOUGHT: Due to the providence of God the younger son received the greater blessing.

PRAYER: Lord, in my affliction, grant me faithfulness and fruitfulness, that I may serve You all the days of my life.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

GENESIS 48:1-20

GENESIS 41:37-53

*“...firstborn Manasseh:
For God, said he, hath made me
forget all my
toil...”*

THE PROMISE FOR MANASSEH

Joseph was promoted from prisoner to second-in-charge of the country of Egypt and married Asenath, an Egyptian woman (Gen. 41:45; cf. 46:20). They had two sons (Gen. 41:50-52) and Joseph named the first son Manasseh which signified that God had enabled him to forget the bitterness of his past. Jacob (Israel) for some 22 years had believed that Joseph was dead, but he had been living in Egypt for about 17 years since being sold by his brothers into slavery. Jacob never expected to see Joseph alive (Gen. 48:11, cf. 47:9, 28) and in his bed of affliction, he adopted his grandsons as his sons (Gen. 48: 5; 1 Chron. 5:1).

Although the origin of the twelve tribes came from the twelve sons of Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh were blessed before the others. Jacob blessed Manasseh and Ephraim by deliberately crossing his hands, giving the younger son the greater blessing (Gen. 48:12-14). When the blessing of Jacob was given, both Ephraim and Manasseh became heirs to Abraham's promises and blessings.

Manasseh occupied land on both sides of the Jordan River. The Eastern tribe of Manasseh was only allowed to occupy its land after it had assisted the other tribes to conquer their territories (Num. 32:1-33). The portion they settled was the largest piece of land east of the Jordan (1 Chron. 5:23-26), north of the tribe of Gad, but in 1 Chron. 5: 25 their involvement in idolatry lead to their eventual captivity in Assyria. The Western tribe of Manasseh (1 Chron. 7:14-19) settled west of the Jordan River in the “Promised Land” (Josh. 17).

THOUGHT: The name Manasseh signified that God had enabled him to forget the bitterness of his past.

PRAYER: Lord, may I forget the bitterness of the past and press on loving You as I ought.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

GENESIS 49:3, 4

NUMBERS 26:5-11

*“These are the families
of the Reubenites.”*

THE PROMISE FOR REUBEN

Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son to Leah (who was previously barren) who caused Jacob both to rejoice and heartache. As the eldest son, he was entitled to an inheritance of the firstborn son. The birthright involved passing on at death the rank and position of the father as the head of the family or tribe and a double portion of the father's property (Deut. 21:15-17).

In his advancing years, Jacob (Israel) gave each of his sons, a prediction-blessing (Gen. 49:1-27). Reuben was as unruly (unstable, turbulent) as the stormy sea and forfeited his birthright (was demoted) because of his immorality after his fornication with Bilhah (Gen. 35:22). In willful arrogance he usurped his father's authority. Consequently he failed in leadership and during the time of the Judges (Judges 5:15, 16), the tribe of Reuben was characterized by indecisiveness, and no prominent leader came from his tribe.

Reuben advised his brothers not to kill their younger brother Joseph, but to bind him and release him later (Gen. 37:20-22). Reuben reminded his brothers that all their troubles and fears in Egypt were their just reward for mistreating Joseph (Gen. 42:22). The birthright of Reuben was given to Joseph's two sons (1 Chron. 5:1), being a double blessing for Rachel whom Jacob loved.

The children of Reuben formed the tribe of Israel by that name (Gen. 4:6-9; Num. 1:21; 2:16; 32:1-33; Joshua 13:15-32; 15:6; 2 Kings 10:32,33; 1 Chron. 5:25,26; 12:37; Ezek. 48:6-31; Rev. 7:5).

THOUGHT: Reuben forfeited his birthright due to his grave offence of incest.

PRAYER: May I be cautious of my morals and ethics before You, O Lord, that I not forfeit the blessing You have for me.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 1

GENESIS 49:5-7

JOSHUA 19:1-9

*"Simeon had their inheritance
within the inheritance."*

THE PROMISE FOR SIMEON

Leah and Jacob had six sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah (Gen. 29:31-35), Issachar, and Zebulun (Gen. 30:17-20), as well as daughter Dinah (Gen. 30:21; 34:1). Simeon and Levi are dealt with together, being violent men given to anger and cruelty, involved in treachery against the men of Shechem as Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite raped their sister. Dinah's brothers consented to Shechem marrying Dinah on the condition that all the Hivites be circumcised. On the third day, whilst in pain, Simeon and Levi attacked them (Gen. 34:25), killed all the males, and plundered the city. Jacob (Israel) was greatly troubled (Gen. 34:30), and disgraced, and denounced them (Gen. 49:5-7).

Simeon was the weakest when numbered as a tribe (Num. 26:14), and when Moses blessed the tribes, he left them out (Deut. 33:8). Simeon was given an inheritance within the inheritance of Judah (Josh 19:1; I Chron. 4:39-43), and absorbed into Judah (Josh. 19:9). After Reuben had forfeited the birthright, Simeon and Levi likewise forfeited the birthright because of their cruelty, anger, self will, fierceness and wrath, consequently the birthright went to Judah.

Joseph's brothers visited Egypt for provision during the famine, and Simeon remained hostage until they brought youngest brother Benjamin (Gen. 42:6-8).

Simeon's children formed the tribe of Israel after his name (Num. 1:6-23; 2:12; Deut. 27:12; Joshua 19:1-9; 21:4-9; Judges 1:3,17; Ezek. 48:23-33; Rev. 7:7).

THOUGHT: As a result of Simeon's violent anger and cruelty, his descendants were scattered throughout Israel (Joshua 19:1-9).

PRAYER: Lord, may I not miss Your blessings because of my uncontrolled anger, consumed by vengeance.

MONDAY, MARCH 2

GENESIS 49:5-7

JOSHUA 21:4-7

“the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance.”

THE PROMISE FOR LEVI

As Levi and Simeon were both involved in the wickedness at Shechem, so the same prediction, of being scattered throughout Israel, would apply to both tribes. The curse on Levi was not removed but was changed to a blessing because of their faithfulness in the wilderness (Ex. 32:26-28; cf. Deut. 33:10; Josh. 13:14; 14:4; 18:7). Whilst Levi stood against the idolatry at the bottom of Mount Sinai, Simeon was zealous toward idolatry and was guilty of the grossest idolatry and the vices associated with it, so was shamefully scattered throughout Judah.

To the contrary, when Joshua distributed the land amongst the children of Israel, Levi was afforded an honorable dispersion because it was the priestly tribe and they had forty-eight cities allotted to them (Joshua 21:1-45) throughout the other tribes. On account of their zeal against idolatry, they were honorably divided in Israel. Levi became the priestly tribe with cities of refuge throughout the land of Israel, consequently the tribe of Levi did not have an inheritance in Israel but instead the Lord was their inheritance.

Levi participated in the plot against Joseph (Gen. 37:4) and later took his family to Egypt with Jacob. God separated the Levites to serve Him in the Tabernacle and declared that the Levites specially belonged to Him (Num. 3:12). The sons of Levi were the Gershonites (Num. 3:18-26), the Kohathites (Num. 3:27-32), and the Merarites (Num. 3:33-37). Ezra recorded the downfall of Israel and Judah due to the marrying of foreign wives who had an influence upon the worship of idols (Ezra 9:1-2). Those guilty were the priests, Levites, princes and rulers.

THOUGHT: The Levites were to serve the priests by assisting them to carry out the offerings and sacrifices, but not perform them themselves.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for Your grace and may those who serve voluntarily mutually help those faithful in full-time service to do Your will.

