

NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

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ACTS

1:1- see on Lk. 1:3.

Reading Luke and Acts through together, it becomes apparent that the author [Luke] saw the acts of the apostles as a continuation of those of the Lord Jesus. This is why he begins Acts by talking about his “former treatise” of all that Jesus had *begun* to do, implying that He had continued His doings through the doings of the apostles (cp. Heb. 2:3, Jesus “began” to speak the Gospel and we continue His work). See on Acts 2:6; 2:7; 8:40; Lk. 24:47.

1:2 Acts 1:2 RV says that on the day the Lord was taken up, “He had given commandments through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles”. The day the Lord was taken up, He gave one commandment to the apostles, related to their possession of the Holy Spirit: to go into all the world with the Gospel. But why does Luke speak in the plural, “commandments”? It could be that here we have one of many examples of Hebrew idiom being used by the Jewish writers of the New Testament, even though they wrote in Greek. There is in Hebrew an ‘intensive plural’, whereby something is put in the plural (e.g. “deaths” in Is. 53:9) to emphasize the greatness of the one thing (e.g., *the* death, of Messiah). Could it not be that here we have something similar? The one great commandment is to go into all the world with the Gospel. We are the light of this world. We, the candles, were lit so that we might give light to others. Our duty is not merely to inform others of our doctrinal position, but to gain, win or catch [as fishermen] our fellow men for Christ.

1:3 A case could be made that Luke’s account in his Gospel and in the Acts actually emphasizes how wealthy and middle class people came to the Lord- e.g. Joanna wife of Chuza, Cornelius the Centurion; Dionysius; Sergius Paulus, governor of Cyprus. Perhaps a reason for this was that he dedicated his works to the “noble” [Gk. ‘well born’, ‘wealthy’] Theophilus (Acts 1:3). Luke, it seems to me, was writing to Theophilus because he wanted to convert him. And so he gives other examples of wealthy people who had also converted. He was urging the middle class to allow the radical call of Christ to reach to them.

Acts 1:3 says that the Lord showed Himself to be alive to the disciples “by many infallible proofs”. The suggestion is that they simply didn’t accept Him as He stood there before Him; they failed to grasp that He was for real. They gave Him food to eat to check Him out; and He again ate before them in Galilee on His initiative.

1:6 Consider how that once the Gospel is preached world-wide, then the end will come (Mt. 24:14); and how the Lord replied to the question: ‘When are you coming back?’ by telling the questioners to go and preach the Gospel (Acts 1:6,8), as if the preaching of the word and the timing of the second coming are related. Likewise in the Olivet prophecy, the Lord gave them some signs of His return but told them that firstly, i.e. most importantly, the Gospel must be preached to all the world (Mk. 13:10)- implying that it is spreading the Gospel world-wide, not looking for the fulfillment of signs, that will bring about His return. Surely this would associate the exact timing of the Lord’s return- for which He and the Father are ever eager- with the time when we have satisfactorily spread the Gospel far enough. When the harvest is ripe, then it is harvested. The Lord has to delay His coming because of the slowness and immaturity of our development; in these ways we limit Him. And it isn’t enough to think that if we merely preach world-wide, therefore the Lord’s coming will automatically be hastened. It is the bringing forth of fruit to His Name that is important to Him.

1:7 When the watchman of Is. 21:11 calls out “What hour of the night [will it come]?” (RVmg.) the answer is “Turn ye” (RV). This is when it will come- when Israel turn again in repentance. This is alluded to in Acts 1:7,8; Mk. 13:28-33, where the answer to the question ‘When will Jesus return?’ is basically: ‘Preach to Israel; lead them to repentance. That’s when the Lord Jesus will return’.

The disciples’ request to know exactly when the Kingdom would be restored (‘When will Ez.21:25-27 be fulfilled?’) was met with a promise that while they would never know the exact date, that was immaterial as they would possess the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit soon (Acts 1:7,8)- implying

that what they would do with them would be a primary fulfilment of the Kingdom prophecies which they were enquiring about.

1:8- see on Mt. 24:14; Mk. 13:32,33.

The record of the Acts is a continuation of all that Jesus *began* to do and teach as recorded in the Gospels (Acts 1:1). The preachers were witnesses *of Jesus* (Acts 1:8). The logical objection to their preaching of a risen Jesus of Nazareth was: 'But He's dead! We saw His body! Where is He? Show Him to us!'. And their response, as ours, was to say: 'I am the witness, so is my brother here, and my sister there. We are the witnesses that He is alive. If you see us, you see Him risen and living through us'. In this spirit, we beseech men in Christ's stead. Just as the Lord strangely said that His own witness to Himself was a valid part of His overall witness, so our lives are our own witness to the credibility of what we are saying.

When we read of how we are to be "witnesses" to all the world, a look under the surface of the text shows that the Greek word 'martyr' is being used (Acts 1:8). We're all martyrs. Augustine said that "The cause, not the suffering, makes a genuine martyr." In his play *Murder in the Cathedral*, T. S. Eliot defines a martyr as one "who has become an instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom". We can all enter into the definition of witness / martyrdom in this sense, insofar as we are 'in' the suffering Christ, even if in practice we may never be called to take a single blow to our body as the result of our witnessing.

The possession of the Holy Spirit in the first century was possessing "the powers of the world to come" (Heb.6:5), showing that at that time there was a foretaste of the coming Kingdom. Thus in answer to the question about whether He would then fully restore the Kingdom of God, our Lord basically said: 'When, exactly, you can't know. But you will receive Holy Spirit power coming upon you (Acts 1:8 AVmg.) and will spread the Gospel world-wide from Jerusalem; which is tantamount to saying that in a limited sense the Kingdom is coming right now, although when it will finally be fully established is not for you to know'. Further support for this is found in our suggestion elsewhere that Kingdom prophecies like Is.2 were fulfilled to some degree in the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem in the first century.

1:9 "A cloud received him" (Acts 1:9) – surely it was a cloud of Angels not water droplets. But so it looked to them standing on earth, and the record is written from that perspective.

1:11 The *same* Jesus who went into Heaven will *so* come again *in like manner* (Acts 1:11). The record three times says the same thing. The "like manner" in which the Lord will return doesn't necessarily refer to the way He gradually ascended up in to the sky, in full view of the gazing disciples. He was to return in the "like manner" to what they had seen. Yet neither those disciples nor the majority of the Lord's people will literally see Him descending through the clouds at His return- for they will be dead. But we will 'see' Him at His return "in like manner" as He was when on earth. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. The Jesus who loved little children and wept over Jerusalem's self-righteous religious leaders, so desirous of their salvation, is the One who today mediates our prayers and tomorrow will confront us at judgment day.

1:14- see on Acts 2:42; Lk. 2:19.

There are a number of words and phrases which keep cropping up in Acts, especially in the early chapters, which are kind of hallmarks of that early ecclesia. "With one accord" is one such. We begin in Acts 1:14: "These all continued with *one accord* in prayer". Then 2:1: "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all *with one accord* in *one place*". Now over to v.46: "Continuing daily *with one accord*... breaking bread... with... *singleness of heart*". And on to 4:24: "They lifted up their voice to God *with one accord*". Now to 5:12: "They were all *with one accord* in Solomon's porch". There is another example in 15:25 too. So it's quite obvious, then, that the fact the early ecclesia was "with one accord" in those early, heady days is stamped as a hallmark over

this record. But this phrase "with one accord" is also used in Acts about the united hatred of the world against those early brethren and sisters. The Jews ran upon Stephen "with one accord" (7:52), those of Tyre and Sidon were "with one accord" (12:20), "The Jews made insurrection against Paul with one accord" in Corinth (18:12), and at Ephesus the mob "rushed with one accord" against Paul (19:29). The same Greek word is used in all these cases (and it scarcely occurs outside Acts). It's quite obvious that we are intended to visualise that early ecclesia as being "with one accord". But we are also supposed to imagine the world around them "with one accord" being against them. The difference between them and the world was vast. The world was actively united against them, and thereby they came to be strongly united with each other.

1:15- see on Acts 3:7.

1:18 The way Judas "burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts 1:18) may not be only a description of a bungled suicide. "Bowels" is elsewhere *always* used figuratively. One wonders whether it doesn't also describe how he fell down headlong, as Saul did when he knew his condemnation, and burst asunder within him, and poured out his heart in desperation, in the very pathetic little field he had bought for the price of the Son of God. In an utterly terrible figure, Ezekiel describes the condemnation of Israel as them being a woman trying to pluck off her own breasts (Ez. 23:34). This was and will be the extent of self-hatred and desperation. She will be alienated from her lovers of this world, and God's mind will be alienated from her (Ez. 23:17,18,22). The utter aloneness of the condemned is impossible to plumb.

1:20 What was true of Judas was thus also true of Israel in general; in the same way as the pronouns used about Judas merge from singular into plural in Ps. 55:13-15 ("a man mine equal... let death seize upon them"), as also in Ps. 109:3 cp. v.8. Similarly the condemnation of Jewry for crucifying Christ in Ps. 69:25 ("let their habitation be desolate") is quoted in the singular about Judas in Acts 1:20.

Psalm 109 is a prophecy of Christ's betrayal and death (:8 = Acts 1:20). The satans ("adversaries") of the Lord Jesus which the Psalm speaks of (:4,20,29) were the Jews, and the specific 'Satan' of v. 6 was Judas. Psalm 55:13-15 foretells Judas' betrayal of Jesus. It speaks of Judas in the singular, but also talk of his work as being done by a group of people – the Jews, in practice: "It was you, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together... let death seize them (plural), and let *them* go down quickly into hell" (cp. Judas' end). Likewise the other prophecy of Judas' betrayal also connects him with the Jewish system: "My own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread (cp. Jesus passing the sop to Judas), has lifted up his heel against me. But You, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them" (Ps. 41:9,10). Thus Judas is being associated with the Jews who wanted to kill Jesus, and therefore he, too, is called a Devil. Both Judas and the Jews were classic 'devils' due to their surrender to the flesh. This is further confirmed by a look at Psalm 69. Verse 22 is quoted in Romans 11:9,10 concerning the Jews: "Let their table become a snare before them... let their eyes be darkened". The passage continues in Psalm 69:25: "Let *their* habitation be desolate; let none dwell in *their* tents". This is quoted in Acts 1:16,20 as referring specifically to Judas, but the pronouns are changed accordingly: "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas... Let *his* [singular] habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and *his* bishoprick let another take".

Ps. 109:8 is quoted in Acts 1:20 concerning Judas, suggesting that the preceding v.6 reveals Christ's thoughts about him: "Set Thou a wicked man over him: and let satan stand at his right hand", implying that Jesus prayed for the Jewish satan to help or co-operate with Judas (which is how the idiom of standing at the right hand is used in Ps. 109:31). This is tantamount to not praying that Judas would overcome the advances of the Jews which the Lord would have been aware they were making. But he could encourage Peter that he had prayed for him to resist these advances (Lk. 22:32). The whole of Ps. 109 is a prayer requesting the punishment of Judas, asking God to confirm

him in his supreme apostasy: "Let his prayer become sin" (Ps. 109:7). The last section of the Psalm (109:22-29) describes Christ's sufferings on the cross in language that has many connections with Ps. 22 and 69; and as with them there is a sudden breakthrough at the end into looking forward to praising God "among the multitude" (Ps. 109:30), as there is in Ps. 22:22. This may mean that it was on the cross that the enormity of Judas' sin was fully realized by Christ, although he had previously recognized it to some degree before the cross (Jn. 19:11; Mt. 26:24).

2:3- see on Acts 2:45.

2:5 It seems that the early brethren chose to understand the Lord's universal commission as meaning going out to preach to Jews of all nations, and they saw the response of Acts 2 as proof of this. And yet "all nations" is used about the Gentiles in all its other occurrences in Matthew (4:15; 6:32; 10:5,18; 12:18,21; 20:19,25). Such intellectual failure had a moral basis- they subconsciously couldn't hack the idea of converting Gentiles into the Hope of Israel. They allowed themselves to assume they understood what the Lord meant, to assume they had their interpretation confirmed by the events of Acts 2... instead of baring themselves to the immense and personal import of the Lord's commission to take Him to literally all.

2:6 The Acts record repeatedly describes the converts as "the multitude of the disciples" (2:6; 4:32; 5:14,16; 6:2,5; 12:1,4; 15:12,30; 17:4; 19:9; 21:22), using the same word to describe the "multitude of the disciples" who followed the Lord during His ministry (Lk. 5:6; 19:37). There is no doubt that Luke intends us to see all converts as essentially continuing the witness of those men who walked around Palestine with the Lord between AD30 and AD33, stumbling and struggling through all their misunderstandings and pettiness, the ease with which they were distracted from the essential... to be workers together with Him. See on Acts 1:1.

2:7 Luke describes the "amazement" at the preaching and person of Jesus (Lk. 2:47,48; 4:36; 5:26; 8:56; 24:22), and then uses the same word to describe the "amazement" at the apostles (Acts 2:7,12; 8:13; 9:21; 10:45; 12:16). See on Acts 1:1.

2:12 Men who began doubting and cynical were pricked in their heart, they realised their need, and were baptized within hours (Acts 2:12,37). The men who marvelled and doubted whether Peter was anything more than a magic man were within a few hours believing and being baptized (Acts 3:12; 4:4). There is a speed and power and compulsion that pounds away in the narrative.

2:14- see on Acts 10:35,36.

It would have become public news in Jerusalem that the man who nearly killed Malchus had slipped in to the High Priest's yard, and just got out in time before they lynched him. And the fool he had made of himself would for sure have been exaggerated and gossiped all round. Jerusalem would have had the small town gossip syndrome, especially at Passover time. Every one of his oaths with which he had disowned his Lord would have been jokingly spread round in the three days while Jesus lay dead. But then Peter's preaching of the Gospel after the resurrection reached a pinnacle which probably no other disciple has reached, not even Paul. No one individual made such huge numbers of converts, purely on the basis of his words of preaching. Nobody else was *so* persuasive, could cut hardened men to the heart as he did, and motivate them to be baptized immediately. He brought men far more highly educated and cultured than himself to openly say from the heart: "What shall we do?", in the sense: 'Having done what we've done, whatever will become of us?'. And of course Peter had been in just that desperate position a month ago. He was just the man to persuade them. And yet on the other hand, there was no man more unlikely. The rules of social and spiritual appropriacy demanded that someone who had so publically denied his Lord keep on the back burner for quite some time. And Peter of all men would have wished it this way.

Peter's speech of Acts 2 was made in response to a mocker's comment that the speaking in tongues was a result of alcohol abuse (Acts 2:13,14). We would likely have told those men not to be so

blasphemous, or just walked away from them. But Peter responds to them with a speech so powerful that men turned round and repented and were baptized on the spot.

2:15 drunk- see on 2 Pet. 2:13.

2:16-21 Many attempts to understand prophecy, not least the book of Revelation, have fallen into problems because of an insistent desire to see everything fulfilling in a chronological progression, whereas God's prophecies (Isaiah is the classic example) 'jump around' all over the place as far as chronological fulfillment is concerned. And this principle is not only seen in Bible prophecy. The historical records in the Old Testament tend to be thematically presented rather than chronologically (Joshua is a good example of this); and the Gospel records likewise. It especially needs to be recognized that in line with so much OT prophecy, neither the Olivet prophecy nor its extension in the Apocalypse can be read as strictly chronological. Thus Lk. 21:8-11 gives a catalogue of signs, and then v. 12 jumps back to the situation before them: "but before all these things..." (21:27,28; Mk. 13:10 are other examples). These principles are all brought together in the way Peter interprets Joel 2. The comments in brackets reflect the interpretation which Peter offers later in his address.

He gives each part of it a fulfillment not in chronological sequence with what has gone before: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [i.e. you are seeing a fulfillment of this prophecy before your eyes]: I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy [fulfilled by the apostles after Christ's ascension]... and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath [the miracles of the Lord Jesus during His ministry]... the sun shall be turned into darkness [the crucifixion], and the moon into blood [also referring to an unrecorded event at the crucifixion?], before that great and notable day of the Lord come [the second coming; or the resurrection?]; and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved [fulfilled by the crowd accepting baptism on the day of Pentecost]" (Acts 2:16-21).

2:21- see on Mt. 14:30; Mt. 19:27.

Joel 2:32 seems to prophesy of multitudes calling upon the name of the Lord in the 'last days'. The preliminary fulfillment of this in Acts 2:21 must surely be repeated in the ultimate 'last days'. And it may be that it is multitudes of Diaspora Jews who respond, as it was in Acts 2...

The description of "the remnant" being saved out of Jerusalem and mount Zion, the temple mount, may mean that they go into the temple area in the last days to seek safety as the Jews did in AD70, and this is where they are at the moment of the Lord's intervention. Joel 2:32 must have had its primary fulfillment in the redemption of this remnant, and it therefore has an application to the salvation of the latter-day Jewish remnant out of Arab-occupied Jerusalem: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord (i.e. truly pray for deliverance in faith, perhaps through calling upon themselves the Lord's name through baptism into Christ) shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem (cp. 2 Kings 19:30,31 for the mention of those two terms) shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said (through Isaiah and his prophets), and in the remnant...". This passage is quoted in a different context in Acts 2:21 and Rom. 10:13, but this does not preclude its application to the faithful remnant in Jerusalem in the last days. This New Testament usage is regarding how a convert should eagerly call upon himself the Lord's salvation/deliverance from sin in Christ. This should therefore be done with the same sense of urgency and desperate intensity as the persecuted remnant of the last days will do, like their counterparts within Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time.

2:22 Peter appealed to Israel: "Hear these words...", and then went on to quote a prophecy of how the Lord Jesus would be raised up [i.e. after His resurrection], "and *him* shall ye hear" Acts 2:22; 3:22,24). The record adds that the crowd received *Peter's* word and were baptized (Acts 2:41), whereas elsewhere in Acts men and women receive the word of the *Lord Jesus*. It is simply so, that when we witness, the words we speak are in effect the words of Jesus. Our words are His. This is

how close we are to Him. And this is why our deportment and manner of life, which is the essential witness, must be in Him. For He is articulated to the world through us.

2:25 With David we should be able to say that we see the Lord [and he meant, according to the New Testament, the Lord Jesus] ever before our face, so that we will not be moved by anything (Acts 2:25).

2:26 David said that just because "our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding", therefore he wanted to be as generous as possible in providing for the work of God's house (1 Chron. 29:14-16). So sure is the hope of resurrection that the Lord interpreted God being the God of Abraham as meaning that to Him, Abraham was living. Death is no barrier to God's continuing identity with His people. His faith in the resurrection is so sure that He speaks of death as if it is not. And in our weakness, we seek to look beyond the apparent finality of death likewise. Because David firmly believed in a resurrection, "my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; moreover also my flesh shall tabernacle in hope" (Acts 2:26 RV). His whole life 'tabernacled in hope' because of what he understood about resurrection. This was and is the power of basics. Yet we can become almost over-familiar with these wonderful ideas such as resurrection.

2:27- see on Dan. 4:13.

Those who heard the message wanted baptism immediately; they had been convicted by the preacher of a Christ-centred message, not just intellectually teased (Acts 8:36; 9:18). Lydia, the Philippian jailer, Paul, the Ethiopian eunuch, the crowds at Pentecost... were all baptized immediately. The Lord added *daily* to the church (2:27; 16:5)- they didn't tell candidates for baptism to wait even until the next Sunday, let alone for a few months 'to think it over'. They understood the first principle: baptism is essential for salvation. Believe or perish. They saw the absoluteness of the issues involved in the choice to accept or reject the Son of God. "Beware, therefore..." was their warning to their hearers (Acts 13:40). They made no apologies, they didn't wrap up the message. They taught the need for repentance more than seeking to prove that they were right and others wrong (although there is a place for this in our witness in the right contexts). They made it clear that they were out to convert others, not engage in philosophical debate or the preaching of doubtful interpretations.

2:28- see on Jn. 15:7.

"The Kingdom of God" was a title used of Jesus. He 'was' the Kingdom because He lived the Kingdom life. Who He would be, was who He was in His life. At the prospect of being made "full of joy" at the resurrection, "therefore did my heart rejoice" (Acts 2:26,28). His joy during His mortal life was related to the joy He now experiences in His immortal life. And this is just one of the many continuities between the mortal and the immortal Jesus.

2:29- see on Jn. 16:25.

David is one of the major OT types of the Lord Jesus. The words of David in Ps. 16 are quoted in Acts 2:25,29 concerning Jesus: "I have set the Lord always before me... he is at my right hand... thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption". These are words describing David's feelings about his own death and resurrection; and yet so identified was he with the Messiah, that they are quoted as being directly true of Jesus. But Acts 2:29 also quotes these words with a slightly different spin- in that David saw the Lord *Jesus* always before him, and it was this sense that stabilized him. This could only have been true in that David understood all his feelings and present and future experiences [e.g. resurrection, not being suffered to corrupt eternally] as being typical of the Lord Jesus. He so understood himself as a type of the One to come that he saw this person as ever with him. This is the extent of the typology. 1 Chron. 17:17 in Young's Literal has David saying: "Thou hast seen me as a type of the man on high" [i.e. Messiah]. David describes himself at ease with clearly Messianic titles such as 'the Christ', 'the man raised on high', and then goes on to speak of the Messiah who *is to come* on the "morning

without clouds”, admitting that “verily *my* house is not so with God” (2 Sam. 23:1-5). This is only really understandable if we accept that David consciously saw himself as a type of the future Messiah. The main reason why there is so much deep personal detail about David is because we are intended to come to know him as a person, to enter into his mind- so that we can have a clearer picture of the mind and personality of the Lord Jesus. This is why the thoughts of David, e.g. in Ps.16:8-11, are quoted as being the very thoughts of Christ (Acts 2:27). So Christ-centred was David's mind that he “*foresaw* (not “saw” - disproof of the pre-existence) the Lord (Jesus) always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved” (Acts 2:25). David was obsessed, mentally dominated, by his imagination of Christ, so much so that his imagination of his future descendant gave him practical strength in the trials of daily life. Small wonder we are bidden know and enter into David's mind. Likewise the book of Genesis covers about 2000 years of history, but almost a quarter of the narrative concerns Joseph; surely because we are intended to enter into Joseph, and thereby into the mind of Christ.

2:30 Acts 2:30-33 says that our Lord's exaltation in Heaven fulfils, albeit primarily, the promise to David of Christ reigning on his throne. This is confirmed by 2 Sam.7:12 saying that God would “set up” David's seed to have an eternal Kingdom; and “set up” in the Septuagint is the same word as “resurrect”, as if in some way the promise would be realized after Christ's resurrection.

2:33 John repeatedly records Christ's description of the cross as Him being “lifted up” (Jn. 3:14; 8:18; 12:32,34). But Peter uses the very same word to describe Christ's exaltation in resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:33; 5:31). Looking back, Peter saw the cross as a lifting up in glory, as the basis for the Lord's exaltation afterwards. At the time, it seemed the most humiliating thing to behold. It was anything but exaltation, and Peter would have given his life in the garden to get the Lord out of it. But now he saw its glory.

2:33-36 An appreciation of the Lord's exaltation will in itself provoke in us repentance and service (Acts 2:33-36). A vision of the exalted Lord Jesus was what gave Stephen such special inspiration in his final minutes (Acts 7:56).