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

GENESIS 49:8-12

NUMBERS 10:14

“... behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”

THE PROMISE FOR JUDAH

The leadership forfeited by Reuben, Simeon and Levi was passed on to Judah, the fourth son of Jacob (Gen. 29:35). Consequently God’s covenantal promise was continued through the line of Judah. The phrase “*thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies*” was that Judah would be a formidable army and would have great victories and success in war (cf. Num 2:9; 10:14; Judges 1; 2).

Jesus Christ is the lion from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:8-10; Num. 24:17; 26:19; Ruth 4:12; Neh. 11:24; Matt. 1:2-3; Luke 3:33; Rev. 5:5). The southern portion of Israel is also known as Judah since that tribe followed the Davidic King (2 Kings 12:20-23; Isa. 1:1). Judah will be praised by his brothers and will defeat his enemies. The sceptre (royal line) will not depart from him until the one to whom it belongs comes. Judah, a symbol of royalty, would remain powerful and succeed in warfare (Num. 2:9; 10:14; Judges 1, 2). “*Until Shiloh*” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Judah was responsible for the selling of his brother Joseph into slavery, rather than killing him. Later in life, he committed fornication against his daughter-in-law, Tamar. Twin sons, Pharez and Zerah, were born, and Pharez became an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Gen. 38:29; Ruth 4:12, 18; Matt. 1:3; Luke 3:33). Nelsons KJV commentary says, “Verses 11 and 12 describe the millennial prosperity” (cf. Isa 11:1-9; Ezk 34:23-31; Amos 9:11-15).

THOUGHT: May we understand the grace of God and that a father is not always responsible for his son’s actions.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the wisdom to understand Your sovereignty and grace.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

GENESIS 49:13

JOSHUA 19:10-16

*“And their border
went up toward the sea.”*

THE PROMISE FOR ZEBULUN

Zebulun was the tenth son of Jacob, the sixth to Leah (Gen. 35:22-23). The tribe of Zebulun was numbered at Mt. Sinai (Num. 1:31) and again before entering Canaan (Num. 26:27). It did not drive out the Canaanites as required by God but required forced labour of them (Judges 1:30).

John J. Davis in his book “Paradise to Prison” speaking of Zebulun said, “Even though Jacob indicated that Zebulun would dwell ‘at the haven of the sea’ it is clear from Joshua 19:10-16 that his tribe’s border never reached the Mediterranean or touched Sidon directly. The territory of Zebulun lay between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean, very close to both but separated from the former by Naphtali, and from the latter by Asher. Even though the tribe of Zebulun never controlled any Mediterranean coastline, it was in a position to benefit from sea trade and commerce.”

Zebulun was a thriving centre of commerce and was greatly enriched by seaborne trade having easy access to the sea, it had a great caravan route from the east which passed through (cf. Deut 33:18,19). Zebulun was a fertile area which included a mountainous area of lower Galilee and the northwest corner of the fertile Plain of Esdraelon (Valley of Jezreel). The hometown of Jesus Christ (Nazareth), was located in the heart of Zebulun (cf. Isa. 9:1; Matt. 4:15).

Zebulun took little interest in politics, but responded readily to Gideon’s summons (Judges 6:35) and 50,000 soldiers assisted enthroning David at Hebron (1 Chron. 12:33, 40). Along with the other northern tribes, Zebulun was carried into captivity by king Tiglathpileser of Assyria (2 Kings 15:29). Isaiah prophesied that in the future Zebulun would be greatly blessed (Isa. 9:1, 2).

THOUGHT: The tribe of Zebulun were expert in war, kept rank and were not double hearted but were single of heart and not wavering in trials.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me single heartedness, faithfulness and courage to serve and be a blessed witness in the places where You put me.

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

GENESIS 49:14, 15

JOSHUA 19:17-23

*“And their border
was toward Jezreel.”*

THE PROMISE FOR ISSACHAR

Issachar was the ninth son of Jacob, his fifth by Leah (Gen. 30:14-18). Issachar and his four sons emigrated to Egypt with Jacob's family (Gen. 46:13; Ex. 1:3; Num. 26:23-24; 1 Chron. 7:1). Issachar's name means "hire" or "wages" (cf. Gen. 30:16-18). Jacob's blessing of Issachar implies that the tribe would hire itself out to bear the burdens of others (Gen. 49:14, 15).

Issachar was described as *“a strong ass couching down between two burdens”* which indicates that as a tribe they would be more agriculturally orientated and motivated. They were given the most fertile territory between the eastern Jezreel Valley (Deut. 33:18, 19; 1 Chr. 12:40) and the Jordan Valley (Josh. 19:17-23). As an agricultural people (farmers), they produced an abundance of food, but were also known as brave warriors and committed soldiers (Judges 5:14, 15, 18), playing an important part in the battle of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:15).

After the children of Israel entered into the Promised Land, the tribe of Issachar was one of the six which stood on Mount Gerizim during the ceremony of the blessing and cursing (Deut. 27:12).

The tribe of Issachar demonstrated an insight into political situations having an understanding of the times (1 Chron. 12:32). Although the tribe of Issachar was a member of the Northern Kingdom, its members attended Judah's Passover feast (2 Chron. 30:18). Issachar became the head of the tribe by his name (Gen. 46:13; Num. 26:23-24; Deut. 27:12; 33:18; Joshua 17:10-11; Ezek. 48:24-33; Rev. 7:7).

THOUGHT: Issachar was given a fertile land between two mountains and would be a servant.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the blessings that You have bestowed. May I be hard-working and have a servant's heart.

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

GENESIS 49:16-18

JOSHUA 19:40-48

*“Dan went up to fight against Leshem,
and took it.”*

THE PROMISE FOR DAN

Dan was the fifth son of Jacob and his mother was Bilhah (Gen. 30:1-6). He was the ancestor of the tribe of Dan. The blessing bestowed upon Dan by his father was that “*Dan shall judge his people*” (cf. Gen. 49:16) which was partly fulfilled for a twenty year period by Samson (Judges 16:31). Dan is only recorded as having one son (Gen. 46:23).

The tribe of Dan, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, was the last of the tribes to receive their small but fertile portion in the “Promised Land” (Josh. 19:40-48). As the land did not have the capacity for the number of Danites, 600 soldiers conquered the northern city of Leshem (Laish) from the Sidonians and the name was changed to Dan (Josh. 19:47). Unfortunately, they succumbed to and were consumed by the evil influences of heathenism and idolatry (Judges 18:17), which was a deliberate insult against God. As the city of Dan was in the northern extremity of Israel, and Beersheba was in the southern extremity of Israel, the phrase “from Dan to Beersheba” is understood to mean 144 miles (Judg. 20:1).

“Dan shall be a serpent by the way” (v 17) alluded to the lack of morals and spiritual stability resulting from idolatry. As a consequence of falling away, Dan is removed from the records of his genealogy. Dan is mentioned in the list in 1 Chron. 27:22, but the name of the tribe vanishes, and is omitted in the genealogies of 1 Chron. 2-12, and Dan is likewise omitted entirely from the list of the twelve tribes (144,000) who were sealed by the angel in Rev. 7:5-7.

THOUGHT: The shifting of a boundary does not mean that people will be faithful.

PRAYER: Lord, grant true believers faithfulness to avoid idolatry and grant spiritual stability that each may be used to Your glory and honour.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

GENESIS 49:19

1 CHRONICLES 5:18-22, 12:8

“...men of war fit for the battle...”

THE PROMISE FOR GAD

Gad was the seventh son of Jacob but the first to Zilpah (Gen. 30:9-11), an ancestor of the Israelite tribe of that name.

When Israel reached the plains of Moab, after wandering in the wilderness for forty years, Reuben, Gad and half-Manasseh sought permission to settle on the East of the Jordan River (Transjordan), which they desired as Gilead was suitable for their considerable livestock (cf. Num. 32:33). After their armies crossed the Jordan River, and possessed the “Promised Land,” they returned.

The area of land that Gad occupied was between the Jabbok and Arnon Rivers, which it shared with the tribe of Reuben. It was a region of great beauty and fertility (Deut. 3:12), bounded on the east by the Arabian desert, on the west by the Jordan (Josh. 13:27). The Jabbok served as the boundary between Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, which was on the East side of the Jordan River. Throughout their history, the tribes of Reuben and Gad continued to follow the pastoral pursuits of their forefathers (Num. 32:1-5).

The tribe of Gad was strong and valiant, which it needed to be as it was vulnerable to harassment and would be constantly attacked. They were “*men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains*” (1 Chron. 12:8; cf. 5:19-22). Elijah (1 Kings 17:1) was from this tribe. Jacob prophesied that Dan shall overcome at the last.

In the days of king Saul, the wooded hills of Gilead offered him a place of refuge (1 Sam. 13:7). The Gadites and others joined the fugitive David and supported him becoming king (1 Chron. 12:1, 8-15, 37-38).

THOUGHT: Gad would defend against all enemies, and overcome at the last.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be content with my lot, defend Your Word against the attack of the enemy, and overcome at last.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 8

GENESIS 49:20

DEUTERONOMY 33:24, 25

"and let him dip his foot in oil."

THE PROMISE FOR ASHER

Asher was Jacob's eighth son, the second born son after Gad to Zilpah, (Gen. 30:12-13), born in Padanaram (Gen. 35:26). The tribe of Asher, is recorded in Gen. 30:13; Joshua 19:24-31; Rev. 7:6.

The area of the "Promised Land" allocated to Asher was the seacoast (Mediterranean) between Tyre and Mount Carmel (Josh 19:24-31). The Mediterranean Sea was the west boundary, on the east was the tribe of Naphtali, in the north was the upper extremity of the "Promised Land" whilst the half-tribe of Manasseh was on the southern boundary.

It was a highly productive area and especially suitable for the production of corn. Asher would produce rich food (royal delicacies) fit for kings (cf. Eccles. 5:9). All people required necessities but only some could afford the dainties. The blessings of Jacob (Gen. 49:20) and of Moses (Deut. 33:24, 25) allude to the fertility of Asher's land, and they would be blessed with prosperity, *"And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil"* (Deut. 33:24). Moses also alludes to strength to secure Israel's northern border (Deut. 33:25).

The Gershonite Levites had four cities in Asher (1 Chron. 6:62, 74, 75), but the Asherites did not completely expel the Canaanites. Consequently, Asher occupied parts of their portion among them, living amongst the Canaanites (Judges 1:31, 32). Asher failed to help Deborah's battle against Sisera, but rallied to Gideon's side to expel the Midianites (Judges 5:17; 6:35; 7:23), and provided warriors to assist king David (1 Chron. 12:36). As with Simeon, neither did Asher produce any Judges.

THOUGHT: The Lord is a bountiful benefactor and provides all necessities.

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks for the necessities of life and the increase and pray that I may be wise to give as You have prospered me.

MONDAY, MARCH 9

GENESIS 49:21

MATTHEW 4:12-17

*“That it might be fulfilled
which was spoken by Isaiah.”*

THE PROMISE FOR NAPHTALI

Naphtali was the sixth son of Jacob, the second son of Jacob and Bilhah (Gen. 30:7, 8). The tribe of Naphtali, described as a hind let loose (Prov. 5:19) and as expressing goodly words, expresses the fact that as a friendly mountain people with liberty they would keep their character. As the swift hind set in high places (Psalm 18:33), they remain sure footed in trouble (Hab. 3:19), and are quick to spread good news. They were friendly to their most formidable enemies and although the name of the tribe signified wrestling and it was involved in struggles, it was to prevail.

As with Asher, Naphtali was of the northernmost tribe of Israel, occupying a long, narrow piece of land some 80 kilometers north to south and 16 to 24 kilometers from east to west. The land of Naphtali was mountainous (Josh. 20:7), having rich soil and beautiful scenery.

During the period of the Judges, Barak successfully led a force of ten thousand from Naphtali against the army of Sisera (Judges 4:6-10, 12-16; cf, 5:18). On two occasions the tribe of Naphtali answered the call of Gideon to battle the invading Midianites (Judges 6:35; 7:23). When Ishbosheth (king Saul's son) challenged David for the throne, the tribe of Naphtali sent 37,000 fighting men led by 1,000 captains, to support David (1 Chron. 12:34).

When Jesus Christ heard that John the Baptist was in prison, He left Judea for Galilee, which encompassed the territories of Zebulun and Naphtali. This fulfilled the prophecy that their land would be honored by a great light that would spring up (Matt. 4:15, 16; cf. Isa. 9:1, 2).

THOUGHT: Judah is described as a lion, Issachar like an ass, Dan like a serpent, Naphtali like a hind. Although a variety of dispositions, they were one.

PRAYER: Lord, as each member of the body has different gifts, may I be granted graciousness not to covet another's gift, but to exercise patience and spread the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, as I ought.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

GENESIS 49:22-26

DEUTERONOMY 33:13-15

*“And for the precious fruits
brought forth by the sun.”*

PRECIOUS FRUIT FOR JOSEPH

Joseph was hated by his brothers because he was a favourite son and because of the interpretation of his dreams with the entire family bowing to him (Gen. 37:1-17). Joseph led a remarkable life, having been sold into slavery by his brothers, who allowed his father Jacob to conclude that had been killed by a wild beast (Gen. 37:18-36). Having maintained his purity, Joseph was thrown into prison, because of a false accusation by Potipher's wife that he tried to seduce her (Gen. 39:1-18). Joseph prospered in prison and soon was placed in charge of the entire prison (Gen. 39:19-23).

Whilst in prison, Joseph interpreted two unusual dreams of the king's servants correctly (Gen. 40:1-23). Joseph was the only person to interpret the two strange dreams of Pharaoh as being a 14-year forecast of plenty and famine (Gen. 41:1-36). The value of humility was expressed (Psalm 75:6, 7; 1 Pet. 5:6), as in one day at the age of 30, Joseph was elevated from the prison to the palace.

Joseph married (Gen. 41:45), and had two sons Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 41:50-52). Joseph was described as *“a fruitful bough”* being a young tree as God made him fruitful in the land of his affliction. Both his sons were as branches of a vine spreading out and running over the wall, and the name of his second son alluded to that fruit. *“And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction”* (Gen. 41:52). Likewise this was an encouragement for Jacob, as it was the fruitfulness of his seed. Under great duress, God preserved Joseph, giving him wisdom, courage and patience. Moses likewise spoke of Joseph's fruitfulness (Deut. 33:13-15).