2:34 There are some passages which imply the Lord Jesus was somehow conscious during His three days in the grave. Evidently this was not the case. And yet the resurrection loosed the birth-pangs of death, Peter said (Acts 2:34). Those three days are likened to labour, in the Lord's case bringing forth life through death. Yet He was dead and unconscious. But to the Father, He saw things simply differently. Sometimes God speaks from His timeless perspective, at other times His words are accommodated to us. Likewise from the Father's perspective, the spirit of Christ went and preached to the people of Noah's day at the time of His death. Yet this didn't happen in real time in such a way.

2:36 Peter's growth of understanding of Jesus as ‘Christ’ also grew. He declared Him as this during His ministry (Jn. 6:69), and also as ‘Lord’, but he preached Him as having been *made* Lord and Christ after the resurrection (Acts 2:36). He saw the Lord's status as having changed so much, even though he used the same words to describe it, and therefore he responded the more fully to Him. He so often refers to the Name of Christ, which had now been given Him (Acts 4:12 RV)- as if this new Name and the redemption in it was the motive power for his witness. Jesus had been born a Saviour, Christ the Lord (Lk. 2:11). But Peter uses each of these titles as if they had been given to the Lord anew, after His resurrection. And indeed they had been. They were no longer just appropriate lexical items for Peter to use; they were the epitome of all that the Lord was and had been and ever would be, all that He stood for and had enabled. And he preached them to men as the basis upon which salvation and forgiveness was now possible.

2:36-38- see on Acts 5:31.

2:37- see on Acts 2:12.

The NT emphasizes the power of the cross, and the horrendous fact that we are really asked to share in His sufferings (e.g. Acts 9:16; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 1:29; 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:3; 1 Pet. 4:1,13; Rev. 2:10). The Acts record seems to bring out how the Lord's people shared in the Lord's mortal experiences (e.g. Acts 4:7 = Mt. 21:23,24). The early converts were "pricked" (Acts 2:37), using the same word as in Jn. 19:34 for the piercing of the Lord's side. Paul speaks of how in his refusing of payment from Corinth, "I made myself servant unto all", just as the Lord was on the cross. In accommodating himself to his audience, "to the weak became I as weak", just as the Lord was crucified through weakness. In our preaching and in our ecclesial lives, we articulate elements of the Lord's cross in our attitude to others.

2:38 Rom.5:16 and 6:23 describe salvation as "*the* gift" - inviting comparison with "*the* gift" of the Spirit in Acts 2:38. Indeed Acts 2:39 seems to be quoting Joel 2:32 concerning salvation as if this is what the gift of the Spirit was. Peter's reference to the promised gift being to those "afar off" alludes to Is.57:19: "Peace (with God through forgiveness) to him that is far off". Eph.2:8 also describes the gift as being salvation, saying that "by one Spirit (this gift) we all have access to the Father" (2:18). This is further validated by the fact that Eph.2:13-17 is also alluding to Is.57:19: "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace... (who) came and preached peace to you which were far off". Ps.51:12,13 draws a parallel between possessing God's holy Spirit, and benefiting from His salvation.

2:39- see on Mt. 14:30.

Peter's maiden speech on the day of Pentecost was a conscious undoing of his denials, and consciously motivated by the experience of forgiveness which he knew he had received. Having been converted, he was now strengthening his Jewish brethren. He went and stood literally a stone's throw from the High Priest's house, and stood up and declared to the world his belief that Jesus was and is Christ. Peter also preached in Solomon's Porch, the very place where the Lord had declared Himself to Israel as their Saviour (Jn. 10:33; Acts 5:12). Peter at the time of his denials had been "afar off" from the Lord Jesus (Mt. 26:58; Mk. 14:54; Lk. 22:54- all the synoptics emphasize this point). Peter's denials would've been the talk of the town in Jerusalem. So when in Acts 2:39 he says that there is a promised blessing for "all" that are far off... I think he's alluding back to himself, setting himself up as a pattern for all other sinners to find salvation. That's perhaps why he talks of "all" [those others] who are [also] "far off" [as he had been]. He could've just spoken of "they" or "those" who are far off. But the use of "all" may suggest he is hinting that the audience follow his pattern. This, in Peter's context, makes the more sense if we see *one* of the aspects of the promised Spirit blessing as that of forgiveness and salvation- as in Acts 3:25,26, the blessing was to be turned away from sins. See on Acts 3:26; 1 Pet. 2:25; Lk. 5:8.

2:40- see on Lk. 3:5.

God sees the world as actively evil: "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4), under His condemnation (1 Cor. 11:32); he that is not with the Lord Jesus is seen as actively against Him, not just passively indifferent (Lk. 11:23). It is absolutely fundamental that our separation from this world is related to our salvation. The act of baptism is a saving of ourselves not only from our sins, but all from "this untoward generation" in which we once lived (Acts 2:40).

The essential demarcation 2000 years ago was between the believer and the world, not believer and believer. Peter even appealed to people to save themselves from the surrounding generation by being baptized (Acts 2:40).

2:41 Converts are described as being added to the church, and yet also added to Christ; the play on ideas seems deliberate (Acts 2:41,47 cp. 5:13,14; 11:24).

Luke gives progress reports on the early Christian mission in quantitative terms, as if analyzing the success of the work and possibly suggesting how it could be done even better (Acts 2:41,47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31; 13:43; 14:1; 17:4,12; 18:10; 19:26; 21:20).

2:42 They “continued” in the doctrine, [example of] prayer and fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42,46; 8:13). The same word is used of how *we* must “continue” in prayer (Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2), i.e. follow the example of the early ecclesia in prayerfulness. The disciples had “continued” in prayer after the Lord’s ascension (Acts 1:14), and now their converts continued in prayer too. Note in passing that we continue in the pattern of those who convert us. Thus to start with, Simon “continued with Philip” (Acts 8:13). This means that who *we* are affects the spiritual quality of others.

Luke's writings (in his Gospel and in the Acts) give especial attention to meals and table talk. Societies tended to distinguish themselves by their meal practices. Who was allowed at the table, who was excluded- these things were fundamental to the self-understanding of persons within society. So when the Lord Jesus ate with the lowest sinners, and Peter as a Jew ate with Gentiles... this was radical, counter-cultural behaviour. No wonder the breaking of bread together was such a witness, and the surrounding world watched it with incredulity (Acts 2:42,46; 4:32-35). Note too how Luke mentions that Paul ate food in the homes of Gentiles like Lydia and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:15,34).

The unity between believers at the breaking of bread is brought out in Acts 2:42, where we read of the new converts continuing in
the teaching of the apostles,
the fellowship
the breaking of bread
the prayers.

It could be that this is a description of the early order of service at the memorial meetings. They began with an exhortation by the apostles, then there was “the fellowship”, called the *agape* in Jude 12, a meal together, and then the breaking of bread itself [following Jewish Passover tradition], concluded by “the prayers”, which may have included the singing of Psalms. The performance of this feast was a sign of conversion and membership in the body of Christ. This is how important it is.

2:44 Some of the Roman leaders initially pushed the idea of Plato, that all land should be state owned and be given up by individuals to the state. Yet Acts 2:44; 4:32 use language which is directly taken from Plato’s *Republic*: “All things common... no one called anything his own”. The early church was seeking to set up an idealized alternative to the Roman empire!

2:45 The Holy Spirit appeared to the apostles as “cloven / parted tongues” (Acts 2:3), giving to each man what each needed (Eph. 4:8-13). In response to this, we read that the apostles sold their possessions and “parted them [s.w. “cloven”] to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:45). Likewise Paul speaks of how God gave the Spirit gifts to every member of Christ’s body, so that there was no part which “lacked” (1 Cor. 12:24). And he uses the same idea when telling the Corinthians to give their excess funds to provide grace / gifts for their brethren who “lacked” (2 Cor. 8:15). The simple picture, which even in different circumstances abides for us today, is that God’s thoughtful and specific generosity to us, His giving us of unique gifts as we ‘have need’, should lead us to materially assisting those likewise who ‘have need’.

Material giving to the Lord’s cause was associated with the breaking of bread in the early church (Acts 2:42-46; 1 Cor. 16:1,2), after the pattern of how every male was not to appear empty before Yahweh (Heb. ‘to appear for no cause’) at the Jewish feasts (Dt. 16:16). We cannot celebrate His grace / giving to us without response. Because Israel had been redeemed from Egypt, they were to be generous to their brethren, and generally open handed (Lev. 25:37,38). This is why the Acts record juxtaposes God’s grace / giving, and the giving of the early believers in response (Acts 4:33 cp. 32,34-37). The bread and wine of the drink offerings were to accompany sacrifice; they were not the sacrifice itself. And likewise the spirit of sacrifice must be seen in us as those emblems are

taken. The Laodiceans' materialism resulted in them not realizing their desperate spiritual need for the cross (Rev. 3:17,18); Lemuel knew that riches would make him ask "Who is Yahweh?"; he wouldn't even want to know the Name / character of the Lord God (Prov. 30:9). The Jews' experience of redemption from Haman *quite naturally* resulted in them giving gifts both to each other and to the poor around them (Es. 9:22). "You shall lend unto many nations" has often been misread as a prediction of Jewish involvement in financial institutions and banking (Dt. 28:12). But the context is simply that "The Lord shall open unto you *His* good treasure, the heaven to give the rain of your land... and *you* shall lend unto many nations". If God opens His treasure to us, we should open our treasures to others, even lending with a spirit of generosity, motivated by our experience of His generosity to *us*. Because Yahweh had redeemed Israel, they were not to be petty materialists, cheating others out of a few grams or centimetres in trading. The wealth and largeness of God's work for them should lead them to shun such petty desire for self-betterment.

2:46

The Size Of The Early Church

The Acts and epistles (and Revelation?) focus on the period AD33-AD70; it is easy to imagine that the early church was markedly different from our present set up in terms of size, organization and details like the instruction of candidates for baptism. However, closer examination reveals that this was not so. Prior to this study I had the impression that the Christian community in those days was vast compared to our own, with the Roman empire littered with large ecclesias so that Christians were a household name due to their numbers alone, as Anglicans, for example, are today. Once the small size (relatively) of the early community is appreciated, it becomes easier to relate to their situation and to see that there is indeed a close bond between those days and our own due to these similarities. Not only so, but if a community of 20,000 people (at a reasoned guess) could "turn the world upside down" by their preaching, what of us with our infinite advantages?

There is a strong emphasis on the existence of house churches throughout the New Testament: Acts 2:46; 5:42; 16:34,40; 18:8; 20:20; 21:8; Rom.16:6; 1 Cor.1:11; 16:19; Col.4:15; 2 Tim.3:6; Philemon 2; Titus 1:11; 2 Jn.10. This list is impressive. It would seem likely that most New Testament ecclesias could fit into a domestic 'house' with the exception of Jerusalem. The remarkable lack of archaeological discoveries of big Christian meeting places pre AD70- and that not for want of trying- would confirm this. Thus the whole Corinth ecclesia could fit inside one house (Paul wrote Rom.16:23 from Corinth). It is worth noting the evidence for household baptisms being quite frequent: 2 Tim.4:19; 1 Cor.1:16; Rom.16:10,11; Acts 16:15 (these probably refer more to the domestic servants and employees rather than the children). It is conceivable that the salvation of Noah and his adult household by baptism (1 Pet.3:20 cp. Heb.11:7) was the prototype for these household baptisms. There is good reason to think that most baptisms in this period were mainly done by the apostles- if the ecclesias continued growing at the rate they did when Paul was among them then there would be hints of a far bigger community. For example, Acts 16:5 speaks of the congregations growing in number daily- implying baptisms were being done daily, immediately a candidate was ready (not left to the weekend for convenience!). Thus these household groups would develop into the house churches which seem to have been the typical first century ecclesia. It is worth sidestepping to Mt.10:35,36: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" in the holocaust of AD70 and that to come; i.e. brother betrayed brother (spiritually and naturally) within the household ecclesias.

There seems no reason to suspect that there were many other ecclesias apart from those mentioned in the New Testament, apart from Crete having ecclesias in "every city" (i.e. not many), and a number of ecclesias in Galilee and Judea, presumably pockets of the disciples' relatives and some who remembered the Lord's miracles. We know that generally the Jews rejected the Gospel; if a few thousand were converted around the time of the first Pentecost (out of a Jewish population of about

2.5 million in the land, deducible from Josephus), it is unlikely that there was a continuation of that pattern of mass conversion. It may be that Paul's equation of the Jewish believers of the first century with the seven thousand who refused to worship Baal has a literal application (Rom.11:4) in that there were about 7,000 Jewish believers. By the time of Acts 4:4 "the number of the men (that believed) had come to be (Greek- not as AV) about five thousand". The only verse that seems to contradict this impression is Acts 21:20: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe". However, the Greek word translated "many" is nowhere else translated like this. The sense really is 'You know what thousands believe'- i.e. 'you know the number of Jewish believers, it's in the thousands'. The same word is translated "what" in 2 Cor.7:11 in the sense of 'how much'. It is significant that Acts 9:31 describes the churches Paul persecuted as being in the provinces of Judaea, Galilee and Samaria; every house church between Jerusalem and Tarsus had personally been entered by Paul (Acts 8:3). This in itself suggests reasonably small numbers, and in passing reminds us of how familiar Paul would have become with the areas in which our Lord lived, probably entering the very houses of believers in towns like Bethany and Capernaum. Doubtless his conscience for Christ grew at great speed in that period. The other provinces such as Idumea, Decapolis, Iturea, Trachonitis etc. do not appear to have had any ecclesias in. In a short space of time after his conversion, Paul was able to introduce himself to all the ecclesias in Judea in person (Gal.1:22 cp. v.24). The 5,000 Jewish converts made at Jerusalem would have largely returned to their original homes in the Roman world (Acts 2:9,10) or been driven to similar places by the persecution. This significant Jewish presence in probably all the ecclesias of the Roman world would account for the epistles nearly all warning against the Judaizers, and their frequent references back to Old Testament incidents and passages which would have been largely unknown to the new, ex-pagan Gentile converts.

Outside Israel numbers also seem to have been small- there were only seven ecclesias ("*the* seven churches") in the province of Asia (Rev.1:11), the elders of whom all turned away from Paul (2 Tim.1:15; there is evidence that Timothy and some other faithful brethren were still in the area). Indeed by the time Peter wrote to this area just prior to AD70 he seems to address himself only to scattered individuals holding the Truth throughout the whole of Asia Minor (1 Pet.1:1). John's letters give a similar impression. Philippi seems to have been a house church based on Lydia's household at the time Paul wrote to them. He says he had enjoyed fellowship with the whole ecclesia "From the first day until now" (Phil.1:5)- i.e. from the time of the first visit there which resulted in Lydia's baptism. Thus the whole ecclesia knew Paul personally- "Those things, which ye have... seen in me, do" (Phil.3:17; 4:9). This indicates that there had been no new baptisms since his visit. Again, note the similarity with present missionary policy of dissuading new converts from doing their own baptisms until there is another visit by mature brethren. Paul's evident affection for this ecclesia is understandable if they were a small, united family unit whom he had initially taught and baptized.

Similarly Paul could constantly remind the Thessalonians of his personal example which they had witnessed, again implying that there had been no new baptisms since his visits. The emphasis cannot be missed: "Ye know what manner of men we were...our Gospel came unto you... in power, and in the Holy Spirit (i.e. they all heard it at the same time)... ye became followers of us... what manner of entering in we had unto you... ye turned to God from idols (Paul's entering in by the Gospel had been to the whole ecclesia at the same time)... yourselves... know our entrance in unto you... after we... were shamefully entreated as ye (all) know at Philippi, we were bold to speak unto you the Gospel (i.e. the whole ecclesia heard it all at that one time)... ye remember, brethren, our labour... ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every (each) one of you (personally)... as a father doth his children"- i.e. Paul had personally fathered each of them by preaching to them. Seeing he was only in Thessalonica "three Sabbath days" the numbers involved could not have been great (1 Thess.1:5,6,9; 2:1,2,9,10,11- there are many others). Paul's great knowledge of the ecclesia and theirs of him also suggests small numbers (2 Thess.1:4; 3:7). Every

ecclesia knowing about the Thessalonians (1 Thess.1:8) even quite soon after their conversion (when the letter was probably written) suggests a small number of ecclesias world-wide, notwithstanding a highly efficient grape vine based on the 'messengers of the ecclesias' (cp. Rom.1:8; Col.4:7,8; 2 Pet.3:15) resulting in epistles and news spreading fast. Similarly the faith of the Rome ecclesia was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom.1:8).

1 Cor.4:17 implies Paul had visited most of the ecclesias: "...as I teach every where, in every church". Thus would account for Paul being able to say what the customs of all churches were concerning head coverings (1 Cor.11:16), and his personal knowledge of so many of the individuals and ecclesias to which he wrote. He could tell the Romans that "the churches of Christ salute you" (Rom.16:16)- i.e. he had personally seen that their faith was spoken of in all the ecclesial world (Rom.1:8). His personal knowledge of the Rome (house?) ecclesia is beautifully shown by him asking them to give each other a holy kiss from him (Rom.16:16), surely implying close personal knowledge of all of them. Paul's great personal involvement with all the ecclesias and often all their members individually resulted in the pressure of caring for *all* the churches that was upon him (2 Cor.11:28). His courage under imprisonment led to "the majority of the brotherhood" (Phil.1:14 Moffat) being encouraged to preach more boldly, suggesting most of them knew him well. His pain because of the Corinth ecclesia's mistakes becomes more real when we appreciate that they all knew him personally, having all had the ordinances delivered to them by Paul at the same time (1 Cor.11:2), all having been begotten by Paul's preaching (1 Cor.4:15,16).

Thus we have good reason to think that the average ecclesia of the first century was probably the same size as the average ecclesia today, although often based around a family unit and with a group of Jewish believers either fleeing persecution or who had broken away from the local synagogue, perhaps under the influence of one of those who was converted at Pentecost. Thus they would have been close-knit units, making it easier for us to appreciate how in such an household ecclesia the brother who was the head of the house could easily abuse the brethren who worked for him as labourers (James 5:4), and sheds more light on the commands concerning how believing employers should treat their brother-employees. A spirit of loving co-operation in the daily round would have been vital if ecclesial life was to prosper.

The large numbers converted around Pentecost can lead us to think that first century preaching was totally unrelated to our experience; however, it seems that this was a special, one-off occurrence. The statement that "many" believed as a result of the various preaching campaigns can also mislead us; the Greek for "many" used on those occasions probably means a figure under 50 in Acts 8:25; 16:23; 24:10; Lk.1:1; 12:19; Mk.5:9,26. Remember how the first 'overseas' preaching mission in Cyprus failed to produce a single convert until their tour reached the end of the island.

2:46 The record of the body of Christ in the New Testament begins with descriptions of the Lord preaching in houses. The word 'house' occurs a huge number of times in the Gospels, especially in Luke's record. He seems to have been very sensitive to the way the Lord entered into homes and did things there. We can be sure that these homes became house churches after His resurrection. The establishment of the church began with the believers gathering in the temple, but breaking bread "from house to house" (Acts 2:46). Fellowship in Christ is about this family sense of community. In practice, the early body of Christ was a fellowship of house churches. They preached and worshipped both in the temple and "in every house", i.e. every house church (Acts 5:42).

Acts 2:46 (NKJV) records how the early brethren broke bread with "simplicity of heart"; and we likewise, in our memorial meetings and in our lives, must unswervingly focus upon Him and the colossal impact of His cross.

Almost every major New Testament description of the Lord's coming and what He will bring with Him is also given an application to our experience in this life: the Kingdom of God, eternal life, salvation, justification, sanctification, perfection, glorification... and of course, judgment. All these

things shall come; but the essence of them is being worked out in the life of the believer now. All this is brought to our attention whenever we attend the breaking of bread. That “table” at which we sit is a picture of the future banquet and table in the coming Kingdom. The “gladness” which accompanied the breaking of bread (Acts 2:46) is the same word used about the “rejoicing” at the future marriage supper of the lamb (Rev. 19:7) and the Lord’s return (1 Pet. 4:13; Jude 24).

Throughout Scripture, the opposition between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God is highlighted. After the establishment of the first ecclesia in Jerusalem, the Acts record seems to emphasize the pointed conflict between the ecclesia and the world. Being “of one accord” was a hallmark of the early brethren (Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25); but the world were in “one accord” in their opposition to that united ecclesia (Acts 7:57; 12:20; 18:12; 19:29).

2:47- see on Mt. 19:27-29.

In Acts 3:4, Peter commanded the lame man: “Look on us”. The lame man responded, and the people were amazed at the subsequent miracle. But Peter then tells them: “Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or *why fasten ye your eyes on us* [i.e., why do you ‘look on us’], as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus” (Acts 3:12,13). I wonder if Peter was here publically acknowledging an inappropriate turn of phrase, when he had asked the lame man to ‘Look on *us*’ - and immediately, he humbly and publically corrected himself, redirecting all glory and all eyes to the Father and Son.

3:6- see on Mt. 19:27.

Peter told the lame man: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk”; but the healing was because of *Peter’s* faith in Christ’s Name (Acts 3:6,16). The Jerusalem Bible makes this apparent: “It is the name of Jesus which, through our faith in it, has brought back the strength of this man”. The RV has: “By faith in his name hath his name made this man strong” - as if the power of the name of Jesus is waiting to be activated by human faith.

3:7 Luke has a favourite Greek word, often translated “forthwith... immediately” (Acts 3:7; 5:10; 9:18; 12:23; 13:11; 16:26,33). This is quite some emphasis; and Luke uses the very same word a lot in his Gospel, as if to show that the speed and power and achievement of the Lord’s ministry is continued in that of His ministers now (Lk. 1:64; 4:39; 5:25; 8:44,47,55; 13:13; 18:43; 19:11; 22:60). The word is scarcely used outside Luke’s writing. And he uses many other words to stress the speed and urgency and fast moving nature of the Lord’s work. They are worth highlighting in your Bible; for our ministry is a continuation of that of our early brethren (Acts 9:18-20,34; 10:33; 11:11; 12:10; 16:10; 17:10,14; 21:30,32; 22:29; 23:30).

Peter understood what it was to be in Christ. All that he did, all that he preached and taught by word and example, was a witness to the one in whom he lived and had his being. As he reached forth his right hand to lift up the cripple, he was manifesting how the right hand of God had lifted up (in resurrection) and exalted His Son and all those in Him (Acts 3:7). Likewise he took Tabitha *by the hand* and then *lifted her up* and “presented her alive” (Acts 9:41), just as the Father had done to His Son. When Peter “stood up” after his conversion (Acts 1:15; 2:14), he was sharing the resurrection experience of his Lord. And now he reflected this in his preaching to others. As God stretched forth His hand to heal through Christ (Acts 4:30), so Peter did (Acts 9:41). And he includes us all in the scope of this wondrous operation: for as God’s hand exalted Christ, so it will exalt each of us who humble ourselves beneath it (1 Pet. 5:6).

3:8 The result of healing lame people in Acts 3:8; 14:10 was that they *leaped* (this is emphasized) and walked, praising God. This seems to be couched in the language of Is.35:5,6 concerning lame people leaping and praising God; a prophecy we normally apply to the future Kingdom.

3:11- see on Mt. 14:30.

3:12- see on Acts 2:12.

The men who marvelled and doubted whether Peter was anything more than a magic man were within a few hours believing and being baptized (Acts 3:12; 4:4). There is a speed and power and compulsion that pounds away in the narrative. The preaching of a God hurt by sin, passionately consumed in the death of His Son, feeling every sin, rejoicing over every repentance and baptism...this was something radically different in the 1st century world, just as it is in ours. And such a God imparted a sense of urgency to those who preached Him and His feelings and ways and being, a need for urgent response, a need to relate to Him, which was simply unknown in other religions. The urgency of man's position must be more up front in our witness. Christianity went wrong in the 2nd century AD because the church abstracted God and His being into nothingness, to the point that the urgent import of the true doctrines was lost in practice. May this not be the case amongst us.

3:16 Peter commented upon the healed beggar: "By faith in his name has his name made this man strong" (Acts 3:16 RV). But whose faith was Peter referring to? The beggar appears to have just been opportunistically begging for money from Peter (Acts 3:3). It was surely by *Peter's* faith that the man was healed, and not by his own faith. For Peter didn't invite the beggar to have faith in anything. And Peter explains to the Jews that he had made the man to walk not through his own power (Acts 3:12). So here again we have an example of a third party being healed as a result of another man's faith.

Trust or faith in God comes from not trusting upon human understanding, but upon the understanding [s.w. meaning, knowledge, wisdom] that is God's (Prov. 3:5). In this lies the importance of truth in Biblical interpretation. So understanding, correctly perceiving meaning, true wisdom... are related to having a real faith. The Proverbs go on to plead for correct understanding, because this will be the source of a Godly life of faith in practice. There is therefore a connection between "faith" in the sense of belief, and the fact the essential doctrines of Christianity are called "*the* faith"; the noun "the Faith" and the verb 'to believe / have faith' are related. This is because a true understanding of the one Faith will inevitably lead to true faith, and therefore works; for faith and works are inseparable. This relationship is brought out in Acts 3:16: "His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong... yea, the faith which is in Him (Christ) hath given him (the healed man) this perfect soundness".

3:17 It had been generous spirited of the Lord to pray on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". He may have meant they were relatively ignorant, or it may be that He felt they were so blinded now that the recognition of Him they once had had was now not operating. And Peter, who probably heard with amazement those words from the cross as he beheld the Lord's sufferings, found the same generous spirit to men whom naturally he would have despised: "In ignorance ye did it" (Acts 3:17 cp. Lk. 23:34).

The generosity of the Father and Son to humanity is awesome- so eager are they for our repentance. God so pleads for Israel to return to Him in Hosea and Isaiah that He almost takes the blame onto Himself, cooing over His people as having been tossed and afflicted- when it was His own judgment of them that caused it. And I think this explains the difficulty of Acts 3:17-19, where Peter appeals to the Jews to repent, because they had murdered the Lord Jesus "in ignorance". The Lord's own parables explained that they did what they did with open eyes- "this is the heir, come let us kill him!". Yet in God's passionate desire for their repentance, He appears to view their awful sin in the most gracious possible light.

3:18 Because the Bible is the only inspired book there is, this can lead us to seeing the book as some kind of icon; it is the only 'thing' we have in our experience which is directly from God. Realizing, however, that the original autographs alone were inspired can help us see the Bible we read for what it is- the living, albeit translated and passed down, word of God Himself. God spoke "by the *mouth*

of all his prophets” (Acts 3:18). It was their spoken words which were inspired; but there is no specific guarantee that the written form and transmission of them was likewise inspired. Their mouths, and not the pens of every scribe who wrote the words, were inspired by God- even though it would be fair to say that the preservation and transmission of their written words was the work of ‘providence’, and the Spirit of God in some way also at work.

3:19- see on Lk. 23:34.

Peter appeals to Israel to repent and be converted “that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19)- quoting the words of Ps. 51:1, where the sin of David with Bathsheba is ‘blotted out’ after his repentance and conversion. Each sinner who repents and is baptized and leads the life of ongoing conversion is therefore living out the pattern of David’s repentance.

Peter’s appeal for repentance and conversion was evidently allusive to his own experience of conversion (Lk. 22:32 cp. Acts 3:19; 9:35). He invited them to seek forgiveness for their denial of their Lord, just as he had done. He dearly wished them to follow his pattern, and know the grace he now did. He reminds his sheep of how they are now “returned” (s.w. ‘converted’) to the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 2:25), just as he had been.

God is willing to totally forgive the repentant sinner. He could just forgive men; it is within His power to do this. But He doesn’t. He allows His power to do this to be limited by the extent of our repentance. "If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil which I purpose to do unto them" (Jer. 26:3). Likewise “Repent ye therefore... and be converted, *that* your sins may be blotted out... Repent therefore... and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart *may* be forgiven thee" (Acts 3:19; 8:22). The ability of God to forgive is controlled by our repentance ("that... may"). This is used by Peter as the source of appeal for men to repent. Acts 3:19,20 RV suggests that the repentance of Israel is a precondition for the sending of the Lord Jesus (see too Rom. 11:15). We hasten the Lord's coming by witnessing to Israel.

3:20- see on Rom. 11:31.

3:21 It was quite possible that the full Messianic Kingdom could have been established in the first century, depending upon how the Jews responded to Christ's Gospel. All things were ready for the feast, representing the Kingdom, and the Jewish guests invited- but their rejection of the offer resulted in a 2,000 year delay while the invitations were pressed home on equally laid back Gentiles (Mt.22:4). Similarly Peter understood that the Lord must remain in Heaven "until the times of restitution of all things (cp. Mt.22:4), which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began"; but he felt, under inspiration, that "all the prophets... as many as have spoken (note the emphasis; cp. "all His holy prophets"), have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts 3:21,24), i.e. the days of the first century.

Restoration of all things- this is almost a quotation, certainly an allusion to, the LXX of Mal. 4:6, talking of how the Elijah ministry would restore the hearts of Israel in preparation for the second coming of Christ. We have here one of many indications that the Lord Jesus could have returned in the first century if Israel had repented; Peter’s ministry to the Jews was therefore to be seen as potentially an Elijah ministry, just as John the Baptist’s had been.

3:22- see on Mt. 17:5.

3:24 According to Acts 3:21,24, *all* the prophets speak of Israel's latter day repentance and the subsequent return of Messiah.

3:25 Col. 2:11 speaks of circumcision as another type of baptism, in that only the circumcised were in covenant with God. "The uncircumcised... that soul shall be cut off from his people" (Gen. 17:14). We either “cut off” the flesh, or God will cut us off. He who would not accept Jesus as Messiah in Messiah were to be “destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:25), using a very similar phrase to the LXX of Gen. 17:14, where the uncircumcised man was to be “cut off from his people”.

3:26 We must remember that baptism means that we are *now* the seed of Abraham, and the blessings of forgiveness, of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and God's turning us away from our sins are right now being fulfilled in us (Acts 3:27-29). Israel were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore (2 Sam. 17:11; 1 Kings 4:20), they possessed the gates of their enemies (Dt. 17:2; 18:6)- all in antitype of how Abraham's future seed would also receive the promised blessings in their mortal experience, as well as in the eternal blessedness of the future Kingdom.

When Peter speaks of how the Lord Jesus will 'turn away' sinners from their sins (Acts 3:26), he is using the very word of how the Lord Jesus told him to "put up again" his sword (Mt. 26:52), thereby turning Peter away from his sin. Peter's appeal for repentance and conversion was evidently allusive to his own experience of conversion (Lk. 22:32 cp. Acts 3:19; 9:35). In this he was following the pattern of David, who sang his 'Maschil' (teaching) psalms after his forgiveness in order to convert sinners unto Yahweh (Ps. 51:13). Like Peter, David did so with his sin ever before him, with a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:3,17). He invited them to seek forgiveness for their denial of their Lord, just as he had done. He dearly wished them to follow his pattern, and know the grace he now did. See on Acts 2:39.

Peter taught that "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him" to preach to the Jews (Acts 3:26). Yet the Lord Jesus personally resurrected and ascended to Heaven, having 'sent' His followers into the world. Yet because all in Him are so fully His personal witnesses, representative of Him as He is representative of them, in this way it's true to say that the Lord Jesus personally was "sent" into the world with the Gospel message after His resurrection. And by all means connect this with Peter's difficult words in 1 Pet. 3:19- that by the spirit of Christ, Christ 'went' after His resurrection to preach to those imprisoned. By our sharing His Spirit, we are Him 'going' and preaching. In this sense the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10). And because Peter was alluding to the 'sending' of the great commission, he goes on to say that the spiritually imprisoned to whom we preach are saved by the baptism we minister in fulfilment of the great commission, in the same way as the ark saved people in Noah's day.

After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was *sent* to preach blessing and forgiveness to Israel (Acts 3:26). But after His resurrection, He sent His men to preach this message. His witness became expressed through, and therefore limited by, His preachers. When they wilfully misunderstood His commission as meaning preaching to Jews from all nations, rather than taking the message to the whole planet literally, His work was in that sense hindered and His intention delayed. Remember that the Rabbis taught that salvation was impossible for Gentiles: "For the heathen nations there will be no redemption", so reads the targum on Ex. 21:30. Like us, the early Jewish converts were influenced by their backgrounds and their limited world views. Until the Lord brought experiences to bear which, when responded to, taught them what is now the obvious meaning of His words- that we each have a duty to take the good news of Him to the whole planet.

3:34 Peter uses Scriptures like Ps. 110 and 118 in exactly the same way as he heard the Lord use them (Acts 3:34 = Mt. 22:44; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7 = Mt. 21:42). A list could be compiled for Peter's allusions to the Lord as I have for Paul's. It may be that Peter's difficult reference to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3:19) is a reference to Is. 61 in the same way as Christ used it in Lk. 4:18. This point is meaningless without an appreciation of the extent to which Christ's words featured in the writing and thought of Peter.

4:2 Not only are there links between Acts and Luke, as if the preaching of the apostles continues the personal work of the Lord in whom they lived and moved, but often Acts records the preaching work in language lifted from the other Gospel records too (e.g. Acts 4:2; 5:12-16 = Mt. 4:23).

4:4- see on Acts 2:12.

4:10- see on Acts 10:35,36.

4:12- see on Acts 2:36.

According to Acts 4:12, there is no salvation "in any other name"; this is the name "wherein we must be saved" (RV). And the early chapters of Acts stress this theme of being "in Christ" (Acts 4:2,7,9,10,12 RV); yet all these things that are possible for those "in Him" require us to be baptized *into Him*. See on 2 Cor. 5:20.

The message they preached had an exclusive nature to it- it was radical preaching: 'this is the truth, and nothing, nothing else on this earth'. Throughout the Roman empire, there was the concept of 'religio' - the gods were thought to bless the empire if the empire worshipped them, and therefore everyone was expected to participate in the state religion. However, in addition, they were quite free to practice their own religions *as well*. But here, Christianity was intolerant. They preached that there was *no other name* apart from Jesus through which we might be saved (Acts 4:12)- a direct and conscious attack upon the 'religio' concept. Christ had to be accepted as Lord in baptism, in contradistinction to 'Caesar is Lord'. A Christian could only serve one of two possible masters. He had to love one and hate the other. The whole idea of "the Kingdom of God" was revolutionary- there was to be no other Kingdom spoken of apart from Caesar's. But our brethren preached the Gospel of the Kingdom *of God*. And those who openly accepted these principles were inevitably persecuted- expelled from the trade guilds, not worked with, socially shunned, their children discriminated against.

4:13- see on Jn. 15:27; Jn. 18:27.

Peter was an uneducated fisherman. Who was he to appeal to Jerusalem's intelligentsia? He was mocked as speaking *a-grammatos*, without correct grammar and basic education even in his own language (Acts 4:13; AV "unlearned"). The way his two letters are so different in written style can only be because he wrote through a scribe (2 Peter is actually in quite sophisticated Greek). So most likely he couldn't write and could hardly read. So humanly speaking, he was hardly the man for the job of being the front man for the preaching of the new ecclesia. But not only did his Lord think differently, but his own depth of experience of God's grace and appreciation of the height of the Lord's exaltation became a motivating power to witness which could not be held in. We all know that the way God prefers to work in the conversion of men is through the personal witness of other believers. We may use adverts, leaflets, lectures etc. in areas where the Gospel has not yet taken root, with quite some success. But once a community of believers has been established, the Lord seems to stop working through these means and witness instead through the personal testimony of His people. We all know this, and yet for the most part would rather distribute 10,000 tracts than swing one conversation round to the Truth, or deliberately raise issues of the Gospel with an unbelieving family member. If we recognize this almost natural reticence which most of us have, it becomes imperative to find what will motivate us to witness as we ought, *a-grammatos* or not. The fact they spoke *a-grammatos* (4:13 Gk.), without proper grammar, the fact they weren't humanly speaking the right men for the job... all this meant nothing to them. The height of the Lord's exaltation and the salvation this enabled just had to be shared with others. See on 2 Pet. 1:5,6.

The credibility of a person depended not so much on them but upon their status and place in society- thus the witness of women, slaves, children and poor people was discounted. We see it happening in the way that the preaching of Peter and John was dismissed by the elders because they were of low social status (Acts 4:13). And yet these were the *very* types of people which the Lord Jesus used as His star and key witnesses in the very beginnings of Christianity!

Boldness- They saw their "boldness", and realised they had been with Jesus; for the very same Greek word is used in description of the Lord's "boldness" in witness (Mk. 8:32; Jn. 7:26; 11:14; 16:25,29; 18:20), and on the cross (Col. 2:15).

There was something about Peter and his fellow fishermen which made even the most unsympathetic make a mental note ("took knowledge") that they had been with Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 4:13). This was the fulfilment of Jn. 13:35, which using the same root word, teaches that the

(Jewish) world would "know" the twelve as the Lord's men *if they reflected His love*. So there must have been something in the love that somehow shone between those men as they stood there before that court, which in a manner impossible to describe, revealed them as Christ's. This same, difficult-to-describe sense will exude from every one who is the Lord's, in whatever context we are in.

4:16- see on 2 Pet. 1:16-18.

4:20 The basis of the Lord's exaltation was the resurrection. When asked why he preached when it was forbidden, Peter didn't shrug and say 'Well Jesus told me too so I have to'. His response was: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). It would have been like saying that, say, sneezing or blinking was a sin. These things are involuntary reactions; and likewise, preaching is the involuntary reaction to a real belief in the Lord's death and resurrection. His preaching was a 'hearkening unto God', not so much to the specific commission to preach but rather to the imperative to witness which the Father had placed in the resurrection of His Son. When arrested for preaching a second time, Peter says the same. I'd paraphrase the interview like this: Q. 'Why do you keep preaching when it's forbidden?'. A. 'Jesus has been raised, and been exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, "for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins". We have to obey the wonderful imperative which God has placed in these things: to preach this wondrous message to those for whom so much has been made possible' (Acts 5:28-32). It's not that Peter was the most natural one to stand up and make the witness; he spoke *a-grammatos*, but it was somehow evident from his body language that he had "been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). In rebuking the false teachers, he likens himself to the dumb ass that spoke in rebuke of Balaam- i.e. he felt compelled to make the witness to God's word which he did, although naturally, without the imperatives we have discussed, he would be simply a dumb ass. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). He told the Sanhedrin that to make true Christians agree not to preach was simply an inappropriate suggestion, because "we *cannot but* speak" out- it was something which went part and parcel with the experience of the risen Lord Jesus. Peter was not just an illiterate fisherman; so many of his words and phrasing indicate a thorough familiarity with the Greek Old Testament. Here, he seems to have Num. 24:13 at the back of his mind; Balaam says that although Balak is forbidding him to speak, he cannot but speak what God has inspired him with, even if it is intensely unpopular with those around him. Of course, the Christian preacher is not inspired as Balaam was, but the principle is the same: it is impossible to keep quiet, because of the very nature of what we believe and who we are. John had the spirit of Peter when he wrote (in one of his many allusions to Peter's words) that what they had heard and seen, that they declared / witnessed (1 Jn. 1:1,3), as if hearing and seeing / experiencing Christ inevitably lead to witness.

4:23 The ecclesia was a growing family; the apostles returned 'to their own' when they came out of court (Acts 4:23 Gk.). Each baptism was and is a birth into *our* family. Visiting brethren were *gladly* received, as one would receive a relative; it was the logical thing to seek out the believers in a town and stay with them (21:7,17; 27:3; 28:14; 3 Jn. 5).

4:24-30 The early brethren appropriated prophecies of Jesus personally to themselves as they witnessed to Him (Acts 4:24-30; 13:5,40). The same Greek words are also used in Luke and Acts about the work of Jesus and those of the apostles later; and also, the same original words are used concerning the deeds of the apostles in the ministry of Jesus, and their deeds in Acts. Thus an impression is given that the ecclesia's witness after the resurrection was and is a continuation of the witness of the 12 men who walked around Galilee with Jesus. He didn't come to start a formalised religion; as groups of believers grew, the Holy Spirit guided them to have systems of leadership and organization, but the essence is that we too are personally following the Lamb of God as He walked around Galilee, hearing His words, seeing His ways, and following afar off to Golgotha carrying His cross.

4:24-31 One major obstacle for Jewish minds would have been their perception that prayer and worship were to be carried out in the Jerusalem temple. This would have been a particular barrier

for the many Jews in Jerusalem who converted to Christ. Whilst initially it appears the believers did attend the temple services, it is also significant that Acts repeatedly brings out the parallels between prayers and worship performed in the *temple*, and those performed in the ordinary homes of believers. Some passages about worship in the temple appear to be in parallel with others about such worship in homes. Luke seems to emphasize how important was the home as a place for prayer. Cornelius is presented as praying at home at the ninth hour, which was the hour of temple prayer (Acts 10:3,30). The prayer of Acts 4:24-31 speaks of the God who made heaven and earth and the sea and everything in it- a classic Jewish liturgy used in the temple prayers. The point being, such prayers didn't have to be made in the temple through the Jewish priests. Further, there is extra-Biblical evidence (from Tertullian, Origen and Cyprian) that the third, sixth and ninth hours were the times for prayer amongst the early Christians- but these were the very hours of prayer in the temple! This would have been so hard to accept to the Jewish mind- that your own humble home [hence Luke stresses meetings and prayers *in homes* so much] was the house of God. It had been so drummed into the Jewish mind that the temple was "the house of prayer" (Is. 56:7; 60:7 LXX)- but now they were faced with the wonderful reality that their own home was that house of prayer. Only those brave enough to really reach out for a personal relationship with the God of Heaven would have risen up to this challenging idea. And yet the very height and thrill of the challenge inspired so many to do so.

4:25 Ps. 2:1,2, a prophecy about opposition to Jesus personally, is appropriated to those who preach Him, because they are in Him (Acts 4:25,26).

4:26- see on Acts 9:15.

Both Jew and Gentile were gathered together against the Lord (God) and His Christ on the cross (Acts 4:26). Peter thus makes a connection between the Father and Son on the cross. Those who reproached Jesus there reproached the Father (Ps. 69:9).

The cross of Christ is the gathering point for His people (see on Jn. 12:32; 17:21). But it is also associated with the gathering together of all God's enemies (Acts 4:26). Even Herod and Pilate were made friends at that time (Luke 23:12). The cross divides men into two united camps; they are gathered together by it, either in the Lord's cause, or against Him. The crucifixion was the judgment seat for this world (Jn. 12:31). Likewise the day of judgment will be a gathering together, either against the Lord (Rev. 16:16; 19:19), unto condemnation (Jn. 15:6); or into the barn of His salvation (Mt. 13:30). And likewise, in anticipation of the judgment, the breaking of bread is a "gathering together" either to condemnation or salvation (1 Cor. 11).

4:29 They spoke of themselves as God's servants in the same breath as they speak of Jesus as being His Servant (Acts 4:29,30). They realized that all that was true of the Servant was true of them too.

When the disciples prayed "Look upon their threatenings..." (Acts 4:29 RV), they were surely inspired by the praying of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 19:16 using the same words. And these examples ought to specifically fire our prayer life, too.

4:30- see on Mt. 14:30 and 31; Acts 3:7.

4:32- see on Acts 2:44.

Sitting there in Babylonian captivity, God offered His people a new covenant (Ez. 11:19,20,25 cp. Heb. 10:16); they could have one mind between each other, and a heart of flesh. But Israel would not, and it was only accepted by those who turned to Jesus Christ. Their being of "one heart" after baptism (Acts 4:32) was a direct result of their acceptance of this same new covenant which Judah had rejected. In the hearing of offer of the new covenant, we are essentially in the position of those of the captivity, hearing Ezekiel's words, and deciding whether or not to remain in cushy Babylon, or make a painful and humanly uncertain aliyah to Zion.

The early brethren in Jerusalem had the attitude that nothing they possessed was really theirs (Acts 4:32), and therefore as a result of this, many sold what superfluous things they had. But those who didn't, we later learn, had their possessions and lands stolen during the persecution of the Hebrew believers that soon followed (Acts 11:19 cp. Heb. 10:32-34). God took back what He had lent them, even before their death. Their realization that they owned nothing was not just a temporary height of enthusiasm; they appreciated a principle which was true before, then and now. That principle applies today just as much as it did then.

In the early church, "no one *said* that any of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32). I wonder- and maybe I'm clutching at straws and justifying us all- if the emphasis is upon the word "said". Their *attitude* was that they didn't personally possess anything. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, to buy and sell and deal in this world, as if we didn't really buy anything or gain a thing, as if it's all somehow performed by us as in a disconnected dream. See on Lk. 14:33.

4:33 The early brethren had seen and known Jesus, despised, hated, dropping from exhaustion in the boat, slumping dehydrated at a well, covered in blood and spittle, mocked in naked shame. And now they knew that He had risen, that He had been exalted to God's right hand so as to make the salvation of men possible, and surely going to return. They spoke this out, because they knew Him. "With great power gave the apostles *their* witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33 RV). And yet through the Gospels and with the eye of faith, we know Him too. And this must be the basis for our witness.

4:35- see on Jn. 6:11.

4:36 An example of the Biblical record going along with the incorrect perceptions of faithful men is to be found in the way the apostles nicknamed Joseph as 'Barnabas' "under the impression, apparently, that it meant 'son of consolation' [Acts 4:36]. On etymological grounds that has proved hard to justify, and the name is now generally recognized to... mean 'son of Nabu'". Yet the record 'goes along' with their misunderstanding. In addition to this, there is a huge imputation of righteousness to human beings, reflected right through Scripture. God sought them, the essence of their hearts, and was prepared to overlook much ignorance and misunderstanding along the way. Consider how good king Josiah is described as always doing what was right before God, not turning aside to the right nor left- even though it was not until the 18th year of his reign that he even discovered parts of God's law, which he had been ignorant of until then, because the scroll containing them had been temporarily lost (2 Kings 22:2,11).

5:3 Peter could plead with men, both in and out of the Faith, with a credibility that lay in his ready acceptance of his failures, and his evident acceptance of his Lord's gracious forgiveness and teaching. Consider how he tells Ananias that Satan has filled his heart (Acts 5:3), alluding to what everyone full well knew: that Satan had desired to have him too, and in the denials he had pretty well capitulated (Lk. 22:31,32). Peter's disciplining of Ananias, so soon after his own deference to the pressures of Satan as opposed to those of the Lord, would have been done surely in subdued, saddened and introspective tones.