THOUGHT: The archers refer to those who are skilful in mischievous deeds and in the art of persecution.
PRAYER: Lord, may my strength be in You during times of temptation, persecution and suffering, that I be fruitful and honour You.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

GENESIS 49:22-26

DEUTERONOMY 33:16, 17

*“The blessings of
thy father have prevailed.”*

BLESSINGS FOR JOSEPH

Jacob had great desires for Joseph and gave him a coat of many colours exalting him above his brethren. Likewise Moses also had great desires for Joseph and gave them the greatest possible abundance of earthly blessings which included the prosperity of a good life (Deut. 33:16, 17). He named his first son Manasseh, signifying that God had enabled him to forget the bitter past. He named the second Ephraim, signifying his fruitful present and future. Moses recognized the priority of Ephraim being raised to the level of the firstborn by Jacob (Deut. 33:16, 17), and assigned to Ephraim a more numerous growth.

Joseph was promised blessings and he could expect the Almighty God, the God of his father, to help in dangers and difficulties and during times of war also. Joshua, who led in war and also lead the children of Israel into the “Promised Land,” came from the lineage of Joseph. Other blessings conferred upon Joseph were spiritual blessings and temporal blessings of heaven above (which included rain, and good weather) and from the earth beneath (which included springs and mines).

Other temporal blessings included children who were born safely and nourished in God’s Word (1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2). As Jacob was blessed with 12 sons, so were his chosen blessed with a copious blessing and the brethren multiplied exceedingly. Joseph also received the bountiful fruit of the everlasting hills (Isa. 54:10).

THOUGHT: God promised to bless Joseph and to strengthen him in dangers and difficulties.

PRAYER: Lord, may my trust continue to be in You, even when I am separated from the brethren and treated harshly. I understand that a blessing awaits faithfulness.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

GENESIS 49:27

JUDGES 20:21-47

*“the children of Benjamin...
destroyed down to the ground.”*

THE PROMISE FOR BENJAMIN

Benjamin was the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons and the son of Rachel (Gen. 35:18), who died giving birth between Bethel and Bethlehem.

Jacob prophesied that Benjamin would devour his enemies like a hungry wolf. He would be warlike, cruel, aggressive and ferocious. As farmers, they were also archers (1 Sam. 20:20, 36; 2 Sam. 1:22; 1 Chron. 8:40; 12:2).

Jacob became attached to Benjamin after he lost his beloved son Joseph. Benjamin was Rachel's only surviving son. Jacob was reluctant to let Benjamin go to Egypt with his sons in search of food during the famine (Gen. 43:1-17). Joseph also loved Benjamin, his only full brother (Gen. 43:29-34). Joseph ordered that his silver cup be planted in Benjamin's sack after their visit to him. Jacob and Benjamin's brothers reacted by showing great love for Benjamin (Gen. 44).

Benjamin was the father of the tribe by that name (Gen. 35:16-20; 43:1-34; 46:21; Num. 26:38-41). Benjamin occupied the central ridge between Jerusalem and Bethel (Josh. 18:11-28). Its eastern boundary was the Jordan River. The children of Benjamin were just as cruel as he, as an atrocity in the territory created an unnecessary civil war with the other Israelite tribes (Judges 20:21-47). This tragedy almost exterminated them (Judg. 20:20, 21; 21:10).

Ehud the judge and Israel's first king (Saul) came from the tribe of Benjamin. Until Abner insisted otherwise (2 Sam. 2:8-9; 3:17-21), the tribe supported Saul's son Eshbaal (Ishbosheth) rather than David. The gate of Benjamin, on the north side of Jerusalem (Jer. 37:13; 38:7; Zech. 14:10) opened in the direction of the area of the tribe of Benjamin.

THOUGHT: Anger stirs up strife and sin and results in punishment.
PRAYER: Lord, grant me wisdom that I be cautious of my conduct and testimony before my family and the world.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

GENESIS 14:17-24

HEBREWS 6:13-20

*“Jesus, made an high priest for ever
after the order of Melchizedek.”*

MELCHIZEDEK AND THE MESSIAH

Melchizedek, was a godly priest of the most high God (Gen.14:18) as well as a king (Psalm 110:4; Heb. 5:6-10; 7:1-22). He was the king of Salem (Jerusalem), the *“king of righteousness.”* The first biblical occurrence of the word priest appears in Gen. 14:18. The three great Old Testament offices were prophet, priest, and king. The prophet represented God to humanity (1 Kings 18:15), whilst the priest represented humanity to God (Lev. 8:1-9:24), and the king, under God, ruled over humanity (1 Sam. 10:1). Two of these offices were filled by Melchizedek whilst Jesus Christ filled all three.

Jesus Christ was a Prophet in His past ministry (Matt. 21:11; Luke 7:16; John 1:18; 4:19; Heb. 1:1, 2), a Priest in His present ministry (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:24-27), and He will be a King in His future ministry (Rev. 19:11-16).

Melchizedek gave Abram bread and wine and blessed him, foreshadowing the death of Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews equates the Royal Priesthood of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1), whose name means “King of Justice”, who was also the “King of Peace” (Heb. 7:2b), with that of Jesus Christ. The Priesthood of Jesus Christ was superior (Heb. 7:4-10), everlasting (Heb. 7:16, 17, 24), guaranteed (Heb. 7:20-22), permanent (Heb. 7:23), Holy (Heb. 7:26), All-sufficient (Heb. 7:18, 19, 25, 27) and faultless (Heb. 7:28).

THOUGHT: As Jesus Christ is the forerunner to Heaven, after the order of Melchizedek, Christians have the blessed hope of being anchored in eternity.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for being an anchor connecting our souls on earth to Jesus Christ in Heaven.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

EXODUS 12:1-7

HEBREWS 9:1-15

*“blood of Christ...
offered himself without spot.”*

THE SPOTLESS MESSIAH

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats” (Ex. 12:5).

The Passover was instituted by God after the ten plagues in Egypt when all of the Egyptian gods were humiliated. It was the occasion of the deliverance of the children of Israel from 430 years of slavery. God required a Passover lamb to be set apart (cf. Matt. 3:17), slain (cf. Rom. 5:10), and the blood sprinkled (cf. Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; Cor. 1:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18-19) on the doorposts of the homes of those who believed in the God of Israel.

The Passover was a set feast of Israel (Lev. 23:5-8) depicting redemption from God's wrath through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. The lamb was to be without spot or blemish, as the smallest deformity or defect would have made the lamb unsuitable for sacrifice, it being a type of Christ and symbolising His perfection (1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:5). A male of the first year (Ex. 12:5) symbolised the strength of Jesus Christ. When the lamb was killed and its blood was shed (Ex. 12:6, 7), it symbolised the price that was paid for redemption (Rom. 5:9, 10). The blood of the lamb was sufficient and nothing else was needed for protection (Ex. 12:23; cf. John 19:30; Heb. 9:12; 10:12-14).

THOUGHT: The lamb without spot or blemish was representative of the perfection of Jesus Christ as the Lamb without spot or blemish.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the blood of Your only begotten Son, the spotless Lamb whose shed blood was the price paid for redemption (Rom. 5:9, 10).

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 15

EXODUS 12:1-14, 29-36

MATTHEW 26:17-29

*"For this is my
blood of the new testament."*

JESUS CHRIST IN THE PASSOVER

God's people (children of Israel) were persecuted by the Hyksos Pharaoh in Egypt who did not know Joseph personally (Ex. 1:8). Due to their rapid growth in population, a concerned Pharaoh set about attempting to control the population by such acts as infanticide, severe persecution and hard labour. God moulded Moses to deliver His children, and sent nine plagues upon Egypt because the hardened heart of the Pharaoh would not let them go. Each plague humiliated the gods of Egypt (Ex. 9:14-10:29). Pharaoh was warned about the final plague but again he did not listen and suffered the consequences (Ex. 11:4-10) and all of the gods of Egypt were mocked.