5:4 When they sold their property, the Holy Spirit's comment in Acts 5:4 was that the money was "their own" and "under their own power" [Gk. *exousia*]. They could have chosen to give all or part of that money to God. It was theirs and not God's, the implication was. This is a startling insight. What wealth we have has been genuinely entrusted to us by the Lord, and in that sense it is indeed 'ours', under our power. Yet we are to realize that of course as those under the sphere of God's rulership / Kingdom, we are under *His* 'exousia'. Absolutely *all* power of *exousia* in any part of Heaven or earth has now been given to the Lord Jesus (Mt. 28:18; Jn. 17:2; Col. 2:10). And yet He has given "authority" or *exousia* to us His servants, and will judge us on His return as to how we have used this (Mk. 13:34; Jn. 1:12). We need to make this connection- that although He has

delegated to us wealth, and placed it under our power or *exousia*, if we are truly part of His Kingdom, we are to give back the *exousia* or power / authority over our wealth to Him.

Acts 5:3 provides an example of the connection between the Devil and our sins. Peter says to Ananias: "Why has Satan filled your heart?" Then in verse 4 Peter says "Why have you *conceived this thing in your heart*?" Conceiving something bad within our heart is the same as Satan filling our heart. If we ourselves conceive something, e.g. a sinful plan, then it begins *inside us*. Note that when Peter speaks of how Ananias has "conceived this thing in your heart" he's alluding to the LXX of Esther 7:5, where the wicked Haman is described as one "whose heart hath filled him" to abuse God's people (see RV). Note in passing that the LXX of Esther 7:4 speaks of Haman as *ho diabolos* [with the definite article] – a mere man is called "the Satan". It's been suggested that 'Satan filling the heart' was a common phrase used in the first century to excuse human sin; and Peter is deconstructing it by using the phrase and then defining more precisely what it refers to – conceiving sin in our heart, our own heart filling itself with sin.

5:14 Acts 5:14 AV says that converts were added "to the Lord" whereas the RVmg. speaks of them being added "to them", i.e. the believers who comprised the body of Jesus. Baptism is not only entry into covenant relationship with the Father and His Son; it is also baptism into the body of Christ, i.e. the body of believers (1 Cor. 12:13). This is where self baptism shouldn't be used too liberally. Thus the record in Acts describes baptisms as believers being "added" to the body of believers (Acts 2:41,47); but also as them being "added" (s.w.) to the Lord Jesus (5:14; 11:24). It is therefore appropriate that there are other members of the body of Christ present at the baptism; baptism is entry into relationship with the community of believers, as well as into a personal relationship with Christ.

The harder side of the Father and the Lord Jesus actually serves as an attraction to the serious believer. The lifted up Jesus draws men unto Him. When Ananias and Sapphira were slain by the Lord, fear came upon "as many as heard these things". Many would have thought His attitude hard; this man and woman had sold their property and given some of it (a fair percentage, probably, to make it look realistic) to the Lord's cause. And then He slew them. But just afterwards, "believers were the more added to the Lord" (Acts 5:12,14). The Lord's harder side didn't turn men away from Him; rather did it bring them to Him. And so the demands and terror of the preaching of the cross did likewise. The balance between His utter grace, the way (e.g.) He marvelled at men's puny faith, and His harder side, is what makes His character so utterly magnetic and charismatic in the ultimate sense. Think of how He beheld the rich man and loved Him, and yet at the same time was purposefully demanding: He told Him to sell all He had and give it to beggars. Not to the work of the ministry, but to beggars, many of whom one would rightly be cynical of helping. It was a large demand, the Lord didn't make it to everyone, and He knew He was touching the man's weakest point. If the Lord had asked that the man's wealth be given to Him, he may have agreed. But to beggars... And yet the Lord made this heavy demand with a deep love for the man.

5:15,16- see on Mt. 14:30.

5:21 The main priestly duty was to teach God's word to the people. A whole string of texts make this point: Dt. 24:8; 2 Kings 17:27; 2 Chron. 15:3; Neh. 8:9; Mic. 3:11. Note too the common partnership between priests and prophets. Because of their role as *teachers*, it is understandable that the anger of the first century priesthood was always associated with Christ and the apostles *teaching* the people, in the belief that they were a new priesthood: Mt. 21:33; Lk. 19:47; 20:1; Acts 5:21. The existing priests felt that their role was being challenged.

5:24 Consider how the disciples responded to the High Priest rebuking them for preaching; he claimed that they intended to bring the blood of Jesus upon them (Acts 5:24). The obvious, logical debating point would have been to say: 'But *you* were the very ones who shouted out 'His blood be upon us!!' just a few weeks ago!'. But, Peter didn't say this. He didn't even allude to their obvious

self-contradiction. Instead he positively went on to point out that a real forgiveness was possible because Jesus was now resurrected. And the point we can take from this is that true witness is not necessarily about pointing out to the other guy his self-contradictions, the logical weakness of his position... it's not about winning a debate, but rather about bringing people to meaningful repentance and transformation.

5:26- see on Jn. 12:13.

5:28-32- see on Acts 4:20. His resurrection is an imperative to preach. When Peter is asked why he continues preaching when it is forbidden, he responds by saying that he is obeying God's command, in that Christ had been raised (Acts 5:29-32). There was no specific command from God to witness (although there was from Christ); from the structure of Peter's argument he is surely saying that the fact God raised Christ is *de facto* a command from God to witness to it which must be obeyed. The resurrection of Jesus is itself the command to preach. Yet reading carefully, Peter says that he is a witness not only of the resurrection, but of the fact that Jesus is now at God's right hand and from that position of power has enabled forgiveness. How could Peter be a witness to *that*? For he hadn't been up to Heaven to check. Quite simply, he knew the extent of his own forgiveness. And so he therefore knew that truly, Jesus had ascended and was there in a position of influence upon Almighty God, to enable forgiveness. His own cleansed conscience was the proof that his belief in the Lord's ascension was belief in something true. And yet we ask: does our belief that Christ ascended really have this effect upon us?

5:30 Earlier, Peter had thought that following Christ to the end could be achieved in a quick, dramatic burst of zeal- for surely his desire to "smite with the sword" in Gethsemane was almost suicidal, and yet by doing so he thought that he would fulfil his promise to lay down his life for Christ's sake. He learnt the lesson, that crucifixion is a way of life rather than just dramatic death; for he said that the Jews had slain Christ *and* hung Him on a tree (Acts 5:30; 10:39). This seems strange- that they should have killed Him and then hung Him on the tree. Peter has in mind the practice of hanging an already dead criminal on a tree as a warning (Dt. 21:23). Paul appears to make the same mistake in Gal. 3:13, where he too says that the lifting up of Christ on the cross was typified by the lifting up of the already dead body of a criminal. Christ was not dead when He was lifted up- physically. But first Peter and then Paul came to understand that His death was actually in His way of life- so that He was as good as dead when lifted up. He was the dead bronze snake of the wilderness; the flesh had been put to death by a daily life of crucifixion.

The Jews "slew (Jesus) and hanged (him) on a tree" (Acts 5:30). There seems to be a distinction here; as if the 'slaying' was an ongoing process in His ministry, crowned by the final hanging on the tree. Paul speaks similarly in Galatians; as if the body was already dead when it was lifted up on the tree; for he quotes the Mosaic law regarding the body of a dead criminal being displayed on a tree as if it was descriptive of the Lord's death (Gal. 3:13 cp. Dt. 21:23). The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord; and yet in it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice (Ex. 27:16), which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life. The Lord taught this when He asked us to take up the cross daily: to live each day in the exercise of the same principles which He lived and died by. Let's not see spiritual life as a survival of a few crises, as and when they present themselves. It's a way of life, and the principles which lead us to the little victories (when we scald ourselves with hot water, when we dirty a newly washed shirt...) will give us the greater ones also, when (e.g.) we stand before a tribunal, or face death in whatever form.

5:31- see on Acts 2:33; 10:35,36.

Man cannot truly know God and be passive to that knowledge; he must somehow respond to the God he sees so abundantly revealed to him. And so it is with an appreciation of the height and nature of the exaltation of the man Christ Jesus. This motivates to repentance and conversion, and therefore the man who has himself been converted by it will glory in it, and hold it up to others as

the motive power of their salvation too. Acts 5:31 is the clearest example: “Him (Jesus) hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things”- in the sense that Peter himself was a witness to the repentance and forgiveness brought about by God’s resurrection and exaltation of His Son. Earlier Peter had preached Jesus of Nazareth as “made...both Lord and Christ”, and when they heard *this*, when he reached this climax of his speech in declaring that Jesus was now made *kurios*, the Greek word that would be used to translate Yahweh, *then* they were pricked in their heart and repented and desired association with Him in baptism (Acts 2:36-38). Later he boldly declared: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men [i.e. no other name given to any man as this Name was given to Jesus], whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Peter had once struggled with the teaching of the Lord that whoever humbled himself would be exalted (Lk. 14:11). Now he joyfully preached the height of the Lord’s exaltation, knowing that by so doing he was testifying to the depth of His humility in His life. Now he valued and appreciated that humility (his allusions to the Lord’s washing of feet in his letters is further proof of this).

The early believers spoke constantly in their preaching of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:21,23; 3:13-15; 5:30,31). The logical objection to their preaching a risen Jesus of Nazareth was: ‘But He’s dead! We saw His body! Where is He? Show Him to us!’. And their response, as ours, was to say: ‘I am the witness, so is my brother here, and my sister there. We are the witnesses that He is alive. If you see us, you see Him risen and living through us’. In this spirit, we beseech men in Christ’s stead. Paul in Galatians 2:20 echoes this idea: “I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not *my* life, but the life which *Christ lives* in me”. The spirit of the risen Christ lived out in our lives is the witness of His resurrection. We are Him to this world. The cross too was something which *shone* out of their lives and words. They sought to convict men of their desperation, the urgency of their position before God, the compelling nature of the cross, that they were serious sinners; that a man cannot behold the cross and be unresponsive, but rather must appropriate that work and gift to himself through baptism. The urgent appeal for repentance was quite a feature of their witness (2:38; 5:31; 7:51; 11:18; 17:30; 18:18; 20:21; 26:20; Heb. 6:1). May I suggest there needs to be a greater stress on repentance in our preaching, 20 centuries later.

Our Lord ascended to Heaven *so that* opportunity of repentance might be given to Israel (Acts 5:31), and *so that* He might give the Holy Spirit gifts to men (Eph.4:8-13 cp. John 14-16 explaining how Jesus departed *in order* to receive the Comforter). It follows that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given largely in order to convince Israel of the Gospel; and so too around the period of the second coming?

5:32 Luke concludes by recording how the Lord reminded His men that they were “witnesses” (24:48); and throughout Acts, they repeatedly describe themselves as witnesses to Him (Acts 1:8,22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39,41; 13:31; 22:15,20; 26:16). This is quite some emphasis. This Christ-centredness should also fill our self-perception; that we are witnesses to the Lord out of our own personal experience of Him. They were witnesses that Christ *is* on God’s right hand, that He really *is* a Saviour and source of forgiveness (5:32); because they were self-evidently results of that forgiveness and that salvation. They couldn’t be ‘witnesses’ to those things in any legal, concrete way; for apart from them and their very beings, there was no literal evidence. They hadn’t been to Heaven and seen Him; they had no document that said they were forgiven. They were the witnesses in themselves. This even went to the extent of the Acts record saying that converts were both added to the ecclesia, and also added to Christ. He *was* His ecclesia; they were, and we are, His body in this world.

We are “witnesses [on account of our being] in him” (Acts 5:32 RVmg.). We are His epistle to men and women; His words of expression consist in our lives and characters (2 Cor. 3:3).

5:41 There are about 70 references to there being joy of faith amongst the early brethren. It was undoubtedly a characteristic of the community, despite the moral and doctrinal failures amongst them, the turning back to the world, the physical hardship of life, and direct persecution from the authorities. There was a joy of faith in conversion and in beholding it (Acts 2:41,46; 3:8; 5:41; 8:8; 13:52; 15:3; 1 Thess. 1:6). Letters to new converts like the Philippians reflect this theme of joy, even though it was written from prison. Paul and Silas could sing in prison. The earlier brethren rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake (Acts 5:41). Paul rejoiced daily in the fact the Corinthians had been baptized (1 Cor. 15:31). Many a photo taken at baptism reflects this same joy amongst us today. Sower and reaper rejoice together (Jn. 4:36). To hold on to the Truth was described as holding on to the rejoicing of the hope unto the end (Heb. 3:6).

5:42- see on Acts 2:46.

6 An extended example of the repetition in Biblical narratives is to be found in the remarkable parallels between the sufferings of Stephen and the Lord Jesus:

The Lord Jesus	Stephen
Acts 2:22	Acts 6:8
Luke 4:22	Acts 6:10
Mark 12:13	Acts 6:11
Luke 20:20	Acts 6:12
Matthew 26:59	Acts 6:13
Matthew 26:61	Acts 6:14
Matthew 26:65	Acts 6:11
Mark 15:20	Acts 7:57,58
Mark 14:62	Acts 7:56

6:1 Luke records how the converts were repeatedly "multiplied" (6:1,7; 9:31; 12:24), using the very word for the 'multiplying' of Abraham's seed as the stars (7:17; Heb. 6:14; 11:12). Every baptism he saw as the triumphant fulfilment of the promises to Abraham, even though many of those who 'multiplied' later turned away.

There were dirty politics in the church. The Greek speaking Jews and the Hebrew speaking Jews within the ecclesia started arguing over welfare payments in Acts 6. It was the old tension- the liberals against the orthodox, with the orthodox unwilling to give much of the welfare collection to those they perceived as more liberal. This squabble was tackled by Stephen, and the record then goes on to describe his murder, almost implying that it was Judaist Christians within the synagogues who set him up for this. After all, there was big money involved- Jews were used to paying 10 or 20% of their wealth to the temple, and if this was now going to the ecclesia, with thousands baptized, there could well have arisen a power struggle over who controlled it. It could well be that the division between Paul and John Mark was over this matter; after they had baptized the first Gentile in Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, John Mark went back to the Jerusalem ecclesia (Acts 13:13). Acts 15:38 RV speaks of how he "withdrew from them from Pamphylia", hinting at spiritual reasons for his withdrawal. It must also be remembered that Christianity was a new, unregistered religion in the Roman empire, increasingly subject to persecution and discrimination. Judaism was registered and tolerated. It was so much easier to remain under the synagogue umbrella, to deny the radical demands of the Lord Jesus, and to accept Him half-heartedly, in Name but not in reality.

The Jerusalem ecclesia is an example of how rich and poor were united together. There were clearly wealthy members- Simon of Cyrene owned a farm (Mk. 15:21). Barnabas sold lands (Acts 4:36).

Ananias and Sapphira had land. And then there were the middle class. Mary owned a house in Jerusalem and had at least one servant (Acts 12:12-17). Levi was a tax collector wealthy enough to throw a large banquet, implying he had a large home (Mk. 2:13-17). James and John had a fishing business in Galilee that employed day labourers. And then there were the poor. The Lord Jesus and the apostles healed the beggars and diseased, who presumably became members of the church. Acts 6:1; 2:44; 4:34 imply there were large numbers of very poor people in the church. James the Lord's brother was presumably a carpenter, poor like the Lord was. And yet he was the leader of the early church. Unlike many other religious movements, early Christianity drew its members from right across society; and one of the poorest was their leading light! This unity, as we have so often said, would have been their biggest single advertisement. And yet the Acts record artlessly says so little about social or economic class distinctions- precisely because they were not important. Any uninspired writer would have made great capital of this phenomenal feature of the early church.

Acts 6:1 makes the point that aid to the poor widows was cut off or impaired, because the other believers were arguing amongst themselves. It would appear that the Hebrew Christians went to the temple daily (Acts 2:46), whereas the Greek widows wouldn't have done (Acts 7:48,49). So the common theological disagreement about how far the Jewish Law should influence Christian life- resulted in old and needy ladies in the ecclesia suffering.

The early elders of the Christian church decided that they were spending too much time on practical matters with the result that they weren't finding enough time for prayer. And so they made a major re-arrangement to enable them to devote more time to prayer (Acts 6:1-4).

6:3 James 1:27 defines the essence of Christianity as 'visiting' the fatherless and widows. But the Greek word occurs also in Acts 6:3, translated 'to look / search out'. We are to actually search out others' needs, go to them, imagine what they might be in need of and supply it- rather than waiting to be confronted by those needs. It was of course exactly in this sense that God 'visited' us in the gift of His Son.

6:4 The twelve gave themselves continually to "the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4); using a phrase used in contemporary literature to describe how the synagogue minister made pupils memorize Scripture texts. See on Acts 20:35.

6:4 So important was prayer in the early community that the seven deacons had to make arrangements for the practical running of the ecclesia so that they could give themselves more time for prayer (Acts 6:4); prayerfulness was more important than petty administration. Husbands and wives abstained from sex for short periods so as to more powerfully pray individually (1 Cor. 7:5).

6:7- see on Mt. 8:4.

Acts 7:3 says that when Abram was in Ur, he was told "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred" - pointedly omitting mention of "thy father's house" . Gen. 12:1 records that the Lord had told Abram to leave his country, kindred *and* his father's house, but goes on to say that "So Abram departed" from *Haran* " as the Lord had spoken unto him" (Gen.12:4). The implication is that the command which he was given in Ur, was repeated to him in Haran, with the additional information that he must now also leave "thy father's house".

Saul, Paul And Stephen

As well as John the Baptist, it would seem that Stephen likewise had a deep impact upon Paul. Stephen's condemnation had been because he had reminded the Jews of the fact "Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool" and therefore the temple was not ultimately relevant (Acts 7:48,49). Yet only a few brief years later, Paul was using the very same words and logic on Mars Hill in Athens. It has been observed that Hebrews particularly has enough conscious points of contact with Stephen's words that it would seem that the author was very familiar with Stephen's words:

Acts [Stephen]	Hebrews
7:2,55	1:1-3; 2:10
7:2-5	11:8
7:2	11:1-31
7:9-36	3:16; 11:21,22
7:38	11:1-29 cf. 4:1-3
7:46	9:11,24 cp. Is. 66:1,2
7:39-43,52	3:7-12
6:14	ch. 1-6

Stephen's speech (and perhaps other, unrecorded words of Stephen) became imprinted upon Paul's mind and consciousness. In writing to the brethren he had once persecuted, both consciously and unconsciously Paul was reflecting Stephen's words. A clear example is found in the way Stephen describes Israel as "thrusting" Moses away from them (Acts 7:39); and Paul is the only other person in the New Testament to use this same Greek word- to describe how although Israel thrust God away from them, yet God did not thrust [AV "cast away"] His people from Himself (Rom. 11:1,2). The even unconscious influence of Stephen upon Paul is reflected in the way he speaks of himself as "born...brought up...educated" (Acts 22:2,3)- using the very terms Stephen uses in Acts 7 about Moses.

Paul's relationship with Stephen becomes even more acute when we reflect upon how Stephen says that Israel were taken into judgment "to Babylon" (Acts 7:43). He is quoting here from Amos 5:26, which in both the LXX and Masoretic text says that Israel were to go "to Damascus". Why does Stephen purposefully change "Damascus" to "Babylon"? Was it not because he knew there were many Christians in Damascus, and he didn't want to speak of 'going to Damascus' as a figure for condemnation? And yet *straight afterwards* we are reading that Saul 'went to *Damascus*' to persecute and kill the Christians there. It's as if Saul was so infuriated by Stephen's subtle change that he wanted to prove him wrong; he would 'go to Damascus' and not be condemned, rather he would condemn the Christians there, and make it *their* place of judgment. This suggestion may seem far fetched. But we have to remember the Pharisaic way of reasoning and thinking. Every phrase of Scripture was so valuable to them, and major life decisions would be made over one nuance of the text or interpretation of it. No wonder that in later life, Paul alludes to his dear friend Stephen so much. What a joy it will be to see them meet up in the Kingdom.

7:2 In his famous final speech, Stephen evidently had humming in his mind the theme of the glory of God. He begins by saying that "The God of glory appeared..." (Acts 7:2). God heard that speech, and read his mind. And responded in an appropriate way- for to give Stephen final strength to face death, God made His glory appear to Stephen (Acts 7:55). And so it can be for us- although it all depends what we have humming in our hearts.

7:4 According to Jewish tradition, Abraham was 23 years in Haran. "From thence...*God* removed him into (Canaan)" (Acts 7:4 R.V.). But if God had *forced* him to be "removed", Abram's response to the promises would not be held up for us as the great example of faith which it is. The call of Abram is an essay in partial response being confirmed by God. *God* removed him through repeating the promises to Abram in Haran, and the providential fact that Terah died there. The fact that Abram "dwelt" in Haran, despite his call to leave, with his kindred and father's house shows a slow reaction to the command to leave those things and go to the unknown land, which by now Abram must have guessed was Canaan- or at least, he would have realized that Canaan was en route to it.

7:13 Two of the greatest types of the Lord's mediatory work are Esther and Joseph. Esther was perhaps ashamed to reveal that she was a Jewess because of her people's behaviour, but given their

desperate need she did reveal it in order to plead with the King for their salvation. And only when Joseph really had to use his influence to save his brethren did "Joseph's race become manifest unto Pharaoh" (Acts 7:13 RV). Does the Lord experience the same sort of embarrassment mixed with an urgent sense of our desperation, in His present mediation for us?

The Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth is hard to explicitly prove from the Old Testament, without recourse to typology. Even Isaiah 53 describes the sufferings of Hezekiah, who was typical of Jesus. Thus Stephen's defence of his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus rests largely on typology – e.g. the fact that Joseph/Jesus was rejected by his brethren at first (Acts 7:13).

7:17 Acts 7:17 speaks of "the time of the promise" drawing near- putting 'the promise' for 'the fulfillment of the promise', so sure are God's promises of fulfillment.

The promises to Abraham received their major primary fulfillment at the Exodus (Acts 7:17). Seeing that their ultimate fulfillment will be at the second coming, it follows that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was typical of this.

7:21- see on Ez. 16:5

7:22 "I am not eloquent (mg. a man of words)...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10); this is how Moses felt he would be perceived, although actually he was formally quite fluent when in the court of Pharaoh (Acts 7:22). Paul would have remembered Stephen saying how Moses was formerly full of worldly *wisdom* and "mighty in words". Paul felt that he too had been through Moses' experience- once mighty in words as the rising star of the Jewish world, but now like Moses he had left all that behind in order to try to save a new Israel from Judaism and paganism.

Paul says he was "*taught* according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" by Gamaliel, receiving the highest wisdom possible in the Jewish world; but he uses the same word as Stephen in Acts 7:22, describing how Moses was "*learned*" in all the wisdom of Egypt.

7:23- see on Heb. 11:24.

7:23 It is worth trying to visualize the scene when Moses was "full forty years old" (Acts 7:23). It would make a fine movie. The Greek phrase could refer to Moses' birthday, and one is tempted to speculate that it had been arranged that when Moses was 40, he would become Pharaoh. Heb. 11:24 says that he refused and chose- the Greek tense implying a one off choice- to suffer affliction with God's people. It is tempting to imagine Moses at the ceremony when he should have been declared as Pharaoh, the most powerful man in his world... standing up and saying, to a suddenly hushed audience, voice cracking with shame and stress and yet some sort of proud relief that he was doing the right thing: "I, whom you know in Egyptian as Meses, am Moshe, yes, Moshe the Jew; and I decline to be Pharaoh". Imagine his foster mother's pain and anger. And then in the end, the wonderful honour would have been given to another man, who became Pharaoh. Perhaps he or his son was the one to whom Moses was to come, 40 years later. After a nervous breakdown, stuttering, speaking with a thick accent, clearly having forgotten Egyptian... walking through the mansions of glory, along the corridors of power, to meet that man, to whom he had given the throne 40 years earlier.

7:25 Moses "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God *by his hand* would deliver them"; but God told Moses at the bush: "I will stretch out *my hand*, and smite Egypt....". Moses had yet to learn the meaning of God manifestation through men- Ex. 3:20 cp. Acts 7:25.

7:26 God sent Moses to be their saviour, pointing forward to His sending of the Lord Jesus to redeem us. Moses came to Israel and "shewed (Greek '*optomai*') himself" to them (Acts 7:26). Yet '*optomai*' really means to gaze at, to watch a spectacle. He came to his people, and gazed at them as they fought among themselves, spiritually and emotionally destroyed by the oppression of Egypt. He invited them to likewise gaze upon him as their saviour. This surely prefigures our Lord's consideration of our sinful state. As he grew up in Nazareth he would have thought on this a lot.

7:27 Israel's rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers "stroved against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh" (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They *thrust* Moses *away* from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not *cast away* Israel; He has not treated them as they treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him.

7:31 *wondered*- The double repetition "Moses, Moses" in Ex. 3:4 may be some kind of rebuke. "I *have*" seen the affliction of Israel could suggest that Moses felt God was not sensitive to the pain of His children; he had been living for 40 years feeling forgotten by God. Moses "wondered" at what he saw and heard at the burning bush (Acts 7:31)- a Greek word which is often used in a negative sense concerning people lacking faith and insight when they should have had it.

7:35 The loneliness of Moses as a type of Christ in showing this kind of love must surely represent that of our Lord. They went to a height which was generally beyond the appreciation of the men among whom they lived. The Spirit seems to highlight the loneliness of Moses by saying that at the same time as Moses *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Israel *refused* him (the same Greek word is used; Heb. 11:24; Acts 7:35). He was rejected by both the world and God's people: for 40 long years. As Israel envied Moses for spiritual reasons (Ps. 106:16; Acts 7:9), so they did Christ (Mt. 27:18), after the pattern of the brothers' spiritual envy of Joseph (Gen. 37:11). Spiritual envy leading to persecution is quite a common feature in Biblical history (Job, Jeremiah, Paul...). And it isn't absent from the Christian experience either.

Israel hated him, they thrust him from them (Acts 7:39); due to their provocation he failed to enter the land. He had done so much for them, yet they bitterly rejected him- "this Moses", as they called him (Ex. 32:1,23 cp. Acts 7:35). But when God wanted to destroy them and make of Moses a great nation, he pleaded for them with such intensity that he achieved what few prayerful men have: a change (not just a delay in outworking) in God's categorically stated intention.

Stephen in Acts 7 brings out the sheer grace of God in redeeming Israel. Although Israel rejected Moses as their ruler and deliverer, "the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer" (Acts 7:35). They didn't want to be saved from Egypt through Moses, and yet God did save them from Egypt through Moses. Israel at that time were exactly like us; while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, we were redeemed in prospect from a world we didn't want to leave. We were saved- and are saved- almost in spite of ourselves. That we were predestined to such great salvation is one of redemption's finest mysteries.

7:36 "He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs... in the wilderness forty years"; yet Ex.12:41; 33:1 say that the bringing out of Israel was at the Red Sea. These two 'bringings out' of Egypt (the flesh) are experienced by us, firstly at baptism, and secondly in actually entering the Kingdom at the second coming. Our bringing out from the Kingdom of darkness into the sphere of God's rulership only occurs in prospect at baptism and must be confirmed at the end of our wilderness wandering. See on 1 Pet. 2:10.

7:38 We find Moses as a type of Christ also presented as representative of Israel, and therefore able to completely sympathise with them in their physical afflictions and spiritual weaknesses. Thus the Spirit says (in the context of presenting Moses as a type of Christ) that Moses was "*in* (not "with") the ecclesia in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38), stressing the way in which he was in their midst rather than distanced from them.

Acts 7:38 (especially the Diaglott translation) speaks as if the Angel was physically present with Moses on the journey: "he (Moses) was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spake to him in the Mount Sina and with our fathers". In passing, this implies that it was the same Angel

(Michael) who gave the promises to Abraham, who gave the Law, and who went with them through the wilderness. Truly He is the Angel connected with Israel! See on Ps. 78:60

7:39 Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews "thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom.

7:42 On their journey to Canaan, the Israelites worshipped idols. Because of this, "God turned, and gave them up (over) to worship the host of heaven... I gave them up to the hardness of their hearts" (Acts 7:42; Ps. 81:12 AVmg.). God reached a stage where He actually encouraged Israel to worship idols; He confirmed them in their rejection of Him. And throughout their history, He encouraged them in their idolatry (Ez. 20:39; Am. 4:4).

7:43 A classic example of Angelic co-operation is found in the account of the first Passover. Ex. 12:23 says that the Passover Angel would "pass (hover) over the door and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you". 'The destroyer' refers to an Angel- Ps. 78 speaks of the "Angels of evil" who brought the plagues, and as the plague of the firstborn was one of them, it follows that this too must have been brought about by an Angel. The same Angel is referred to in Jer. 51:1- the "destroying spirit" ["wind", AV] who was sent forth by God to smite Babylon; note how Revelation also describes Babylon as being destroyed by a singular Angel. In another Angelic context we read: "O Lord my Lord; will you be the destroyer of the remnant of Israel?" (Ez. 9:8 Heb.). "Let the Angel of the Lord persecute them" (Ps. 35:5,6) has the same Angel in mind. The destroyer Angel is perhaps alluded to in Job 18:13: "The firstborn of death". Job 33:23 LXX certainly is relevant: "Though there should be one thousand Angels of death...". This same 'destroyer' Angel is referred to again in the context of being present with Israel to punish them if they disobeyed in 1 Cor. 10:10 - "they were destroyed of the destroyer". So we have here on this first Passover night the situation where one Angel is commissioned to do a certain task- in this case kill all firstborn in Egypt- and goes ahead with this task blind to any other consideration, e. g. whether the people concerned were obedient Israelites or not. Therefore another Angel was needed, presumably more powerful or senior to the 'destroyer', to stop the faithful Israelites being killed. Of course God could have given the 'destroyer' additional instructions about not killing the Jews; but it seems to be God's way of working both amongst us and among the Angels to assign each a specific role in the execution of His purpose, and to take pleasure in seeing each Angel or saint working in loving co-operation with another, after the pattern of the Angelic co-operation. Ez. 20:8-14 talks more about this destroyer Angel: "Neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out My fury upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted among the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes... My sabbaths... the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness... but I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted". The

destroyer Angel went out through the midst of the land of Egypt to kill the firstborn. He wanted to kill the Jews too because they were not forsaking the idols of Egypt- i. e. they were preparing to take them out of Egypt with them (Ex. 13:17 and Acts 7:43 lend support here). "I"- God manifest now in the Passover Angel- "wrought for My name's sake" (v. 9) against the Destroyer that this should not be done. He remembered how He had "made myself known unto them" in the burning bush, by saying there "I am the Lord your God" (v. 5). "Mine eye (the Passover Angel) spared them from destroying them", v. 17; i. e. from the work of the Destroyer Angel, both in Egypt at the night of Passover and also in the wilderness. Notice how God is spoken of as both wanting to destroy them and also striving for His Name's sake (born by the Angels) so this should not happen. It seems sensible to interpret this by reference to the two powerful Angels active at this time, perhaps representing the groups of Angels of good and Angels of evil (i. e. disaster bringing) which appear to be in Heaven.

Ezekiel 20 describes how Israel took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea; indeed, they lugged a whole pagan tabernacle system with them through the wilderness, in addition to the true tabernacle (Acts 7:43,44).

Stephen pointed out, by the inflection which he gave to his OT quotations, that Israel's service of God was meaningless because at the same time they worshipped their idols: "O ye house of Israel, *have ye offered* to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch" as well as Yahweh's (Acts 7:43). This was a rhetorical question. They offered the sacrifices, but actually they didn't. And what is the difference between "slain beasts" and "sacrifices"? Aren't sacrifices only slain beasts? The point is that the animals they gave were only slain beasts; nothing more, not real offerings, not real, acceptable sacrifice. "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth it not" (Hos. 8:13). And likewise we can dress up our devotions with the appearance of real sacrifice when there is nothing there at all.

7:46-49 Stephen was accused by the Jews of blaspheming the temple. In reply, he gives a potted history of Israel, emphasizing how the faithful were constantly on the move rather than being settled in one physical place. He was subtly digging at the Jewish insistence that the temple was where God lived. In this context, he refers to Solomon's building of the temple in a negative light. He says that David tried to find a *tabernacle* for God, "*But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne... what house will ye build me?*" (Acts 7:46-49). This cannot mean 'God no longer dwells in the temple as He used to before Christ's death', because the reason given is that the prophet Isaiah says that God cannot live in houses. This reason was true in Isaiah's time, before the time of Christ. It would seem that Stephen is politely saying: 'Solomon made this mistake of thinking that God can be limited to a physical building. You're making just the same mistake'. And he goes on to make a comment which could well allude to this: "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers (including Solomon) did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Further evidence that Stephen saw Solomon's building of the temple in a negative light is provided by the link between Acts 7:41 and 48: "*They made a calf... and rejoiced in the works of their own hands ... howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands*". The word "made" is stressed in the record of Solomon's building the temple (2 Chron. 3:8,10,14-16; 4:1,2,6-9,14,18,19,21). The work of the temple was very much produced by men's *hands* (2 Chron. 2:7,8). Things made with hands refers to idols in several Old Testament passages (e.g. Is. 2:8; 17:8; 31:7). Significantly, Solomon's temple is described as being made with hands in 1 Chron. 29:5. And it may be significant that the words of Is. 66:1,2 concerning God not living in temples are quoted by Paul with reference to pagan temples in Acts 17:24, and concerning the temple in Jerusalem by Stephen. The building of the temple became an idol to Solomon. Human motives get terribly mixed.

It was God's clearly expressed wish that He should *not* live in a physical house (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Acts 7:48; 17:24). Yet He accommodated Himself to human weakness in wanting a physical house in which to worship Him; He came and lived (in a sense) in just such a house.

7:54 The Jews are described as 'gnashing their teeth' in furious rejection of Stephen's inspired words (Acts 7:54); such language must surely connect with the oft repeated description of the rejected gnashing their teeth at the judgment (Mt. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30); as if those Jews acted out their own rejection by their attitude to the word in this life.

7:55 In his time of dying, Stephen saw the Lord Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55). But about 13 times in the New Testament, the point is made that the Lord *sits* there, unlike the Mosaic priests who *stood* (Heb. 10:12). Jesus was passionately feeling for Stephen; and He just as emotionally and passionately feels for us in our struggles. This alone should lift us out of the mire of mediocrity. Prayer will have meaning and power. It won't just be the repetitious conscience-salver it can descend into.

7:56- see on Acts 2:33-36.

We are invited to see Christ as sitting there, unlike the nervous High Priests of old on their annual entry into the Holiest *standing*; and we are surely invited to see the connection with the fact that Stephen saw the Lord *standing* at God's right hand, caught up, as it were, in the passion of mediation for His suffering servant (Acts 7:56), whereas normally He offers our prayers seated.

As the human judge condemned Stephen- presumably by standing up to condemn him as usually happened in law courts (Acts 7:56 cp. Is. 3:13)- the Lord Jesus stands up in the court of Heaven as intercessor for Stephen. And this happens time and again in our lives, as and when and if we suffer the abuse of human condemnation and misjudgment. Although condemned by an earthly court, he confidently makes his appeal before the court of Heaven (Acts 7:56). Doubtless he was further inspired by the basic truth that whoever confesses the Lord Jesus before men, He will confess him before the angels in the court of Heaven (Lk. 12:8).

Stephen's enemies "gnashed on him with their teeth", and his Biblical mind would therefore have raced to Job 16:9, describing the behaviour of the wicked towards the faithful: "He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth". The context goes on: "Now, behold, my witness is in heaven and my record is on high" (v. 19). Surely Stephen had thought ahead to this, for as his enemies gnashed their teeth against him, "he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). He looked up to Heaven and saw His witness, faithful and true, standing there as he expected.

7:59 Stephen's death sentence was against Pharisaic principles; and it was a studied rejection of the more gentle, tolerant attitude taught by Gamaliel, Paul's early mentor ("though I distribute all my belonging to feed the poor..." in 1 Cor. 13:3 is Paul virtually quoting Gamaliel- he clearly was aware of his stance). People like Paul who come from strict, authoritarian backgrounds can have a tendency to anger, and yet in Paul there seems also to have operated an inferiority complex, a longing for power, and a repressed inner guilt. Although Paul changed from an angry man to one dominated by love, to the extent that he could write hymns of love such as 1 Cor. 13, there were times when under provocation the old bitterness and anger flashed back. We too have these moments, and yet in the fact that Paul too experienced them even in spiritual maturity, we have some measure of comfort.

7:59,60 Realizing, sensing how he was living out the sufferings of his Lord, all this really motivated Stephen; when he asked for forgiveness for his tormentors and asked for his spirit to be received (7:59,60), he was so evidently reflecting the words of the Lord in His time of final agony and spiritual and physical extension (Lk. 23:34,46). He saw the similarities between his sufferings and

those of the Lord; and therefore he went ahead and let the spirit of the Lord Jesus live in him. He personalized those words of the Lord which he already well knew, and made them his own.

7:60 The sins of the wicked are written down against them, to be discussed with them at the judgment (Acts 7:60 Diaglott). “Charge them not with this sin” (Acts 7:60) certainly sounds as if Stephen expected that individual actions of human sin will be raised with them at the day of judgment. And yet the wonder of it all, is that our prayers now for our enemies can result in their not being charged with those sins. We are in that sense called to do the work of the advocate, to reflect the saving mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus in our prayer life right now. Our prayers for others really can have an effect upon what will be raised with them at the judgment- for that’s what Stephen prayed for in his time of dying. And are we to think that his wonderful prayer went unanswered?

8:1- see on Jn. 10:13; Rom. 1:32.

Luke uses the word for ‘Diaspora’ to describe how the brethren were “scattered abroad” (Acts 8:1,4; 11:19); he saw this persecution as turning them into the new Israel.

Acts 8:1 records that the entire membership of the Jerusalem ecclesia was scattered; the way we read of them numbering thousands by the time of Acts 21:20 suggests that to avoid persecution those who remained reconciled themselves with the temple, becoming a sect of Judaism, presumably with the tithe and temple tax going to the temple rather than to the ecclesia. These “thousands” of Acts 21 were probably largely converted since the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen. The original Jerusalem ecclesia had gone and preached to the Gentiles (Acts 11:19,20), which wasn’t what the later Jerusalem ecclesia supported. Indeed, Acts 11:22 goes straight on to record that the Jerusalem ecclesia sent representatives to find out what was going on. In order to escape further persecution, the Jerusalem ecclesia threw in their lot with the temple and orthodox Judaism. Finally Paul wrote to the Jerusalem ecclesia, as recorded in Hebrews. He sorrows that they fail to see the supremacy of Christ over Moses, and that despite initially enduring such persecution and loss of their goods (during the early persecutions), they had lost their real faith in Christ. The fact they weren’t *then* being persecuted indicates they had reconciled with the temple. They needed to hold on, to keep the joy of faith they once had, rather than become hard hearted, judgmental, works-centred. But they didn’t listen.

8:2 When the Romans began persecuting the early church, only the leaders were seized, while crowds of obvious Christians went unpunished. This was perhaps because paganism was utterly dependent on its elite, and most cults could easily be destroyed from the top. This explains a few Bible puzzles- why devout men could carry Stephen to burial and yet be unharmed; why the apostles could remain in Jerusalem [they were seen as unlearned and ignorant fishermen] whilst the others in the Jerusalem ecclesia had to flee (e.g. the great company of priests who became obedient to the faith). And yet Christianity spread yet further. Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.63-64) expresses surprise that the “tribe of Christians” [indicating their unity] had not disappeared after the death of their founder, “the [so-called] Christ”. Unlike other religions, the faith of the followers was not in the leaders- if the organization and leaders were taken away, would our church continue? The early church did- and flourished. We must beware lest our system of elders and organizations doesn’t take away our individual commitment to preach and personally care for people, and especially for the brotherhood. First century Christianity was a mass movement, rooted in a highly committed rank and file; and therefore it had the advantage of the best of all marketing techniques: person-to-person influence. This in the end is how we can preach far more effectively than through mass meetings or organized campaigns [not that I am saying not to hold these].

8:3- see on Acts 26:10,11.

Note how in Acts 8:3, “the church” is paralleled with “every house” [church]: “Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house”. That’s a very significant parallel. Those house churches in sum were the church of Christ. See on Eph. 3:15.

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8:6 We read that a whole crowd "with one accord" believed Philip's preaching of the gospel (Acts 8:6). There was evidently a crowd mentality- every person in the crowd had the same mindset towards Philip's preaching at that moment. Now it seems to me that we would likely judge such momentary, mass response as mere passing emotion. But God is more positive- the record which He inspired counts it to them as real belief, just as the "crowd" who followed the Lord are credited with faith, even though soon afterwards they were doubting Him. That indicates to me not only the hopefulness of God for human response to His grace, but also His willingness to accept people.

8:7 When we read in Acts 8:7 of unclean spirits crying out, the Eastern (Aramaic) text reads: “Many who were mentally afflicted cried out”. This is because, according to George Lamsa, “‘Unclean spirits’ is an Aramaic term used to describe lunatics”. It should be noted that Lamsa was a native Aramaic speaker with a fine understanding of Aramaic terms. He grew up in a remote part of Kurdistan which had maintained the Aramaic language almost unchanged since the time of Jesus. It’s significant that Lamsa’s extensive writings indicate that he failed to see in the teachings of Jesus and Paul any support for the popular conception of the Devil and demons – he insisted that the Semitic and Aramaic terms used by them have been misunderstood by Western readers and misused in order to lend support for their conceptions of a personal Devil and demons.

8:8 One gets the impression from the 2nd century writings that the joy dropped out of Christianity; and yet the joy of the converts, and the urgent need to retain that first joy of conversion, is a major theme in the NT (e.g. Acts 8:8; 13:52; 15:3). This strange joy must have been a major factor in confirming the Gospel as authentic.

8:12 “The kingdom of God’s sake” (Lk. 18:29) is paralleled with the sake of the Name of Christ by the account in Mt. 19:29. The things of the Name and the things of the Kingdom were therefore not two different things, rather were they different ways of referring to the same realities.

It is helpful to read Luke and Acts following straight on. It is evident that Luke saw the apostles as continuing the work of preaching that Jesus personally performed. One of the most evident connections is the way in which Luke ten times uses the word ‘euaggelizo’ to describe the Lord’s witness; it occurs only one other time in the other Gospels. And yet Luke uses the word 15 times in Acts to describe the witness of the apostles. He clearly saw them as continuing the ‘evangelion’ of Jesus. As Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom as He walked around Israel in the late 20s of the first century (Lk. 4:43; 8:1; 9:11; 16:16), so His men continued the very same witness (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31).

8:13- see on Acts 2:42.

8:24 As with his preaching, Peter’s pastoral work was shot through with an awareness of his own failure and taste of his Lord’s grace. The lack of energy in our collective care for each other is surely reflective of a lack of awareness of our sinfulness, a shallow grasp of grace, and a subsequent lack of appreciation of the need to lay down our lives for the brethren, as the Lord did for us. Jesus

Himself encouraged Peter to see things this way, in that He arranged circumstances so that Peter had to pray for Simon as Christ had prayed for him (Acts 8:24 cp. Lk. 22:32).

8:26 There is a theme in the New Testament that major response to preaching is often unexpected. The disciples were told to cast the net on the other side, when they were convinced there would be no response. Philip was told to go onto a road in the heat of the day- when nobody was travelling (Acts 8:26). His willingness to go, to do at least something, resulted in an amazing response. This is exactly why predicting response to preaching is well nigh impossible. It's why the geographical spread of the Gospel is so hard to explain when it is humanly analyzed.

8:31- see on Rom. 10:14.

Our Bible reading can be so easily performed on a merely surface level, skimming over words without letting their real import be felt at all. Fred Barling truly observed: "Through long familiarity we have come to read [the Bible] with a phlegm and impassivity which are in sharp contrast to the amazement felt by those who came into actual contact with Jesus, and by those who first read these accounts". Philip realized this when he quizzed the eunuch, with a play on words in the Greek: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Acts 8:31): *ginoskeis ha anaginoskeis?* 'Do you really understand, experientially, what you are understanding by reading?'

8:32 There is great emphasis on the Lord being led (Mt. 26:57; 27:2,31; Mk. 15:16; Jn. 18:13,28; 19:16; and notice how Acts 8:32 changes the quotation from Is. 53 to say that Christ was led (this isn't in the Hebrew text). His passivity is another indication that He was giving His life of His own volition, it wasn't being taken from Him.

8:33- see on Mt. 18:4.

8:35 Our early brethren preached a person, even a personality cult- based around the man Christ Jesus. They preached a Christ-centred Gospel, to the extent that the preaching of the entire Gospel is sometimes summarised as "preaching Christ" (Acts 8:35; 5:42; 28:31). They preached a Man, a more than man, who has loved us more than we loved Him, and more than we ever can love Him. In this there is an imperative for response. It's not the same as demanding obedience merely for the sake of a good time to come.

As He 'began' in the prophets and expounded "in all the scriptures the things *concerning himself*" (Lk. 24:27), so those in Him "*began* at the same scripture, and preached... *Jesus*" (Acts 8:35).

8:40 Luke describes the Lord and His followers as 'passing through' and teaching as He went (Lk. 2:15; 4:30; 5:15; 8:22; 9:6; 11:24; 17:11; 19:1,4); and employs the same word to describe the preaching of the apostles in Acts (8:4,40; 9:32,38; 10:38; 11:19,22; 12:10; 13:6,14; 14:24; 15:3,41; 16:6; 17:23; 18:23,27; 19:1,21; 20:2,25). See on Acts 1:1.

9:1 The Damascus road experience surfaces time and again in Paul's writing and self-consciousness (Rom. 10:2-4; 1 Cor. 9:1,16,17; 15:8-10; 2 Cor. 3:4-4:6; 5:16; Eph. 3:1-13; Phil. 3:4-11; Col. 1:23-29). It is no mere pointless repetition that results in Luke recording Paul's conversion three times in Acts (Acts 9,22,26). Special attention is being paid to his conversion, because he is being set up as the model of all Christian conversion.

9:2- see on Acts 22:19.

9:3- see on Acts 26:10,11.