The Feast of the Passover was celebrated (in Spring) on the 14th day of the first month (our March/April) in the evening (Lev. 23:5). On the occasion of the "Passover," the lamb was slain and eaten with both bitter herbs and unleavened bread, commemorative of God passing over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, sparing the firstborn son and the firstborn male animal when He saw the blood of the Passover lamb applied to the door-posts, but not so for the first born of Egypt. The "Passover" commemorated the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt and the birth of the nation (Lev. 23:4-5).

The "Passover" was a reminder of God's Divine protection of Israel's firstborn of man and animals, in connection with the Exodus. Consequently, God placed a special claim on the firstborn (Ex. 13:11-13).

THOUGHT: On the night that Jesus Christ was betrayed, He became our Passover Lamb (cf. Isa. 53:6-8; John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7b) and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the Cruel Cross typified the "Passover."

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks that all who truly believe in Jesus Christ are delivered from sin as Jesus Christ became the "Passover Lamb."

MONDAY, MARCH 16

EXODUS 23:9-18

MATTHEW 17:1-8

*“transfigured before them:
and his face did shine as the sun.”*

PREPARATION FOR THE CROSS

The Shekinah (*dwelling*) glory is a visible manifestation of the presence of God. The Shekinah glory led Moses and the children of Israel through the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 13:21). At Mount Sinai the Lord said to Moses that the Shekinah glory (the Pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) would lead them (Ex. 23:20). The Shekinah glory was visible on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:9-18) and in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:35) and in King Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8:1-13; 2 Chron. 5:2-7:3).

The Shekinah glory of God is the Hebrew expression for the very presence of God, it is a luminous cloud that rested above the altar in the place of worship and illumined the room. Ezekiel records the Shekinah glory in the Temple (Ezek. 1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:3, 4; 9:3a), but it departed just before the Babylonians destroyed the Temple (Ezek. 10:4, 18, 19, 11:22, 23). The Shekinah glory travelled with the children of Israel throughout the wilderness (Num. 9:17, 18). Phinehas, the grandson of Eli, was named Ichabod (*without glory, the glory has departed*) because the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:19-22), and God's glory had departed.

The return of the Shekinah glory was at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, appearing to the lowly shepherds (Luke 2:8, 9).

At the transfiguration, Peter, James and John, often referred to as the “inner circle,” were present with the Lord Jesus Christ who was clothed with the “Shekinah Glory of God” (Matt. 17:2). This was His “Divine Glory.” At the time of the transfiguration, both Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:3) to prepare Him for His death on the “Cruel Cross.”

THOUGHT: Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the prophets as the Old Testament comprised of both the law and the prophets.

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks that true believers will witness the day when Jesus Christ will return in His “Shekinah Glory.”

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

LEVITICUS 16:1-34

HEBREWS 9:23-28

*“Christ was once offered
to bear the sins of many.”*

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The “Day of Atonement” recorded in Lev. 16:1-34; 23:27-32; Num. 29:7-11 describes Israel’s most celebrated Holy day, known as *Yom Kippur*. It is celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew religious calendar which falls approximately around September-October (Lev. 16:29). It was a day of national confession of the sin of Israel.

The “Day of Atonement” was an annual feast of the children of Israel which speaks of both the sufficiency and efficacy of Jesus Christ’s atoning work on the Cruel Cross. Before the foundation of the world, it was predestined by God that Jesus Christ should die once and for all for the sins of His people.

On the “Day of Atonement,” the High Priest would make an atonement for the sins of the children of Israel before the LORD (Lev. 16:30). It was to be a day of Sabbath rest for the children of Israel when no work could be done, no matter on which day of the week it fell (Lev. 16:31; cf. 16:29). On the “Day of Atonement,” the anointed High Priest would sanctify the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies), the Tabernacle, and the altar (Lev. 16:32-33). God revealed that He is absolutely Holy, and no man, not even the High Priest, in the Old Testament could approach Him whenever he chose (cf. Heb. 9:1-12). If the High Priest had entered the Most Holy Place (once a year) in a way that was not prescribed by God, he would be struck dead (cf. Lev. 10:1-7).

THOUGHT: The sin offering of the bullock prefigured the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whilst the sacrificial goat of the sin offering (Lev. 16:5-10) was for the people of Israel (Heb. 9:23-28).

PRAYER: Lord, I confess my sin before You and give thanks that Jesus Christ is my Atonement once and for all.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

EXODUS 25:10-22

1 PETER 2:18-25

*“cherubims of glory
shadowing the mercyseat.”*

THE MERCY SEAT

Having redeemed the children of Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt at Mt. Sinai, the God of Israel announced that He would dwell with them. His dwelling place with them was designated as the Tabernacle which was a detailed illustration of Jesus Christ and salvation in Him (Ex. 25-27).

The “Mercy Seat” was a lid which covered the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:17, 21). It was made of wood covered with gold, depicting both the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ as our “Mercy Seat.” The “Mercy Seat” perfectly covered the Ark which contained the Ten Commandments written on stone (Ex. 25:21; Deut. 10:3-5), a pot of manna preserved by God as a testimony to future generations (Ex. 16:32-34) and Aaron’s rod that budded to prove that Aaron was God’s chosen (Num. 17:1-11).

Once a year on the “Day of Atonement” (the Holiest Day of the Jewish calendar), the High Priest would sprinkle the “Mercy Seat” with blood (Lev. 16:14, 15). This signified the atonement for sin by the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9-10). In the Greek, the word translated “Mercy Seat” in Heb. 9:5 is correspondingly translated “propitiation” in Rom. 3:25. Consequently, both mean a covering and the “propitiation” (satisfaction, covering or the fulfillment of a demand) of Jesus Christ perfectly covers and satisfies the holy demands of God.

The blood of the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament was symbolic of the blood of Jesus Christ, but it was real blood as required by God’s Law (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). This pointed to the atonement of Jesus Christ being the significance of the Mercy Seat.

THOUGHT: God’s mercy is the cause of His salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5-7; 1 Pet. 1:3), which is constantly available to the believer (Heb. 4:15, 16) and motivates us to serve Him (Rom. 12:1, 2).

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks for Your mercy, tenderness, pity, kindness, forgiveness and compassion and for the significance of the Mercy Seat.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

NUMBERS 21:4-9

HEBREWS 12:1-17

*“Looking unto Jesus the author
and finisher of our faith...”*

THE BRONZE SERPENT

The Book of Numbers is sometimes considered as the “Pilgrims Progress of Moses” as he wandered with the children of Israel through the wilderness after forty years. Numbers 21 teaches us about perseverance and encouragement in life.

At the beginning of Numbers 21, Israel was attacked by the Canaanites, yet Israel won the battle with the help of the LORD. The children of Israel were then making their final approach to the “Promised Land,” which was within sight (a days walk), yet after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they were refused from passing through Edom. Consequently, they had no choice but to march back to the Red Sea with bitter disappointment which revealed their weakness, and the depravity within the heart. This new generation of people had emerged with a new spirit.

Their problem with the Edomites started with Esau, Israel’s (Jacob) brother. It has been a long-running family dispute. Esau was a godless and negative example of a profane character and sold his birthright to his brother Jacob who became Israel (Gen. 25:27-34; Heb. 12:16-17). When the root of bitterness is allowed to develop in the heart, the end result is defilement. The Edomites were cruel to Judah and carried away captives during the reign of King Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:17).