Light from Heaven. Paul's conversion-commissioning experience on the Damascus road has many similarities with the commissioning of Ezekiel. Ezekiel saw a similar vision of glory, heard "a voice of one that spoke", fell to the ground, resisted the commission, received Divine assurance, rose up by Divine invitation and was prepared for his commission by signs and wonders. The difference was that Paul says he saw the glory of the risen Christ. Ezekiel saw the glory of Yahweh, as the Lord Jesus wasn't in physical existence and hadn't resurrected at his time. But essentially, it was the

same glory- for the glory of the Father is now fully invested in the Son (Rom. 9:23; Phil. 4:19). Ezekiel saw at the head of the vision of glory “the likeness of a man”. He calls this figure the *Kavod*, the glory of God (Ez. 1:29). Although Jesus was not in physical existence at Ezekiel’s time, I suggest that Ezekiel saw a vision of the Lord Jesus in glory. John 12 says that Isaiah likewise saw the glory of the Lord Jesus when he saw a similar vision of glory in Isaiah 6. James 2:1 speaks of “our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory”. Christ is “the Lord of glory”, reflecting the glory of God (Col. 1:27; Heb. 1:3). When Paul writes of our being transformed into “the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49) he seems to have in mind Ez. 1:28 LXX: “The appearance of the image of the glory of the Lord”. “The glory” in Ezekiel is personified- it refers to a person, and I submit that person was a prophetic image of Jesus Christ. But Paul’s big point is that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the Lord’s glory (2 Cor. 3:16- 4:6); just as he did on the Damascus road, and just as Ezekiel did. It follows, therefore, that not only is Paul our example, but our beholding of the Lord’s glory propels us on our personal commission in the Lord’s service, whatever it may be.

9:5- see on Acts 23:1.

Paul was told by Jesus that all those whom he had persecuted were in fact Jesus personally (Acts 9:5). And this idea of the believer being so totally bound up with his or her Lord continues with Paul throughout his life. Thus he takes a prophecy concerning how Christ personally would be the light of the whole world (Is. 49:6), and applies it to himself in explanation of why he was devoted to being a light to the whole world *himself* (Acts 13:47- although 26:23 applies it to Jesus personally).

9:8- see on Acts 13:11.

9:15 The Lord spoke of Paul even before his conversion as "a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:15). The words "chosen" ['elect'] and "vessel" recur frequently in Paul's reasoning in Romans 9-11, where he argues that *we* are chosen vessels, elected / chosen by grace. It's as if Paul is warning us not to see him as a special case, a piece of Divine artwork to be admired in passing; but as a very real example of how God is just as powerfully at work with *us*. Truly Paul 'bore' Christ to the world just as John 'bore' (s.w.) Christ's Gospel (Acts 9:15 = Mt. 3:11).

The obvious objection to the preceding paragraphs is that Paul was a “chosen vessel” to preach the Gospel. And indeed he was. But the above evidence demands, surely, the verdict- that he really is, all the same, our pattern as a preacher. Significantly, Paul describes us all as ‘vessels of election’ just as he was (Acts 9:15 RVmg. = Rom. 9:22,25).

“A chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15) = “The Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you” (Is. 49:7 RSV). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

9:15 Paul was to bear Christ’s name to the world *in that* *he* would suffer great things for the sake of that Name (Acts 9:15,16). His sharing in the Lord’s sufferings was the bearing of the Name before men. The Greek word for ‘bear’ in Acts 9:15 is the same used in Lk. 14:27 about bearing the cross. To bear His name to the world is to bear His cross. The record of the disciples’ persecution for the sake of their witness is studded with references to their preaching being *in* the Name of Jesus (Acts 4:2,7,9,10,12 RV). Whoever heard them heard Jesus (Lk. 10:16). The prophecy of Psalm 2 concerning how “the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ” was appropriated by the preachers to themselves even though it is elsewhere applied to the crucifixion (Acts 4:26).

9:16 Right at his baptism, Paul realized that the Lord Jesus intended to make Paul fellowship the spirit of his experience on the cross (Acts 9:16). Later, Paul speaks of how he is "filling up what is lacking" in the aim Christ had set him: to fellowship the crucified Lord Jesus (Phil. 3:10). As the sufferings of Christ (i.e. his ability to relate to them) increasingly abounded in Paul (2 Cor. 1:5 Gk.), so did his comfort and certainty that he would be in the Kingdom; because he knew that if he suffered with Christ, he would share his glorious resurrection (2 Cor. 4:11,12). As we grow,

therefore, our realization that we are progressively sharing the sufferings of Christ should increase; our understanding of the memorial meeting (which reminds us of this) will deepen, as we appreciate more what it means to take the cup of his pain. The need and simple beauty of the breaking of bread becomes more logical; taking those emblems becomes in a sense more difficult, yet more sobering and comforting. The point is that as we grow, the centre of our attention will increasingly be the Lord Jesus and his cross.

9:17- see on Lk. 1:14.

9:20 Consider two parallel descriptions of Paul's early preaching:

Paul "preached Jesus, that he is the son of God" (Acts 9:20); Gal. 1:16 describes this as God being pleased to reveal His Son in Paul.

Paul had the Son of God within he; he had the spirit / mind of Christ. And it was this which gave credibility and power to his preaching Jesus as the Son of God. And God eagerly manifested Himself and His Son through this.

9:22 At his conversion, Paul "increased... in strength" (Acts 9:22). But he repeatedly uses the same word, particularly in his later letters, to describe how Christ strengthened him (Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:1; 4:17).

Acts 9:22 records how Paul preached "proving that this is very Christ". This is a strange way to put it; it's as if Paul himself was standing there showing in his person, Christ Himself. Preaching is a revealing to men of the Christ that is within us; this is what witnessing in Christ is really about, rather than pushing bills or placing press adverts or writing letters. Not that any of these things are to be decried, but the essence is that we from deep within ourselves reveal Christ to men. This is why those who witness to Him, as only those in Him can, testify to His especial presence in this work. The promise that "I am with you always" was in the context of being near the preacher as he or she witnesses.

9:27- see on Eph. 6:20.

9:29 Sometimes there was simple, joyful proclamation of the good news (*euaggelizein*), sometimes patient comparison of the OT Scriptures (*suzetein*, Acts 9:29, *paratithestai*, 17:3, *sumbibazein*, 9:22); at other times there was the utter defeat of the listener by argument (*sunchunein*, 9:22). This is a far cry from the blanket attitude to 'the world' which our preachers so often show. There *is* a place for intellectual argument; belief is a matter of the mind as well as the heart.

9:34- see on Lk. 5:25.

Peter told Aeneas: "Jesus Christ healeth thee" (Acts 9:34 RV) when of course it was Peter standing there healing him. He was Christ-manifest in his witness, just as we should be.

9:39 When Peter resurrects Dorcas, he asked the weeping crowd to depart before he raised her (Acts 9:39,40)- exactly repeating the Lord's procedure when He raised Jairus' daughter. Note how she is laid in a chamber, she is spoken to by Peter, she opens her eyes and sits up, and Peter presents her alive and asks for her to be given food. All this was evidently parallel to what Peter had been especially invited by Jesus to come and witness when He raised the girl during His ministry. The events Peter had been witnessed had been especially arranged so that when they repeated themselves in his future life, he was able to see the similarities and act as a true follower and mimicker of his Lord.

9:40 The way he put everyone out of the room, turned to the body and said "Tabitha, arise", and she rose up, is exactly the way the Lord acted (Acts 9:40 cp. Lk. 8:54). Consciously or unconsciously, his very body language and words reflected those of the Lord.

9:41- see on Acts 3:7.

10:3 In Acts 10:3,22,25: an Angel 'comes in' to Cornelius and gives him hope of salvation, and then Peter 'comes in' to Cornelius and explains that hope in more concrete terms. Peter was acting out what his guardian Angel had prepared for him to do, just as Israel had to follow the leading of the guiding Angel in the wilderness. We too must as it were follow our Angel.

10:4 Cornelius had his generous gifts responded to in the same way as his prayers- in that Peter was sent to teach him the Gospel and baptize him (Acts 10:4). This suggests that our good deeds are seen as an expression of our essential self, and are treated as prayers. Yet those good deeds are not in themselves verbalized requests. It is also doubtful whether Cornelius was specifically praying for more knowledge and the opportunity of baptism. But this is how his prayers were interpreted by God, and this passive though unexpressed desire was interpreted and responded to.

Prayer is likened to incense coming up before God. But so also is the almsgiving of Cornelius; his good deeds expressed a fine spirituality in his heart, and this was counted by God as prayer (Acts 10:4). Prayer is seen as an incense offering (Ps. 141:2); but the generosity of Mary (Jn. 12:3), the work of preaching (2 Cor. 2:16); living "a life of love" (Eph. 5:2 NIV); giving money to the needy (Phil. 4:18) are all seen as a fragrant incense offering. The act is the prayer. Mary's anointing was to be seen as a "memorial" (Mk. 14:9), but the only other times this word is used are in connection with the prayers of Cornelius (Acts 10:4, cp. the OT idea of prayerful people being God's 'rememberancers'). Likewise, prophecy does not have to refer to specific, lexical statements; it can refer to the spirit and implication behind the recorded words.

10:5 The sense of the physical presence of the Angel was shown in Peter's case in the matter of Cornelius. Acts 10:5 says that the Angel told Cornelius to send men to Joppa to ask for Peter, whilst the Angel ("The spirit", v. 19) tells Peter in v. 20 that He has sent the men, showing how God works through men. Thus Peter heard the voice of an Angel in his vision, and this awareness of the Angel is perhaps continued when Peter says in v. 33 "we are all here present before God"- i. e. before the Angel which both he and Cornelius were conscious had led them together. And later when Peter was in prison it was maybe that same Angel that led him forth. How relieved and safe he must have felt as he walked through those two streets with the Angel next to him! But the fact is that the Angel walked beside him through much of his life, although his eyes like ours were holden from seeing Him. So often in our lives we would have so much more courage if only we could see in faith that Angel next to us. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

10:9 Jesus removed prayer from being mere liturgy into being a part of real, personal life with God. The way Peter prays at 12 noon (Acts 10:9), and how Paul urges us to pray *all the time* (Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2) are therefore radical departures from the concept of praying at set times, three times / day.

10:15 Consider how the unclean animals which Peter saw in the vision represented all the Gentile world (Acts 10:15,28). They had already all been "cleansed" by the blood of Christ, but He was dead in vain, the cleansing achieved for nothing, unless the likes of Peter took the message to them. The more and the wider and the more powerfully we do this, the more we enable the cross of Christ to be victorious, to achieve its end, the more 'worthwhile' as it were was the Lord's sacrifice.

10:21 "I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?" (Acts 10:21) is full of allusion to the Lord in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:56; Jn. 18:4-6). There is perhaps no exact sense in the allusions; but they reflect the fact that the experience of the Lord's death and resurrection so indelibly impressed Peter that he reflected it both consciously and unconsciously. Likewise with us- even our body language should reflect our experience of such great salvation in so great a Saviour.

10:14- see on Ez. 4:10-14.

An example of relevant Old Testament quotation is shown when Christ asked Peter to kill and eat unclean animals. He replied by quoting from Ez. 4:14, where Ezekiel refuses to eat similar food when asked to by the Angel. Perhaps Peter saw himself as Ezekiel's antitype in his witnessing against Israel's rejection of the word of God in Christ (note how Ez. 4:16 is a prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction in AD70). 'In the same way as God made a concession to Ezekiel about this command to eat unclean food', Peter reasoned, 'so perhaps my Lord will do for me'. But the Lord was to teach him even greater things than Ezekiel.

10:15- see on Acts 10:35,36.

The fact we can be guilty of causing others to stumble means that we can limit God's gracious plan for them. By refusing to preach to the Gentiles, Peter was 'making common' what God had potentially cleansed (Acts 10:15 RV). We can spiritually *destroy* our brother, for whom Christ died (Rom. 14:15); we can undo the work of the cross for a brother who would otherwise be saved by it. We can make others sin (Ex. 23:33; 1 Sam. 2:24; 1 Kings 16:19).

10:21 Peter was full of unconscious allusions to the Lord's life and words in the Gospels. Consider how he says to Cornelius: "I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?" (Acts 10:21). He is combining allusions to Mt. 26:50 and Jn. 18:4-6, but without any apparent meaning. The similarities are too great to pass off as co-incidence. The events in the garden were so permanently imprinted in his subconscious that they just came out.

10:34 We have spoken of how Peter was so powerful as a preacher, standing only a stone's throw from where he denied his Lord, to make a speech which is studded with conscious and unconscious reference to his own denials and need for the Lord's salvation. Yet consider in more detail his preaching to Cornelius: "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him [Peter alludes here to Old Testament passages such as Dt. 1:17; 10:17; Prov. 24:23; Is. 64:5]. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel...that word, ye know" (Acts 10:34-37). Peter is saying that he only *now* perceives the truth of those well known Old Testament passages. He is admitting that the truth of his Lord's criticism of him, that he had been so slow of heart to believe what the prophets had spoken. And yet Peter masterfully goes on to show solidarity with his readers- he tells them that they too had already heard "the word" and yet now they like him needed to believe the word which they already knew. In doing this, Peter is bridge building, between his own humanity and that of his hearers. And the wonder of it all is that it seems this happened quite naturally. He didn't psychologically plan it all out. His own recognition of sinfulness quite naturally lead him into it.

10:35 Whoever truly works righteousness "is accepted" with God right now (Acts 10:35), as well as at the final judgment. Some faithful men experience condemnation for their sins now, with the result that they repent and therefore at the day of judgment will not receive that condemnation

10:35,36 Peter's grasp of the extent of Christ's Lordship was reflected in the scope of his preaching. He had known it before, but understood it only to a limited extent (see *Peter And Christ*). It seems that he preferred to understand the commission to preach "remission of sins *among* all nations" as meaning to the Jewish diaspora scattered amongst all nations (Lk. 24:47)- notwithstanding the copious hints in the Lord's teaching that His salvation was for literally all men. He preached forgiveness (s.w. remission) *to Israel* because he understood that this was what the Lord's death had enabled (Acts 5:31). It was Israel who needed it, because they had crucified God's Son- this seems to have been his thinking. Peter applies the word "all" (as in "to all nations") to his Jewish audiences (Acts 2:14,36; 3:13; 4:10). But he was taught in the Cornelius incident that because Christ is "Lord of *all*", therefore men from *every* (s.w. "all") nation can receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:35,36). He makes the link back to the preaching commission in Acts 10:43: *all* in *every* nation who believe can receive remission of sins (s.w. Lk. 24:47)- as he was commanded to preach in the great commission. He came to see that the desperate need for reconciliation with God was just as

strong for those who had not directly slain His Son; for, Peter may have mused, all men would have held him “condemned by heaven” if they had been Jerusalem Jews. And he realized that Christ was truly Lord of all, all men, everywhere, and not just of a few hundred thousand Jews. And with us too. The wider and the higher our vision and conception of the ascended Christ, the wider and more insistently powerful will be our appeal to literally all men. Yet Peter had heard the Lord’s words, when He had asked them to tell all nations, and when He had prophesied that His cross would draw all men unto Him. And his comment that “unto you *first* God, having raised up His Son, sent him to bless you” (Acts 3:26) suggests he suspected a wider benefit from the resurrection than just Israel. But all this knowledge lay passive within him; as with his understanding of the cross, he just couldn’t face up to the full implications of what he heard. But it was his recognition of the extent of Christ’s Lordship that motivated him to make the change, to convert the knowledge into practice, to throw off the shackles of traditional understanding that had held him from understanding the clear truth of words he had heard quite clearly. An example would be the words recorded in Mk. 7:19 RV: All meats were made clean by Christ. But Peter had to be told: “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:15). He had to be taught to simply accept the word he loved, with all its implications.

10:36- see on 1 Cor. 6:19.

Acts 10:36 speaks of “the word... which was proclaimed throughout all Judea... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit...”, as if the word of the Gospel is the Gospel story as recorded by Mark and the others.

Acts 10:36,37 suggests that the word of God is the preaching of it- we cannot know the word and not preach it: “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace... that word, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea”. The word is the preaching / publishing of it.

10:37- see on 1 Pet. 1:17.

10:39- see on Acts 5:30.

10:43- see on Acts 10:35,36.

Peter had been taught that God *accepted* *whoever* believed in Him, regardless of their race. But now Paul had to remind Peter that truly, God “*accepteth* no man’s person” (Gal. 2:6). The same Greek word was a feature of the Cornelius incident: whoever believes *receives*, accepts, remission of sins (Acts 10:43), and they *received*, accepted, the Holy Spirit as well as the Jewish brethren (Acts 10:47). With his matchless humility, Peter accepted Paul’s words. His perceptive mind picked up these references (and in so doing we have a working model of how to seek to correct our brethren, although the success of it will depend on their sensitivity to the word which we both quote and allude to). But so easily, a lifetime of spiritual learning could have been lost by the sophistry of legalistic brethren. It’s a sober lesson.

10:47- see on Mt. 19:14.

11:2- see on Acts 15:5.

11:3- see on Heb. 13:9.

Eventually Peter wouldn’t eat with the Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:12). But he had learnt to eat with Gentile brethren in Acts 11:3; he had justified doing so to his brethren and persuaded them of its rightness, and had been taught and showed, so patiently, by his Lord that he should not make such distinctions. But now, all that teaching was undone. There’s a lesson here for many a slow-to-speak brother or sister- what you start by passively going along with in ecclesial life, against your better judgment, you may well end up by actively advocating. It can be fairly conclusively proven that Mark’s Gospel is in fact Peter’s.

11:14 Cornelius was told “*words*, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14). Belief is essential for salvation, and yet belief must have some intellectual basis; there must be some knowledge to be believed before faith can exist. Therefore it is utterly impossible to divorce understanding from ultimate acceptability. This is because the vital virtue of faith is rooted in understanding.

11:16 When dealing with the tricky ecclesial situation which arose over the admission of the Gentiles, Peter had truth and right on his side. But in his account of what happened to the elders, he constantly makes allusion to his own failures. “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said...” is an unmistakeable reference to his remembering of the Lord’s word all too late after his denials. It’s as if he was saying: ‘And there I was again, not remembering the Lord’s word, not facing up to what it obviously implied, almost denying Him again by hesitating to accept these Gentiles’. He comments that the vision of the unclean animals came “even to me”, as if he was the least worthy to have been involved with this work.

11:17- see on Mt. 19:14; Rom. 15:16.

Growing appreciation of the excellency of the Lord Jesus was also a feature of Peter's spiritual growth; he was the first to coin the phrase "the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 11:17); although *never* did he call the Lord simply "Jesus" (indeed it seems that none of the disciples addressed and rarely spoke about Jesus without giving Him a title). Trace through the path of Peter's growth on appreciation of the Lord's greatness: Mt. 16:22 (*arguing* with Him!); Acts 2:36; 10:36; 11:17. When Peter realized he was looking at the risen Christ standing on the shore, he exclaimed, with evident appreciation: "It is *the Lord*" - not 'Jesus' (Jn. 21:7). And even though he had to swim to meet Him, Peter cast his fisher's coat about him to cover his bare arms and legs. He realized the greatness which attached to the Man from Nazareth on account of His resurrection. After the pattern of Peter, some of the early brethren likewise reached this appreciation of the Lord's excellence *and the importance of it* as the climax of their probations; for many were slain simply because they insisted on calling Jesus of Nazareth "Lord", when Nero had insisted that *he* be called 'Lord' (cp. Acts 25:26). Those brethren (and sisters) died with the confession of Jesus as *Lord* on their lips- and more importantly, deep in their hearts.

The grace of God is manifested to the world through the preaching of the ecclesia; and in this sense, God has allowed His ability to manifest this Grace to be limited according to our effort in witness. Peter could have chosen not to baptize Gentiles; and if he had done so, he would have withstood God, like the Pharisees he would have frustrated the counsel of God (Acts 11:17). As in the Song of Solomon (1:8), the bride [the church] follows the sheep [believers] to find the shepherd [Jesus]. The sheep lead others to the shepherd. God has “manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me” (Tit. 1:3).

11:17,18 “The like gift as he did also unto us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ... the Gentiles also... repented unto life” (Acts 11:17,18 RV). It was at Pentecost that Peter saw himself as having repented / converted, to a higher level.

11:18 In our moments of repentance, both at baptism and on the many subsequent occasions, it is hard to believe that in prospect God's enormous Spirit power has really prepared a way for us to be totally spiritual. Israel on Carmel with Elijah were in a similar position; thus Elijah prayed "Hear me, O Lord... that this people may know... that Thou hast turned their heart back again" (1 Kings 18:37). He meant: 'They don't realize that you are so willing for them to repent, that in prospect you have touched their hearts and made them do it; answering my prayer dramatically may motivate them to make the necessary freewill response in repenting, so that the spiritual help you have made available in prospect, can be theirs in reality'. Even the frankest comparison of ourselves with that motley crew of hardened apostates should inspire afresh the belief within us that God is willing that all His people should continually come to repentance. The reference in Acts 11:18 to God *granting*

repentance shows that He is active in developing our desire to repent; "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom.2:4).

11:19- see on Acts 8:1.

11:22 The Jerusalem ecclesia told Barnabus to go only as far as Antioch; he didn't tell them how wrong they were to boss him around. He went beyond Antioch to Tarsus, took Paul, and then went down to Antioch (Acts 11:22,25). In the end, whilst we must respect those who deserve it, we are personal servants of the Lord who died for us, and we must follow Him according to our personal conscience. The lesson from this is that we should seek to be as positive as possible in the midst of this tension between right and left- especially in the way we write or speak about the problems. We should seek to move the Gospel forward, whatever unhappy disagreements there are between those already baptized.

11:22- see on Acts 8:1.

11:26 All Christians are disciples, 'learners' (Acts 11:26); the twelve men who followed the Lamb of God around Galilee, with all their misunderstandings and lack of faith, were and are symbols of us all. The focus was upon Him, not each other. We are all learners of Christ, taught by He Himself (Eph. 4:20,21). And we are to make all men into disciples (Mt. 28:19 RV); to make them learners of Jesus too.

11:29 First century people were relatively passive to disasters compared to Euro-American people today. A famine was an act of God, of nature, and it had to be accepted; the idea of one ethnic group taking up a collection for another one in another place who were suffering from famine was a real paradigm breaker. And that's just what Paul engineered, in arranging for the Gentile converts to take up such a collection for the Jewish believers in Palestine who were suffering famine.

The Mosaic Law countered this idea that only the rich can be generous. The purification after childbirth and the cleansing of the leper allowed a lower grade of offering to be made by the very poor- to underline that *no one* is exempted from giving to the Lord, no matter how poor they are. Consider the emphasis: "Every man shall give *as he is able*... he shall offer *even such as he is able to get*... then the disciples (consciously motivated by these principles?) *every man according to his ability*, determined to send relief [one gets the picture of a convoy of brethren going to Jerusalem, carrying a little bit of meal from Sister Dorcas, a few coins from brother Titus...] ... let *every one of you* lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (Dt. 16:17; Lev. 14:30,31; Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2).

12:8- see on Jn. 21:13.

When the Angel told Peter "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals... and follow me" (Acts 12:8), he was alluding back to the Lord's words to Peter, that when he would be old, others would gird him and carry him to his death (Jn. 21:18). The Angel was therefore saying that the time of Peter's death had not yet come. The lesson is, that the amount of comfort and reassurance Peter took from the Angels' words would have been proportionate to the degree to which he had meditated on his Lord's prophecy. And so with us.

12:11 Peter was delivered from prison as a result of the Angel being "sent forth"- from the court of Heaven, by the prayers of the other believers at their prayer meeting (Acts 12:11 RV). When those same believers commented: "It is his Angel" (:15) they were perhaps not mocking Rhoda; rather they were thanking God that Peter's guardian Angel had indeed been sent forth due to their prayers.

12:15 The believers in Acts 12 gathered together to hold a prayer meeting for Peter's release. Their prayers were answered; he stood outside, knocking on the door. But they simply didn't believe it. They couldn't conceive their prayer was answered. They mocked poor Rhoda and told her to go back and watch the door and not disturb them any more while they prayed for Peter's release. And having mocked her, they got back on their knees and asked again for his release. We can pray, in

faith apparently, but with no very deep faith that the answer in actual reality will happen or may already have been granted.

12:17- see on Mt. 28:10.

When the Angel 'brought Peter forth out of the prison', Acts 12:17 records this as "the Lord" (Jesus) doing so (RV). He worked through [one specific?] Angel.

There seem to be a number of unconscious allusions by Peter back to his own failures- e.g. "Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren" (Acts 12:17) was an allusion to the women being told to go and shew the news of the resurrection to the brethren *and Peter*, who was then in spiritual crisis. Those words, that fact, was ingrained upon Peter to the point that he unconsciously builds it in to his own words. In Acts 12:17 the same Greek words are used by Peter as by the Lord: "Go shew these things... to the brethren". Peter felt that his deliverance from prison was like the Lord's resurrection, and perhaps unconsciously he used the Lord's words to Mary Magdalene. Peter then went "to another place" just as the Lord did on saying those words. He saw that his life was a living out of fellowship with the Lord's mortal experiences, every bit as much as our lives are too.

The way Peter beckons to the disciples to hold their peace, declares how the Lord had brought him out of the prison and death, tells them to go and shew these things to the brethren and then goes "unto another place" is a reflection of the Lord's behaviour after His resurrection (Acts 12:17 cp. Mt. 28:19). Consciously and unconsciously, confirmed by providence, Peter was living out the fact he was in Christ; he was showing the risen Lord to men and women by his words and actions.

12:20 Throughout Scripture, the opposition between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God is highlighted. After the establishment of the first ecclesia in Jerusalem, the Acts record seems to emphasize the pointed conflict between the ecclesia and the world. Being "of one accord" was a hallmark of the early brethren (Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25); but the world were in "one accord" in their opposition to that united ecclesia (Acts 7:57; 12:20; 18:12; 19:29). The two women of Proverbs both have surface similarities; folly parodies wisdom. Thus the words of the adulteress drip honey and oil (Prov. 5:3), just as those of wisdom do (Prov. 16:24). Rabshakeh promised the Jews an Assyrian Kingdom where everyone sat under their own vine and fig tree- consciously parodying Micah's contemporary prophecies of God's future Kingdom (Is. 36:16 cp. Mic. 4:4). The Assyrian Kingdom was set up as a parody of Solomon's, which was the Kingdom of God (1 Kings 4:25; 2 Chron. 9:8). A glance through the descriptions of the beasts- the Kingdoms of this world- reveals that they are all set up in terms of the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom.

12:21- see on Jn. 19:13.

12:24 We must believe, really and truly, that the word will not return void, but it will accomplish what it is intended to achieve. We are not scattering seed with the vague hope that something might sprout up; we are planting, fully expecting to see a harvest. "The word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24) surely means that the number of converts to the word multiplied- for the same word is repeatedly used in this sense (Acts 6:1,7; 5:14; 9:31; 19:20). Thus "the word of God" is put by metonymy for 'the response to the word of God', as if the word will inevitably bring forth response. See on Mt. 13:19.

12:25 It's recorded that Paul 'fulfilled his ministry' (Acts 12:25); and he can use the same two words in telling Archippus to ensure that he too fulfils *his* ministry (Col. 4:17). Surely Paul is setting himself up as a pattern, and inviting his brother to follow it.

Some changed their Hebrew names into the Latin forms when they went on mission work into the Roman world: Silas became Silvanus, Saul became Paulus, Joseph Barsabbas became Justus (Acts 1:23); and hence we read of "John, whose other [Latin] name was Mark" (Acts 12:12,25).

13:1- see on Mt. 27:32.

13:2 - see on Acts 18:18.

All spiritual endeavour leads to the Lord inviting us deeper into that endeavour; thus it was *as* Barnabas and Paul went about their ministering to the Lord that they were invited to go on a missionary journey (Acts 13:2). Likewise it was *as* the Levites were in process of collecting funds for repairing the temple, that they found the book of the law- perhaps because they needed more space in which to store the donations, and whilst making space they found the scroll (2 Chron. 34:14).

Paul appropriates the words of Hab. 1:5 LXX to his work of preaching: "I *work a work* in your days, which ye will in no wise believe though *a man* declare it unto you". And so when we read of the *men* Barnabas and Saul being sent out on the *work* of the first missionary journey, we are to see an allusion back to Hab. 1:5 (Acts 13:2; 14:26). And yet that passage went on to say that the work would not be believed. Yet hoping against hope, they embarked on the missionary journey. Cyprus didn't respond, initially- as they had expected. But soon their positive spirit was rewarded, and converts were made, against all odds.

13:5- see on Acts 4:24-30.

13:9 It can be no accident that Saul appears to have changed his name to 'Paul', "the little one", at the time of his first missionary journey. His preaching of the Gospel was thus related to his own realization of sinfulness, as reflected in his name change. And so it has ever been. Saul becomes Paul in so many lives. True self-abnegation, recognition of our moral bankruptcy, our desperation, and the extent of the grace we have received... these two paradoxical aspects, fused together within the very texture of human personality, are what will arrest the attention of others in this world and lead them to the Truth we can offer them.

Saul and Paul

Various expositors have noticed the links between Saul and Paul. "Is Saul also among the prophets?" was directly matched by 'Is Saul of Tarsus also among the Christians?'. The way Paul was let down through a window to escape persecution was surely to remind him of what King Saul had done to David (1 Sam. 19:12). They were both Benjamites, and perhaps his parents saw him as following in Saul's footsteps. And it seems Paul was aware of this. The implication is that by Acts 13:9 Paul consciously changed his name from Saul to Paul ('the little one'). It is difficult to avoid seeing the link with 1 Sam. 15:17: "When thou wast little (Heb. 'the littlest one') in thine own sight", God anointed Saul and made him the *rosh*, the chief, over Israel. Maybe Paul's parents intended him to be the *rosh* over Israel; and it seems he would have made it had he not been converted. I suggest that 1 Sam. 15:17 rung in Paul's mind. He saw how he had persecuted Christ, as Saul had David. He saw the self-will within him as it was in Saul. Yet he went on to see the tragedy, the utter tragedy, of that man. He saw how pride had destroyed a man who could have achieved so much for God. And he determined that he would learn the lesson from Saul's failure (as he determined to learn the lessons from those of John the Baptist and Peter). So he changed his name to Paul, the little one. What influence his sustained meditation on one Old Testament verse had upon him! It affected some basic decisions in his life; e.g. the decision to change his name. There was a time, according to the Hebrew text of 1 Sam. 15:17, when Saul felt he was 'the littlest one' (as demonstrated in 1 Sam. 9:21; 10:22). This was so, so pleasing to God. Saul at that moment, captured as it were in a snapshot, as the obvious, anointed King of Israel hid among the baggage, knowing in his heart he was no way suited to be the leader of God's Israel, was Paul's hero. And Paul alludes to it when he says he is less than the *least* of all saints, *least* of the apostles, chief of sinners (1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15- note the progressive realisation of his sinfulness over time). He earnestly resolved to be like Saul was at the beginning. When he describes himself as "anointed" (2 Cor. 1:21) he surely had his eye on 1 Sam. 15:17 again; when Saul was little in his own eyes, he was anointed. Paul tried to learn the lessons from Saul, and re-apply Saul's

characteristics in a righteous context. Thus Saul was jealous (1 Sam. 18:8; 19:1), and Paul perhaps had his eye on this when he describes himself as jealous for the purity of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:2). "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19) is surely a reference back to Saul's *disobedience* (1 Sam. 15:22).

13:10- see on Lk. 3:4; Jn. 8:44.

In Acts 13:10 Paul calls Elymas a "son of the devil" (RV), implying he was a tare sown among the wheat (Mt. 13:38).

13:11- see on 2 Pet. 2:17.

It is possible that the way he made Elymas blind "not seeing the sun for a season", so that he had to be led by the hand (Acts 13:11), is all so reminiscent of Paul's own experience in 9:8 that it would seem he was consciously seeking to replicate his own conversion in the life of another man. And this is, indeed, the very essence of preaching from a grateful heart. He saw the power that worked in Him as working in all of us (Eph. 3:7,20). See on Col. 1:9.

13:13- see on Acts 6:1.

John Mark was an example of one 'brought up in it' (almost) who made it real for himself in the very end. His mother Mary owned the home where the first ecclesia met in Jerusalem- he would have known all the leading lights, the doubts, the joys, the fears, the debates of the early church. Barnabas was his kindly uncle, who took him on the first missionary journey with Paul. Cyprus was OK, but once they landed at Perga, Paul insisted on leaving the coast road and going up the dangerous road to preach on the uplands; and Mark quit, scared perhaps to risk his life that far. And so he went back to his mum in Jerusalem, and the safety of the home ecclesia. And no doubt he was warmly welcomed home, as the Jerusalem ecclesia by then were beginning to consider Paul as apostate. But over the months, things changed. John Mark wanted to go again, and his uncle Barnabas encouraged him. But Paul would have none of it. That rejection must have sorely hurt Mark; and we hear nothing more of him for about 15 years. Then, when Paul was in prison, he starts to get mentioned. He is called there Paul's "fellow-prisoner" (Col. 4:10), as if he too had been imprisoned for his bold preaching. To Philemon, Paul writes that Mark is his "fellow-worker"; and in his last days, he begs Mark to come and see him (2 Tim. 4:9-11). Peter also, probably writing likewise from Rome ["Babylon"] mentions Mark as his "son" (1 Pet. 5:13), and tradition has it that Mark wrote down Peter's Gospel. So the young brother who possibly had been made flabby by the nice background, eventually made it real for himself in the end.

13:16 The early brethren preached looking for a response. They were preaching toward decision, for conversion. The Lord taught us that He will make His followers fishers of men; and fishers catch something, they aren't fishermen if they just offer a bait indifferently. Paul taught that his hearers should repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance (Acts 26:20). The address in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia has three parts, each marked by an appeal to the listeners. Clearly it has been planned in advance, and was an appeal for response (Acts 13:16,26,38). These preachers weren't shy in asking men and women to decide for or against the love of God in Jesus. They challenged men to do something about the message they had heard.

13:20 Sometimes the Bible is very vague. Under inspiration, the Hebrew writer seems to have forgotten the exact quotation, or to have been deliberately vague, when he speaks of "one in a certain place testified" (Heb. 2:6). There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). And 1 Kings 7:23 gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty". Surely this is to show that

God is God, not man. His word is not contradictory, but in ensuring this, God does not sink down to the level of a man who wanted to forge an apparently faultless book, carefully ensuring that every figure exactly tallied. He has a spiritual culture much higher than this. And this is behind the many Bible paradoxes which we meet.

13:22 Perhaps David was only after God's own heart at the time Samuel anointed him?

David was, in God's opinion, a man after His own heart, who fulfilled all His will (Acts 13:22). Yet this is the God whose ways are not, and cannot be, ours. Yet this is how humble He is, and how positive His view of a faithful servant.

13:23 The false doctrine of the physical 'pre-existence' of Christ before birth makes a nonsense of the repeated promises that he would be the *descendant* of Eve, Abraham and David. The early preachers emphasized that Jesus was "of David's posterity" [Gk. *Spermatoros*- Acts 2:29-31; 13:23; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8]. If he were already existing up in heaven at the time of these promises, God would have been incorrect in promising these people a descendant who *would be* Messiah.

13:24- see on Mt. 3:7.

13:24,25 As John preached repentance with a deep sense of his own unworthiness, so did Paul, with exactly that same sense (Acts 13:24,25 = 17:3; 20:21; 26:20).

13:26- see on Lk. 23:34.

13:27 Consider the intensity of allusion to the records of Christ's death and resurrection in Acts 13:27-38:

Acts	Gospels
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13:27	Lk. 24:27
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13:28	Mt. 27:72; Mk. 15:13
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13:29	Mt. 27:59
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13:30	Mt. 28:6
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13:38	Lk. 24:47
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Thus Paul's early recorded preaching was basically a commentary on the Gospel records of Christ's death and resurrection (as was Peter's).

It was because the rulers of Israel "knew not... the *voices* of the prophets which are read every sabbath day" (Acts 13:27) that they crucified the Lord. He speaks of their "voices" rather than merely their words. They had heard the words, but not felt and perceived that these were the actual voices of men who being dead yet speak. They didn't *feel* the wonder of inspiration in their attitude to Bible study- even though they would have devoutly upheld the position that the Bible texts were inspired. And here we have a lesson for ourselves. See on Rom. 9:27; Jn. 5:39.

13:30,31- see on Lk. 23:55.

13:38 "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins", Paul stressed (Acts 13:38)- the preaching of the man Paul was in effect the preaching of the man Christ Jesus.

Because the Lord's resurrection enabled forgiveness of sins (1 Cor. 15:17), Peter therefore on this basis makes an appeal for repentance and appropriation of the Lord's work for men through baptism into His death and resurrection (Acts 2:31-38; 3:15,19 "therefore"). And Paul likewise: "He, whom God raised again... through [on account of] this man [and His resurrection] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:37,38). Because of the Name the Lord has been given, salvation has been enabled (Acts 4:12 cp. Phil. 2:9). "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26); "the God of our fathers raised up Jesus... exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give (i.e. inspire) repentance

to Israel, and forgiveness" (Acts 5:30,31). The fact of the Lord's resurrection has obtained forgiveness of sins for all who will identify themselves with it through baptism into Him; and this is why it is thereby an imperative to preach it, if we believe in it. The disciples were told to go and preach of the resurrection of Christ, and *therefore* of the required responses this entails: repentance, acceptance of forgiveness and baptism (Lk. 24:46). Preaching is motivated by His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:14). Baptism saves us "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21 cp. Rom. 4:25; Col. 2:13).

13:40 Prophecies of judgment can come true at any time if there is the required 'condition' of disbelief and disobedience. Hence Paul warns Israel: "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish..." (Acts 13:40). The prophecy didn't *have* to come true for them; but they should "beware" lest it did.

13:43 They weren't interested in giving good advice, but rather good news. They were pressed in their spirit, that they *had* to appeal to men (13:43; 18:13; 26:28; 28:23; Gal. 1:10). They persuaded men, convinced and confounded the Jews, reasoned, testified and exhorted, disputed and converted (8:25; 18:13,19,28; 2:40). In short, they *so* spake that multitudes believed (14:1).

13:45 The Jews of Antioch in Pisidia cursed Paul and his message (Acts 13:45 Gk.), drove him out of the city, and then travelled 180 km. to Lystra to oppose his preaching there. See on 1 Thess. 2:16.

13:46 One phrase of Paul's in Acts 13:46 combines allusions to two verses in Matthew (21:41; 22:8). Those verses are close to each other. As Paul thought about 21:41, he would have gone on to 22:8, and then brought them both together in his allusion- ultimately controlled by the Spirit, of course.

Not only are we living out *our* judgment by how we preach; by presenting the Gospel to people we are effectively bringing the judgment to them. Paul commented how those who rejected his preaching judged / condemned themselves to be unworthy (Acts 13:46). The Jews by their attitude to the word "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46); and we too can anticipate the judgment seat by the same mistake. The preacher stands in the 'highways' (Mt. 22:9)- 'the place of two roads', the Greek means, i.e. the place where two roads divide. This is what our taking of the Gospel to people means. They are given their choice. We bring the crisis of the judgment seat right in front of them, and they make their choice.

13:47- see on Lk. 1:45.

Isaiah's prophecies of Christ being a light to the Gentiles in the Kingdom were fulfilled in Paul (Is.49:6= Acts 13:47; and is Is.49:4 also a prophecy of Paul's thoughts? "I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought... yet surely my judgment is with the Lord").

Paul noticed the prophecy that Christ was to be the light of the whole world and saw in this a commandment to him to go and preach Christ world-wide (Acts 13:47). He read "...for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider" (Is. 52:15) as a prophecy which required him to fulfil it, by taking Christ to those who had not heard (Rom. 15:21). All that is prophesied of Christ is an imperative to us as His body to action. Paul was to bring others to the light just as John had (Lk. 1:77,79 = Acts 13:47; 26:18,23). Paul takes a prophecy concerning how Christ personally would be the light of the whole world (Is. 49:6), and applies it to himself in explanation of why he was devoted to being a light to the whole world *himself* (Acts 13:47- although 26:23 applies it to Jesus personally). Paul even says that this prophecy of Christ as the light of the world was a *commandment* to him; all that is true of the Lord Jesus likewise becomes binding upon us, because we are *in* Him. Note that Paul says that God has commanded *us* to witness; it wasn't that Paul was a special case, and God especially applied Isaiah's words concerning Christ as light of the Gentiles to Paul. They apply to *us*, to all who are in Christ. Because everything said about Christ is a commandment to all of us who are in Him. What would Jesus do, who would He be, if He lived in your street, did your job, was married to your

partner, mixed with the guys *you* mix with? The answer to that is our mission. In this sense He has in this world no arms or legs or face than us.

13:51 The way Paul shook off the dust of his feet against those who rejected his preaching was surely an almost unconscious reflection of the attitude which the Lord had enjoined upon his men; but there is no evidence that Paul was given the same commission (Acts 13:51 cp. Mt. 10:14).

13:52- see on Acts 8:8.

14:1 Paul *so* spoke that men believed (Acts 14:1). Presentation *is* important. Yet, his speech was “rude... contemptible... not with wisdom of speech” (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:17AVmg.). Yet it was because Paul *so* spoke that men believed. He spoke God’s Truth in his own words, with no pretensions, with no attention to a smooth presentation; and the more real, the more credible. Because he spoke things as they are, right between the eyes, without posing as anyone apart from the real, human guy Paul... therefore men believed. He came over as credible and convinced, and he inspired others to this end.

14:2 Because doctrine and practice are linked, the Gospel is something to which man must be obedient (Acts 14:2 R.V.)- it isn't merely a set of academic propositions. It results in "the obedience of faith". Probably the greatest temptation for all of us, in all stages of our spiritual career, is to be like Israel of old: to *know* the Faith, on an abstract, surface level, but not to really *believe* it in our hearts, and therefore not to act in the way God intends. Paul was aware of this difference; he spoke of us as those who believe *and* know the Truth (1 Tim. 4:3).

14:3- see on Acts 17:34.

14:10- see on Acts 3:8.

14:15 Paul and Barnabas ran amongst the crowd in Lystra shouting “We also are men of like nature with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn... unto the living God” (Acts 14:15 RVmg.). Exactly because they were ‘one of us’, they could make the appeal of the Gospel. As the Lord Jesus was and is our representative, so we are His representative to men, whilst being ‘one of them’, ‘one of us’. This is why we shouldn’t be afraid to show chinks in our armour, to admit our humanity, and on that basis make appeal to men: that I, as one of us, with all your humanity, your doubts and fears, am appealing to you to grasp that better way. When Paul wrote that if anyone was weak, he was weak, he seems to be saying that they could match their spiritual weakness by his own. This is why personal contact *must be* the intended way to witness.

14:20 Paul was stoned and dragged out of Lystra as dead- presumably they didn’t want him to die within the city limits as they were under Roman jurisdiction. Yet, hobbling and bleeding, he returned into the city to witness (Acts 14:20). And it was here in Lystra that he made one of his greatest converts, Timothy (Acts 16:1). And when Paul asks us to follow him, he is speaking in the context of his life’s work and preaching. He is our pattern, to be lived out in spirit within the confines within which God has placed us.

14:21- see on Mt. 28:20.

14:22 Paul spoke of how we *must* go through tribulation to enter the Kingdom. Perhaps he was alluding to the Lord’s parable of the sower, where He taught that when, and not “if” tribulation arises (Mt. 13:21). Paul knew that it *must* come because of the way the Lord had worded the interpretation of the parable.

We must have tribulation, either in the condemnation of the judgment (Rom. 2:9), or now, in order that we will enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22). We must bear the burden either of our sins (Am. 2:13; Is. 58:6; Ps. 38:4) or of the Lord’s cross (Gal. 6:4 etc.). We will experience either the spiritual warfare of the striving saint (Rom. 7:15-25), or the lusts of the flesh warring in our members, eating us up with the insatiability of sin (James 4:1; Ez. 16:28,29). See on Mt. 3:11.

14:26 The experience of grace is the essential motive behind all witness. Thus Paul was “recommended” [Gk. To surrender, yield over to] to the grace of God for the missionary work which he fulfilled (Acts 14:26).

15:1 The legalists taught that unless believers kept the circumcision laws, “ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). The very same Greek phrase is used by Paul when he calls out in urgency during the storm: “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 27:31). Surely Luke’s record is making a connection; the legalists taught that it was time to quit the rest of the community unless they got their way, for the sake of their eternal future; and Paul responds by teaching that our salvation depends upon us pulling together against the desperate situation we find ourselves in. It’s as if the salvation of Christ’s body depends upon it staying together. As time went on in the first century, the gap between the Jewish and Gentile elements, the right and the left wing, the legalists and the libertines, got ever wider. The tension got stronger. But nobody won. The Jewish element returned to the Law, and forgot all about the saving grace of Jesus. The Gentile element mixed even more with the world and its philosophies, and forgot the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. They ended up formulating blasphemous doctrines like the trinity, which nobody with any awareness of the Jewish foundation of the Father and Son could possibly have entertained. And so the faith was lost, until it was revived again in those groups who again interpreted Christianity in terms of “the hope of Israel”.

15:4 In Acts 15 the representatives of the ecclesias reported to the whole church at Jerusalem, not just the elders. There seems to have been a series of meetings: initially, the group from Antioch who raised the problems being discussed met with the elders (Acts 15:4), who met together in a second meeting to consider it all, involving “the whole assembly...the whole church” (:6,12,22). Then there was perhaps a third meeting where “the whole assembly” was also present. And this is why “the apostles and elders *with the whole church*” (Acts 15:22) agreed a solution. It wasn’t a top down decision imposed upon the congregation. They all participated. This parallel between elders and the assembly is even found in the Old Testament- e.g. “Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people, And praise him in the assembly of the elders” (Ps. 107:32). The “assembly of the people” and that of the elders is paralleled.

15:5 One of the major themes of Acts is how right from the beginning, there was a struggle within the body of believers. And Paul’s letters repeatedly address the problem. The Jewish believers polarised around the Jerusalem ecclesia, and tended towards a keeping of the Law of Moses. They couldn’t really accept that Gentiles could be saved, and saw themselves as a sect of Judaism (“the sect of the Nazarenes”). They were called “the circumcision party” (Acts 11:2), and “the sect of the Pharisees-who-believe-in-Jesus” (15:5). The Lord had foretold that His true people would soon be thrown out of the synagogues and persecuted by the Jews, just as they had persecuted Him. But these brethren so accommodated themselves to Jewish thinking that this didn’t happen.