As a result of their sinful murmuring, God immediately sent fiery serpents as a means of chastisement, and many of the children of Israel died (Num. 21:6). The remedy that God gave was to look upon a bronze serpent to save them from death. This typified the raising of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

THOUGHT: God never punishes His people without giving them a remedy.

PRAYER: Lord, may I look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

PSALM 22:1-26

JOHN 20:27

*“Reach hither...and behold my
hands...
and thrust it into my side.”*

THE PSALM OF THE CROSS

Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm depicting the foreshadowing of Jesus Christ as the Lamb to the slaughter, involving His suffering on the Cruel Cross of Calvary. On the “Cruel Cross,” Jesus Christ would echo David’s cry of anguish (Psalm 22:1; Matt. 27:46). Unheeded prayer is not a prayer unheard, but God’s plan must still go ahead (Psalm 22:2-5). He would be despised of men, ridiculed and laughed to scorn, with gestures of contempt. Those who at the beginning of the “Passion Week” wanted to crown Him, then wanted to crucify Him (Psalm 22:7, 8; Matt. 27: 42, 43; Mark 15:29) and release a murderer instead (Acts 3:14; cf. Isa. 49:7; 53:3; Matt 27:39).

The Lord Jesus Christ found no man to stand beside Him at the “Cruel Cross” (Psalm 22:9-11). He would suffer, His hands and feet being pierced (Psalm 22:16; Luke 24:39, 40) and would be publicly stared at by the priests, rulers, scribes, Pharisees, and others gathered like an enraged herd of wild bulls (Psalm 22:13; Matt. 27:39, 47; cf. Ezek. 39:18; cf. Amos 4:1) and ravenous lions. His life is poured out like water (Psalm 22:14), His bones are out of joint (22:14, 17), His heart is melted like wax (22:14), His strength is totally dried up (22:15). When David said *“they pierced my hands and my feet”* (Psalm 22:16c), the cruel and inhumane Roman method of death by crucifixion was not known to David.

The *“dogs”* refer to the Roman soldiers who laid rough hands upon Him (Matt. 27:27-35). At His crucifixion, His garments would be gambled for and divided (Psalm 22:18; Matt. 27:35) by the Roman soldiers, supposedly the victors.

THOUGHT: Crucifixion, the most cruel means of punishment, was invented by the Romans for serious crimes such as civil disobedience and murder.

PRAYER: Lord, may I appreciate Your suffering on behalf of believers.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

PSALM 69:4-21

1 PETER 2:18-25

*“Who his own self bare our sins
in his own body on the tree.”*

UNDESERVED SUFFERING

Psalm 69 is a Messianic Psalm. Jesus was given gall to eat, whilst He was on the Cruel Cross, and vinegar to drink. Gall is a bitter poisonous herb which deadens pain (Deut. 29:18; Psalm 69:21; Matt. 27:34), but the Jesus refused to partake of it. Although He drank the full cup of God’s wrath for the sin of others, He refused to be soothed of the bitter experience (Matt. 26:39, 42; 27:34).

In the psalm, there are situations referred to which pertain to the author David, and not to Jesus. Portions of the Psalm designated strictly to the author include the saying during his greatest hour of persecution, *“Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness”* (Psalm 69:27). These words are contrary to Jesus who during His deepest persecution said, *“...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do ...”* (Luke 23:34). This Messianic Psalm expresses an undeserved suffering of Jesus on the Cruel Cross of Calvary.

In his book “Meditations from Psalms,” Rev. Dr. Timothy Tow titled Psalm 69 as “Lest I Forget Gethsemane...Lead Me To Calvary.” He said, “There is, however, a higher purpose in David’s sufferings. God has used these sufferings to adumbrate the sufferings of His greater Son and our Lord. No other Psalm apart from Psalm 22 is as much quoted as this Psalm for some part of Christ’s suffering before His crucifixion.” The difference between David and Jesus is that David was a sinner but Jesus was sinless.

THOUGHT: David and Jesus were hated without cause (Ps 69:4; John 15:25); misunderstood by their families (Ps 69:8; 1 Sam. 17:28; John 7:5); and displayed great zeal for God (Ps 69:9; 2 Sam. 6:14, 15; John 2:17).

PRAYER: Lord, allow me to truly comprehend that Jesus Christ took my sins upon Himself and whilst I deserved to suffer, He suffered the cruelty of an undeserved suffering in my place.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 22

ZECHARIAH 12:1-10

JOHN 19:31-37

*"But one of the soldiers with
a spear pierced his side."*

RESPONDING TO THE PIERCED PRINCE

The Book of Zechariah was written to the Jews who had returned from exile in Babylon in 538 B.C. to encourage the rebuilding of the Temple, give instruction in holiness and provide information concerning both the first and second Coming of Jesus Christ, encouraging believers to look to the future with hope regardless of their present position. Zechariah was both a priest and a prophet. Likewise his grandfather Iddo (Zech. 1:1) also a priest returned from the exile with Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:4).

Zechariah 9 to 14 are five chapters quoted more often than any of the Old Testament texts regarding Christ-centered prophecies of the "Passion of Jesus Christ" being His suffering on the Cruel Cross and His blood shed for the remission of our sins. Such texts assist believers to understand the significance of His crucifixion and death and the promises of future hope for believers, and how they can respond appropriately to the pierced Messiah. In the book of Zechariah, it is prophesied that Jesus Christ would be betrayed and sold at a price of a wounded slave (30 pieces of silver) (Zech. 11:12, 13) and that He would be pierced (Zech. 12:10).

Zechariah reveals the Mystery Man as a person who mourns in the house of David and is a leading person in the family who will be a fountain for sin (Zech. 13:1), whose hands will be wounded (Zech. 13:7), who will be smitten (Zech. 13:7). In Zech. 3:8, He was to be "*The Branch*" who will take away sin. This is a prophetic picture of Jesus Christ whose hands would be pierced and wounded by the act of a professed friend. Even on the day of His betrayal, Jesus Christ called Judas Iscariot "*friend*."

THOUGHT: The wounded hands of Jesus Christ which suffered excruciating pain at Calvary (John 19:18) are extended to sinners today.

PRAYER: Lord, may I understand the value of the Cruel Cross and salvation.

MONDAY, MARCH 23

ZECHARIAH 11:7-14

MATTHEW 27:1-10

*“took the thirty pieces of silver
... children of Israel did value.”*

A GORED SLAVE’S VALUE

The significance of thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13) is that it was the price paid for the most lowly slave. It was the price paid to a master who had his slave gored by an ox (Ex. 21:32). The Nelson’s KJV Study Bible says, “A sound slave was considered to be worth twice the amount. This insult would ultimately be ascribed to the Messiah Himself (Matt. 27:9, 10). This is the supreme insult: the Messiah, God’s Son, worth only the price of an incapacitated, gored slave!”

The consequence of the betrayal of Jesus Christ led to the punishment of Judas Iscariot (Matt. 26:24). Let us be reminded that hell is not annihilation. As Matthew declared, hell is a place of punishment (Matt. 25:46), and a place of fire and eternal torment (Matt. 13:42, 50; cf. Mark 9:44-48; Rev. 20:15; 14:10).

When Judas Iscariot realized that Jesus Christ was going to die as a consequence of his actions of betrayal, he returned the betrayal price of 30 shekels and hanged himself. Both Peter and Judas felt remorse, but Peter’s remorse led to repentance and restoration (cf. John 20:1-10; 21:15-18; Acts 2:14-40). To the contrary, Judas’ remorse led only to death (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10; Acts 1:16-19).

In Matthew 27:9, the gospel writer, according to Hendriksen, “combines two prophecies, one from Zechariah, and one from Jeremiah. Then he mentions not the minor prophet, but the major prophet as the source of the reference. This mentioning of only one source, when the allusion is to two, is not peculiar to Matthew.” The reference to Jeremiah 32:6-9 is linked to Zechariah 11:12, 13.

THOUGHT: What value is the “Pierced Prince” to me? May I avoid the ultimate insult of betraying or insulting Jesus Christ by my lack of service.

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks that after the gift of salvation comes the gift of service. May I love and serve You and not insult the Lord Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

MATTHEW 27:36-44

REVELATION 19:11-16

“*KING OF KINGS,
AND LORD OF LORDS.*”

THE KING AND THE CROSS

Jesus Christ the Messiah was born a King (Matt. 2:2). He came preaching the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), He died as a King (Mark 15:32), and will yet be seen as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16). He fulfilled the threefold position of Prophet, Priest and King. His function as a King-Priest enables true believers to become heirs of the Kingdom that He has established through His sacrificial death on the Cruel Cross (Heb. 5:6; 7:1; Rev. 11:15).

Pilate officially turned Jesus Christ over (delivered Him) to his soldiers for execution in the *praetorium* or governor's quarters, possibly in the fortress of Antonia. Jesus Christ was mocked and ridiculed by the Roman soldiers who fashioned a mocking symbol of authority crowning Him with a crown of thorns (pushing it on His head) prior to His crucifixion (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5). Not only a crown of thorns but they also put a reed in His hand as His “sceptre” pretending to acknowledge Him as King of the Jews.

They also placed a purple robe on Him symbolizing the fact that He had been said to be King of the Jews, before leading Him to be crucified (Mark 15:16-20; John 19:1-16). The soldiers disrobed Jesus Christ (the Prince of Peace, Isa. 9:6) and dressed Him in an old discarded and faded garment (military uniform). The superscription on the Cruel Cross likewise proclaimed their mockery of Him.

Old Testament sacrifices depicted how God's Son, the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Messiah) would pay the price for sin (Heb. 9, 10; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19). The blood of the King was upon the people (Matt. 27:25), yet the Cross was the means by which Jesus Christ was enthroned and the Kingdom announced and established.

THOUGHT: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, all who genuinely confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (1 John 1:7-10).

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that Jesus Christ will return as the “*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*” (Rev. 19:16) establishing His Kingdom forever.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

MARK 10:42-45

ISAIAH 42:1-4

*“Behold my servant...
shall bring forth judgment to the
Gentiles.”*

THE SERVANT AND THE CROSS

The theme of the Gospel of Mark is the presentation of Jesus Christ as a servant. The Gospel of Mark was written by the travelling companion of Paul and Peter who writes under the inspiration of God to a Gentile audience resident in Rome. The word “*servant*” is used some 40 times in the Gospel of Mark. The “ox,” (Ezek. 1:10; Rev. 4:7) a work animal (1 Cor. 9:9) is considered the servant and labours much with all its strength. The oxen used in sacrifices typified Jesus Christ as the willing servant of God (Heb. 10:7).

The Word of God mentions in Zech. 3:8 of the Servant-hood of Jesus Christ being the “Servant” and the “Branch” identifying Him as the seed of David, referring to Him as the heir to David’s throne. The Word of God says, “*I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH*” (Zech. 3:8; cf. Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 6:12-13; Matt. 1:1; Isa. 9:6-7; Rev. 22:16). The key verse in the Gospel of Mark expressing the Servant-hood of Jesus Christ is Mark 10:45.

As a humble servant, Jesus Christ was “*oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth...*” (Isa. 53:7). He said, “*I am meek and lowly in heart*” (Matt. 11:28, 29). In Mark 9:33-37, Jesus Christ spoke of humility being the secret of greatness, the harmony of Christian fellowship (Mark 9:38-41) and what must be done to avoid hell (Mark 9:42-50).

A disciple is to esteem himself as a servant (Greek: *diakonos*) and willingly attend to all duties whether considered menial or not, and eagerly receive children without recognition or reward (Matt. 18:1-14; Luke 9:46-48). This is the second occasion Jesus predicted His crucifixion and resurrection (Mark 9:31). He concluded by saying, “*...If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all*” (Mark 9:30-35). Jesus Christ gave His life as a ransom for many.

THOUGHT: Greatness in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is not a matter of superiority but of sacrifice and faithful service.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that Jesus is a living example of Servanthood and humility as He willingly went to the Cross for my sins.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

REVELATION 3:7-13

*“I also will keep thee from
the hour of temptation.”*

NOT APPOINTED UNTO WRATH

The Apostle Paul assured the Christians at Thessalonica that departed loved ones in the Lord would not miss out on the appearing/return of Jesus Christ. The Apostle exhorted that those who had previously experienced salvation and were in the grave would be gloriously raised with a resurrected body to meet Jesus Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-15; 1 Cor. 15:20-28), followed immediately by those who are alive, being raptured with a glorified body to be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:50-58). The Apostle ensured them that those who are living will have no advantage over those who are deceased in the Lord.

The unbeliever is a vessel fitted for wrath as he has fitted himself for destruction, because of his willful rejection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 9:22) as he is culpable for his actions. To the contrary those who willingly confess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour having been convicted of their sin by the Holy Spirit, having been prepared by the grace of God, through faith in His only begotten Son, are fitted for eternal life.

God has not promised Christians they will be free from trials, but has given the means to endure (John 16:33). The “Great Day of Wrath” from the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16, 17) is the predicted time of God’s judgment of the inhabitants of the earth (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31). When God’s wrath is come (Rev. 11:18), His vengeance will be upon His enemies who are alive (cf. Psalm 2:5; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8), but those deceased will be subject to the future “Great White Throne of Judgment” (Rev. 20:11-15). God’s wrath is also recorded in Rev. 12:12; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15, but in Rev. 3:10 God has promised to keep His beloved from the “*Great Tribulation*” to come.

THOUGHT: Recipients of God’s mercy (those who are saved) are not appointed unto the wrath of the “*Great Tribulation*,” but are prepared for eternity.

PRAYER: (Pray for the salvation of loved ones who are not saved, that they may love the Lord Jesus Christ, and not be appointed unto God’s wrath.)

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

REVELATION 7:1-8

ROMANS 11:25-33

*“And so all Israel shall be saved:
as it is written.”*

144,000 SEALED AND SAFE

Between the sixth and seventh seal, there is a short interlude (Rev. 7:1-17). During this period, the Angels of God will prevent further devastation upon the earth until they have placed the seal of God on the forehead of His servants (Rev. 7:3; cf. 14:1). This is the calling, conversion and sealing of the 144,000, involving 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, who will evangelise, like evangelism has never been seen before, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Jesus Christ who said, *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”* (Matt. 24:14).

A noticeably missing tribe is the tribe of Dan which is replaced by the tribe of Joseph (Rev. 7:1-8). Although Dan was to judge the people, some say he lacked morals and is excluded, having encouraged idolatry (Judges 18:30; 1 Kings 12:28-30). But God knows the reason. The Word of God in Ezekiel prophesied a *“portion for Dan”* which is a millennial land distribution (inheritance) (Ezek. 48:1). Ephraim is also excluded (Rev. 7:5-8) although he would be included under Joseph, but Manassah is mentioned (Rev. 7:6), as is Levi (Rev. 7:7).

The Word of God shows very clearly that more than 144,000 Jewish believers will be saved during the Great Tribulation (Rom. 11:26). Those who have the mark of the Father arrive safely with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 14:1-5). This is a blessed promise. To the contrary the wicked suffer destruction, even in the shocking conditions (darkest day and most horrible hour of history) of Rev. 11-13. Israel will be delivered from sin (cf. Psalm 14:7; Isa. 59: 20, 21; Jer. 31:31). The promise of the future restoration of Israel is recorded in Isa. 11:11-13; Ezek. 37:15-28; Rom. 11:26.

THOUGHT: Rev. Dr. Gary Cohen said, “Let us for ever abandon all theories that make these to be Britishers, or Anglo-Americans, or Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks for Your covenantal promises and faithfulness.

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

REVELATION 7:9-17

MATTHEW 24:4-14

*“gospel of the kingdom shall be
preached in all the world...
and then shall the end come.”*

A GREAT REVIVAL

Speaking of Rev. 7:1-8, Bible believing, born again Christian (Arab) Salem Kirban claims, “This will be a time in which 144,000 of the children of Israel, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes will be ‘sealed.’” After the sealing there will be an unparalleled revival with an unnumbered multitude being too numerous to count, who will be saved (Rev. 7:9-17). These will be Gentiles saved from all nations who are evangelised by the believing Jews during the “Great Tribulation.”

This same numberless group is mentioned in Rev. 6:9 who are slain for God. A great number saved during the Tribulation will be killed (martyred) by the Antichrist. In Rev. 7:9, they stood in their white robes of righteousness with palm branches of victory. There is a seven-fold praise in Rev. 7:12. These are the “Great Tribulation” believers who are martyred for Jesus Christ. Rev. 7:14: *“...These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”*

The three groups saved during the “Great Tribulation” are firstly the martyred remnant during the first half (Rev. 6:9-11), secondly the 144,000 Jews (Rev. 7:2-8) and thirdly the numberless Gentiles from all nations (Rev. 7:9-14). Many of these believers will be executed by the guillotine during the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4). The words JEW and ISRAELITE are used interchangeably as the Apostle Paul called himself both a Jew (Acts 21:39) and an Israelite (Rom. 11:1).

THOUGHT: Good Angels will protect the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists who spread the message of salvation in Jesus Christ during the “Great Revival.”

PRAYER: Lord, I do pray that my loved ones will truly believe in Jesus Christ and not go into the Great Tribulation.

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 29

REVELATION 19: 11-21

TITUS 2:11-14

*"Looking for that blessed hope,
and the glorious appearing."*

THE SECOND COMING

Prior to the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, four great Alleluia's are proclaimed (Rev. 19:1-6). The first Alleluia in Heaven is shouted because the Lord has judged the Great Apostate Harlot Church, because of its immorality and murder of the saints; the second, because the smoke of the harlot church rises forever and ever; the third being the 24 elders representing the Church triumphant, and four living creatures glorify and worship God; and the fourth Alleluia, because the Lord God the Omnipotent has reigned.

Jesus Christ will return from Heaven to fulfill God's programme for Israel (Rom. 11:1-2, 13; Jer. 33:25-26) and when Jesus Christ returns, His enemies will be made a footstool (Heb. 10:13). Also He will judge His enemies and set up His earthly rule (Zech. 14: Matt. 24:27-31; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:14; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; Titus 2:13; Jude 14,15; Rev. 19-20). Jesus Christ will return for His bride, the Church, which is the bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-9; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-30). Judgment will be upon Satan (Rev 19 and 20) as Satan is the temporary ruler of this earth (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and is the god of this earth (2 Cor. 4:4) using the power of death to enslave men (Heb. 2:14-15). Satan's judgment will be the culmination of that which began at the first Coming of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:20; 1 John 3:8).

THOUGHT: The literal and physical Return of Jesus Christ will be with those who share His victory and triumph (Rev. 19: 8,14).

PRAYER: Lord, I thank You for the soon, literal Return of Jesus Christ being the hope and expectation of every believer.

MONDAY, MARCH 30
REVELATION 19:17-21
EZEKIEL 39:17-20

*“every feathered fowl...
Assemble yourselves.”*

THE PROMISED FEAST

“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Rev. 19:21; cf. 17, 18).

The Apostle John now saw Jesus Christ return to earth with His armies, ready for the last great battle (Rev. 19:11-15), already displaying his rightful title, “*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*” (Rev. 19:16). An angel will invite scavenger birds in readiness for a great feast of the gruesome supper at Armageddon, of followers of the Antichrist (Rev. 19:17, 18, 21). This is in stark contrast to the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” for all true believers in the Living and True God (Rev. 19:9) which will include the armies of the Lord’s redeemed in Rev. 19:14.

The Antichrist and all of his human allies whom he has deceived will gather at Armageddon (Rev. 19:19). The Antichrist and False Prophet will be captured and thrown into everlasting punishment in hell awaiting final judgment (Rev. 19:20). Then all the armies gathered will be slaughtered when the birds have their promised feast (Rev. 19:21).

The *KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS* will paralyse plague and destroy all who go against Israel. The supper of death will involve all who followed after the Antichrist (the Beast), who rules the whole world, including the 200 million army from Rev. 9:16. When Magog falls, the scavenging birds of prey and animals, will feast (Ezekiel 39:17-20; Rev. 19:17-21). The diabolical gathering of armies against Israel will result in their own destruction and the fowls of the air including the crows, hawks, eagles and vultures which are breeding prolifically in the Jezreel Valley will eat the dead bodies of all the kings and their armies.

THOUGHT: Birds of prey will devour kings, captains, mighty men, horses and riders, all men, both free and bond, both small and great who come against Israel.

PRAYER: Lord, I give thanks to You for the culmination of victory of Jesus Christ in this age.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

JOHN 11:17-46

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28

“... in Adam all die,
even so in Christ shall all be made
alive.”

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Whilst Jesus Christ was ministering in Jerusalem, His good friend Lazarus became very sick, so his sisters Mary and Martha sent news to Him, expecting His immediate visit. Jesus Christ, being omniscient, waited until four days after the death of Lazarus (John 11:6) before raising him, that God be glorified.

Mary, Martha and Lazarus were not married and the grief of his sisters for him was intensified by his untimely death. Although Lazarus will rise in the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-18), Martha limited the power of Jesus Christ (John 11:21-26) and was bewildered when “*Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again*” (John 11:23) as she was thinking only of the resurrection in the last day (John 11:24). When Jesus Christ said “*I am the resurrection and the life*” and raised Lazarus from the dead, He was not just talking about the resurrection in the end of time, but He is the resurrection and the life even that day.

In the terms of spiritual and eternal life, the “Resurrection of Jesus Christ” demonstrates the power of the Living and True God (Eph. 1:19-21), that He is God (Rom. 1:4), and the first fruit of many that will follow (1 Cor. 15:23). Salvation depends on faith in His resurrection (Rom. 10:9), proves His teachings are true, including His great promise (John 6:40), and secures the believers’ justification (Rom. 4:25). The true believer’s resurrection depends completely on Jesus’ bodily resurrection (1 Thess 4:14; cf. 2 Cor. 4:14), and the power for the Christian’s life is the power of His resurrection (Eph. 1:19-21; Rom. 6:4).

THOUGHT: With Jesus Christ there is endless hope. Without Jesus Christ there is a hopeless end.

PRAYER: May I fully comprehend the power of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave and the victory it gives in life and over death and hell.