Ironically, the Greek word for ‘heresy’ is the very word used to describe those divisions / ‘sects’ which should not be amongst us (see its usage in Acts 15:5; 24:5). To divide the Lord’s body is itself a heresy; and yet it is so often done in order to protect His body, supposedly, from heresy. Yet the difference between the heresy and the heretic is often fudged. The person gets attacked rather than their beliefs. So often we’ve seen this happened. A brother may, e.g., have views of the interpretation of prophecy which are found obnoxious by some. Yet the criticism of him will tend to get personal; his character is besmirched, because it’s felt that this is justified because he [supposedly] has ‘heretical’ views.

15:8- see on Acts 26:22.

15:10 There is the possible suggestion in Acts 15:10 that God was ‘tempted’ to re-enstate the law of Moses, or parts of it, in the first century, seeing that this was what so many of the early Christians desired to keep. That God is so eager to work with us should in itself be a great encouragement.

15:11- see on Mt. 14:30.

15:13- see on Lk. 1:14.

15:14 "In that day (of the future Kingdom- v.14) will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9:11)- a clear future Kingdom prophecy, but quoted about the building up of the first century church in Acts 15:14-16.

15:15-17 Reflect carefully upon James' justification of Peter's preaching to the Gentiles: "To this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written (in Am. 9:11 LXX)... I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called" (Acts 15:15-17). He is surely saying that because the house of David has been rebuilt, therefore it is now O.K. to help the Gentiles "seek after the Lord". James perceived that firstly the Gospel must go to the house of David, the Jews, and once they had responded, then it would go to the Gentiles. Perhaps the Lord had the same principle in mind when He had His preachers to not [then] preach to Gentiles but instead [at that stage] concentrate on preaching to the house of Israel (Mt. 10:5). Yet the primary fulfillment of Amos 9 is clearly in the last days- then, after Israel have been sifted in the sieve of persecution amongst the Gentiles in the latter day holocaust, the tabernacle of David will again be 'rebuilt', the Gentiles will turn to the Lord, and then "the plowman shall overtake the reaper... the mountains shall drop sweet wine... and I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel... and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land" (Am. 9:13-15). Surely what we are being told is that there must be a repeat of what happened in the first century. What happened then, in the repentance of a minority in Israel, the spread of the Gospel to the world and then the Lord's 'coming' in AD70... this must all be repeated on a far greater scale. Thus some in Israel must repent in the last days, after the pattern of the 1st century. This will bring about the great latter day gathering in of the Gentiles at the establishment of the Kingdom, when the whole Gentile world will seek to come up to Zion (Is. 2:3; 19:23; 11:10; 51:4,5; 60:3,11; 66:20; Zech. 8:21).

15:16 A note is perhaps necessary about *how* the NT writers quoted from the LXX. Because often it appears they don't quote exactly from the LXX. The classic example would be the way Amos 9:11,2 is quoted in Acts 15:16-18. The argument of James actually hinges on the LXX reading as opposed to the Hebrew [Masoretic] text reading. 'All the nations' were to have God's Name called upon them, whereas Is. 63:19 describes the Gentiles as people upon whom God's Name had not [then] been called. Yet this 'quotation' is actually a merger of the Amos passage with several others (Is. 45:21; Jer. 12:15; Hos. 3:5). That's why James introduces the quotation with the comment that he is quoting "the prophets" (plural). The quotation is more like an interpretation of the text- which was how the Jews were used to interpreting the OT texts. Their principle of exposition, called *gezera shawa*, linked together Bible texts which used the same language. One of the texts which James incorporates into his 'quotation' is Jer. 12:16 LXX, which speaks of how converted Gentiles will be "in the midst of my people". Yet this very phrase occurs several times in Lev. 17 and 18, where we have the commands for how the Gentiles who lived amongst Israel should behave (Lev. 17:8,10,12,13; 18:26). They were told that there were four areas where their lifestyle had to conform to Jewish practice. And these are the very four areas, in the same order, which James asks the Gentile Christians to obey! Clearly, then, the decree of Acts 15, commanding the Gentile Christians to e.g. not eat blood, had as its context how Gentile Christians should live 'in the midst of' a Jewish Christian ecclesia. This is the limitation of the context. From this little exercise in exposition we learn how carefully and intricately the early brethren expounded the OT. Yes, they used the LXX, but they used it in such a way as to bring out practical points, searching always for Bible precedents for the situations they found themselves in. They set us quite some example, especially considering that James, the Lord's brother, would have been a manual worker and artisan as the Lord was;

perhaps he was scarcely literate. And yet he reached such heights of exposition and wisdom purely from a simple love of God's word and attention to its detail. See on Jn. 13:18.

15:17 "The residue of men", every single non-Jew, was to be invited to the Kingdom (Acts 15:17). Every single person whom we can 'find'- and the Greek word *heurisko* is elsewhere translated 'see, perceive'- should be invited by us to the wedding feast (Mt. 22:9). "As many as" [s.w. "all"] we can see or possibly imagine should be invited- so they must surely all be capable of responding. That's the whole point of our being sent to call them.

Acts 15:17 (cp. Am. 9:12) encourages us to preach to the Gentiles "upon whom my name is [Amos says 'has already been'] called". The Name is called upon us by baptism; yet in prospect, in potential, the Name has already been called upon the whole world. But it is for us to go and convert them. This explains why Paul is spoken of as having been a convert before he actually was. Paul was as an ox bound to a yoke, kicking against the goads. But it was as if he was already bound into Christ's light yoke. He wrote that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. He seems to be alluding to the practice of branding runaway slaves who had been caught with the letter F in their forehead, for *fugitivus*. His whole thinking was dominated by this awareness that like Jonah he had sought to run, and yet had by grace been received into his Master's service. But the figure implies that he already was a slave of Jesus at the time of his 'capture' in conversion.

15:26 Bearing the name of Christ is in itself an imperative to witness it. Thus "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" is used as a metonymy for 'the preaching of Christ' (Acts 15:26; 3 Jn. 7; Mt. 24:9 cp. 14). We are baptized into that Name and thereby it is axiomatic that we become witnesses to it.

15:28- see on Rom. 8:15.

15:29 There is such a thing as compromise in spiritual life. The compromise of Acts 15 about the demands placed upon the Gentile believers was an example. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write that the Mosaic food laws had no binding at all upon Christian converts; and yet "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit" to endorse the compromise reached in Acts 15:28. The laws agreed there as binding upon the Gentile converts in Acts 15:29 are in fact the so-called Noachic or Primeval Laws, considered by some orthodox Jews to be binding upon all the sons of Noah. That interpretation of what God said to Noah is itself stretched and hardly on a solid Biblical foundation- but God was willing to go along with it in order to make concessions required so that there would at least be some human chance of unity in the early church. Note that the Western Text [*Codex Bezae*] of Acts omits "things strangled", leaving us with three basic laws about idolatry, fornication and bloodshed. In this case we would see an allusion to an uninspired passage in the Mishnah (*Aboth* 5) which taught that the captivity in Babylon came about "on account of idolatry, fornication and bloodshed". In this case we would see God willing to compromise and accept the terms which were familiar to the orthodox Jewish minds, rather than merely telling them that their Mishnah was uninspired and so often hopelessly incorrect.

15:34 A good case can be made that James was written as a follow up to the Council of Jerusalem- there are some marked similarities [James 1:1 = Acts 15:34; James 2:5 = Acts 15:13; James 2:7 = Acts 15:17; James 1:27 = Acts 15:29].

15:38 Paul's dislike of Mark was for deeper reasons than just surface irritation. The Spirit in Acts 15:38 says that Paul considered that Mark *had not gone with them* to the work. This is quoting the Septuagint of 1 Sam. 30:22, where "all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, said, Because they *went not with us*, we will not give them ought of the spoil". Why does the Spirit make this connection? Is it not suggesting that Paul, zealous soldier of David / Jesus as he was, was in those early days in some sense a man of Belial, bent on achieving his own glory in preaching, and unwilling to share it with anyone who wasn't spiritually or physically strong enough to do it as he was (cp. the weaker followers of David)? If this is the case, then this is a far, far cry from the Paul who wrote his letters some years later, begging Timothy to come to encourage him,

and letters in which the care of all the churches weighs down his soul daily, coming upon him as he woke up each morning (2 Cor. 11:28); the Paul who repeatedly encourages the weak, treating weak and strong as all the same in many ways, until he eventually attains a level of selfless devotion to his weak brethren that is only surpassed by the Lord Himself.

15:38- see on Acts 6:1.

15:39- see on 1 Cor. 13:5.

The "contention" between Paul and Barnabas is described in a word which occurs only thrice elsewhere. In Heb. 10:24, a more mature Paul speaks of how we should consider one another to "*provoke* unto love and good works". Surely he wrote this with a sideways glance back at his earlier example of provoking unto bitterness and division. Likewise he told the Corinthians that he personally had stopped using the miraculous Spirit gifts so much, but instead concentrated on developing a character dominated by love, which was *not* easily provoked (1 Cor. 13:5). The Spirit seems to have recognized Paul's change, when Acts 17:16 records how Paul's spirit was "stirred" at the spiritual need of the masses, and thereby he was provoked to preach to them; rather, by implication, than being provoked by the irritations of weaker brethren.

16:3 There are several examples in the NT of where Paul could have taken a certain course of action, or insisted on acceptance of a certain doctrinal position, knowing that Truth was on his side. But he didn't. Thus the council of Jerusalem established that Gentiles didn't need to be circumcised, but straight afterwards Paul circumcised Timothy in Lystra out of consideration to the feelings of the Jewish believers (Acts 16:1-3). He could have stood on his rights, and on the clear spiritual principles involved. But he stepped down to the lower level of other believers (e.g. by keeping some of the redundant Jewish feasts), he made himself all things to all men that he might try to save some, and by so doing stepped up to the higher level in his own spirituality.

16:5 Acts 16:5 speaks of the congregations growing in number daily- implying baptisms were being done daily, immediately a candidate was ready (not left to the weekend for convenience!).

16:6 Paul speaks of how he had been given areas in which it was potentially possible for him to preach in, and he didn't enter into those areas which had either already been preached in, or which were another brother's responsibility. This seems to suggest that God does indeed look down from Heaven and as it were divide up the world amongst those who could preach in it. This is why Paul perceived that he had been 'forbidden' from preaching in some areas [e.g. Macedonia] and yet a door was opened to him in Achaia. This language is allusive to the way in which the Lord forbade Israel to conquer certain areas on their way to the promised land (Dt. 2:37). The point is, between us, our preaching is a war of conquest for Jesus, pulling down strong holds and fortresses as Paul put it; or, as Jesus expressed it, taking the Kingdom by force, as stormtroopers.

16:7 Living according to the spirit / mind / example of Jesus will mean that we naturally find the answers to some of the practical dilemmas which may arise in our lives. Thus we read that when Paul tried to go to preach in Bithynia "the spirit of Jesus suffered them not" (Acts 16:7 RV). Could it not be that the spirit of Jesus, a life lived after His pattern, compelled them to (let's imagine) go to visit a sick child and this meant they missed the transport leaving for Bithynia?

16:10 Paul 'assuredly gathered' that "the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them" (Acts 16:10). The Lord calling is usually used concerning His calling of men to understand and obey the Gospel. Perhaps Paul is saying that the reason why we are called is to preach, and in this context he realised that the people *he* was to preach to, were the Macedonians. He later reminisced: "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak (i.e. preach)" (1 Thess. 2:4).

Paul and the apostles were urgent in their preaching. When Paul received the go ahead to preach in Macedonia, he "immediately endeavoured" to go there, even not waiting for Titus to join him, such

was his urgency (Acts 16:10; 2 Cor. 2:12,13). And the response of people to these urgent preachers was therefore quick too. Men who began doubting and cynical were pricked in their heart, they realized their need, and were baptized within hours (Acts 2:12,37).

If we don't shine forth the light, both in the world and in the household, we are not fulfilling the purpose for which we were called. Perhaps this is the meaning of Acts 16:10, where Luke says that they preached in Macedonia because they perceived that "the Lord had called us *for* (in order that) to preach the gospel (in this case) unto (the Macedonians)". Whether such an interpretation appeals or not, there are many passages which teach that our salvation will be related to the extent to which we have held forth the word both to the world and to the household (Prov. 11:3; 24:11,12; Dan. 12:3; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 12:8; Rom. 10:9,10 cp. Jn. 9:22; 12:42; 1:20; 1 Pet. 4:6 Gk.).

16:13 When Paul is described as going "forth without the gate" to preach in Philippi (Acts 16:13 RV), this is the very language of Heb. 13:12 about the Lord going forth without the gate, carrying the cross, and bidding us follow Him. For Paul, to preach was to carry the cross of Christ, and so it must be for us.

16:15 The way of the world was that the whole household converted to the religion of the head of the house. And yet the call of Christ was to individuals. Therefore when we read of whole households converting (Acts 16:15, 31-34; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:11,16; 16:15 Rom. 16:10) we must assume that they had resisted the temptation to mass convert, and that Masters had the humility to *not* demand of their slaves and family members that they just blindly follow them. This request would have been axiomatic to their preaching of the Gospel; and yet it would have been a radical departure from how family heads around them behaved.

16:16 Acts 16:16–18 are the words of Luke, under inspiration: "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of Python met us". As explained in the footnote in the Diaglott version, Python was the name of a false god believed in during the first century, possibly the same as the god Apollo. It was believed that the 'spirit' of Python took over the 'immortal soul' of the person being possessed. Seeing that the Bible strongly opposes the idea of an immortal soul, there is no way that a spirit of Python can possess anyone. So Python definitely did not exist, but Luke does not say the girl was 'possessed with a spirit of Python, who by the way, is a false god who does not really exist...'. In the same way the Gospels do not say that Jesus 'cast out demons which, by the way, do not really exist, it is just the language of the day for illnesses'. The demons cast out of Legion went "into the abyss" (Lk. 8:31 Gk.); the pagan concept of the abyss is a nonsense, yet if we believe that the record of Legion's cure teaches the existence of demons, then we must logically believe in 'the abyss' too.

16:18 Paul didn't allow himself to be irritated. The tragedy of mental illness grieved him; the tragedy of the way in which some people have an all too *partial* knowledge of God's truth. And his grieving for her didn't merely result in him preaching the Gospel to her; he did something concrete to help cure her.

16:21 In both Thessalonica and Philippi, strong opposition arose to the preaching of the Gospel because it was held that it was preaching another King, Jesus, in opposition to Caesar, and that the obligations of this new religion were at variance with the Imperial Cult (Acts 16:21; 17:7). In a sense, these allegations were true. Christianity taught that the convert became a member of a new, spiritual Israel. It was irrelevant whether he or she was a Jew, Roman or Gentile. And the convert had to act inclusively rather than exclusively towards other converts. It must have been hard for a Roman citizen to willingly become as it were a 'citizen' of 'spiritual Israel', a 'member' of the despised and captive Jewish race. To not participate in the cult of emperor worship was serious indeed; Roman citizenship could be lost over this matter. Pliny wrote that Christians were therefore "unable by temperament or unwilling by conviction to participate in the common activities of a group or community". They were seen as any true living Christian is: a bit weird, unsociable, aloof from worldly pleasure, and thereby a silent critic of those who indulge. "The Christian would not

attend gladiatorial shows or games or plays. He would not read pagan literature. He would not enlist as a soldier, for then he would come under orders that might conflict with his standards and with his loyalty to Jesus Christ. He would not be a painter or sculptor, for that would be to acquiesce to idolatry. Nor would he be a schoolmaster, for then he would inevitably have to tell the immoral stories of the pagan gods. The Christian had better steer clear of business contracts, because they required the taking of oaths, which the Christian abjured. They had better keep out of administrative office because of the idolatry involved... and so on". The Romans considered anyone outside the Roman world or who rejected Roman manners and laws as being a barbarian; and yet the Gospel appealed to Roman citizens to reject these very manners and laws. Thus Ramsay comments: "To the Romans *genus humanum* meant not the human race in general but the Roman world, men who lived according to Roman manners and laws; the rest were enemies and barbarians. The Christians, then, were enemies to civilised man, and to the customs and laws which regulated civilised society... they introduced divisions into families and set children against their parents".

16:31 A theme of Acts is that the work of the Father and Son are paralleled (e.g. 16:31 cp. 34; 15:12; 26:17 cp. 22). They are working *together* to achieve our final redemption. The concept is wondrous.

16:34 Whole households were converted (Acts 10:2; 16:34; 18:8; Col. 4:15), and the earliest Christian meeting places unearthed were rooms in the homes of rich believers. And with us too, the success of our community depends upon God's Truth first and foremost being the centre of family life, with the joy of faith permeating it. Household conversions were a major feature of the first century spread of the Gospel (e.g. Lydia- Acts 16:15; Crispus- Acts 18:8; Priscilla and Aquila- Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Nymphas- Col. 4:15; Onesiphorus- 2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19; Philemon- Philemon 2; "the elect lady", 2 Jn. 10; the home at Troas- Acts 20:6-8). Clearly 'house' was used in the first century as a kind of shorthand for 'house church'. They knew no other pattern of gathering. There was almost an assumption that if a man converted to Christ, his 'house' also would. Hence we read that Cornelius would be told words "whereby thou and thy house shalt be saved" (Acts 11:14). The same phrase was repeated to the jailor at Philippi (Acts 16:31). It's emphasized four times in three verses that the Gospel was preached to his house, and his whole house responded (Acts 16:31-34). The Lord likewise rejoiced in Zacchaeus' conversion, that salvation had come to that man's house (Lk. 19:9). He assumed that Zacchaeus would quite naturally persuade his 'house'.

Consider how the prison keeper "rejoiced greatly... having believed in God" (Acts 16:34 RV). He was unlikely to have been an atheist [atheism wasn't very common in the 1st century]. But he grasped for the first time the real import of a real and relevant faith in the one true God as a personal being. See on Jn. 14:1.

16:37- see on Acts 22:25.

16:40- see on 1 Tim. 5:13.

17:1-9 The simplicity of what Paul preached can be seen from reflecting how he was only three weekends in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), but in that time he converted and baptized pagans and turned them into an ecclesia. Given the long hours worked by people, his number of contact hours with the people would've been quite small. He then had to write to them in 1 Thessalonians, addressing basic questions which they had subsequently asked, such as 'What will happen to dead believers when Christ returns?', 'When will Christ return?'. The level of their instruction before baptism must have been *very* basic. It is rare today to see such focus upon the urgency of baptism. Yet I submit that if we have the spirit of the early church, we will be pushing baptism up front to all we meet. And this was one of the first century keys to success.

17:2 The speed with which he established ecclesias. He stayed a few weeks or months in cities like Lystra and Thessalonica, returning, in the case of Lystra, after 18 months, and then again a few years later. He spent three consecutive sabbaths in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2), baptized the converts,

and then didn't come back to see them for about five and a half years (Acts 20:1,2). How were they kept strong? By the good shepherd, by the grace of God, by the Father and Son working with Paul. He seems to have drilled them with the basics of the Gospel and the life they needed to live, ordained immature elders who were literate and able to teach the word, and then left them what he repeatedly calls "the tradition", a document or set of teachings relating to practical life in Christ (1 Cor. 11:2,23; 2 Thess. 2:5; 3:6; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; 3:14; Tit. 1:9). It was perhaps the simplicity and brevity of the message that was its strength in the lives of the early converts. Their lives were based directly upon reflection upon the implications of the basic elements of the Gospel. It is today amazing how simple men and women remember and reflect upon the things taught them even verbally, and show an impressive appreciation of them when they are visited again after some months or years. Interestingly, Corinth had the most evident problems and immaturity, even though Paul spent 18 months there, whereas ecclesias like Philippi which he established far quicker seem to have been far sounder. It therefore follows that length of pastoral work is not necessarily related to spiritual strengt

17:3- see on Acts 13:24,25.

Paul could tell the Galatians that in him they had seen Jesus Christ placarded forth, crucified before their own eyes (3:1). Paul knew that when people looked at his life, they saw something of the crucifixion of the Lord. The Galatians therefore accepted him "even as Christ Jesus" (Gal. 4:14). He could describe his own preaching as "this Jesus, whom I preach unto you..." (Acts 17:3), as if Jesus was right there before their eyes, witnessed through Paul. As the Lord was Paul's representative, so Paul was Christ's. The idea of representation works both ways: we see in the Gospel records how the Lord experienced some things which only we have; and we show aspects of His character to the world which nobody else can manifest.

17:4 First of all there must be an intellectual understanding if there is to be conversion. Men were "persuaded", not just emotionally bullied (Acts 17:4; 18:4; 19:8,26; 28:23,24). The intellectual basis of appeal is made clear in the way we read of accepting 'truth' as well as accepting the person of Jesus. Thus converts believe the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-13), acknowledge truth (2 Tim. 2:25; Tit. 1:1), obey truth (Rom. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:22 cp. Gal. 5:7), and 'come to know the truth' (Jn. 8:32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:3; 1 Jn. 2:21). Preaching itself is 'the open statement of the truth' (2 Cor. 4:2). And so it is perfectly in order to seek to intellectually persuade our contacts.

Paul had to remind the Thessalonians that he isn't preaching because he wants to take money and have relationships with women (1 Thess. 2:3-12). There were some wealthy women in Thessalonica who accepted the Gospel (Acts 17:4 Western Text), and no doubt gossip spread from this. See on 1 Tim. 5:19.

17:7- see on Acts 16:21.

Paul in the face of every discouragement could preach that "there *is* another king, one Jesus" (Acts 17:7). This was the core of his message; not so much that there *will be* a coming King in Jerusalem, but that there *is* right now a King at God's right hand, who demands our total allegiance. The Acts record associates the height of Jesus with a call to repentance too. This is the message of Is. 55:6-9- *because* God's thoughts are so far higher than ours, *therefore* call upon the Lord whilst He is near, and let the wicked forsake his way. Because the Father and Son who are so high above us morally and physically are willing to deal with us, *therefore* we ought to seize upon their grace and repent.

17:12- see on Lk. 8:3.

"Not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men" were converted in Thessalonica (Acts 17:12 RSV). Lydia was a wealthy woman, trading in luxury garments ("purple"), and a female head of household. The attraction of the Gospel for wealthy women has been often commented upon in the historical literature. We are left to imagine wealthy sisters marrying poorer brethren, or

remaining single, with all the scandal attached to it in the first century world, pining for children, comforted only by each other and the surpassing knowledge of Jesus their Lord.

17:16- see on Acts 15:39.

17:17 Paul says himself that he was not an eloquent speaker; and the Corinthians were acutely aware of this. And yet it was through his public speaking that many were converted in places like Athens (Acts 17:17). The lesson is clear- God uses us in our weaker points in order to witness powerfully for Him. Uneducated Peter was used as the vehicle with which to reach the intelligentsia of Jerusalem- and you and I likewise in and through our very points of weakness are likewise used to reach people.

17:18 It is clear that we are to seek to relate to our audience in a way they can relate to. Using their terms, shewing our common binds with them. Paul did this when he was faced with the rather mocking comment that he was a “setter forth” of a strange God. He replied that he ‘set forth’ to them the One whom they ignorantly worshipped (Acts 17:18,23 RV). He seized upon something they all knew- the altar to the unknown God- and made his point to them from that. And he picked up the noun they used for him and turned it back to them as a verb.

17:23 Paul’s positivism is a wonderful thing to study. When he met people believing in “the unknown (Gk. *agnosto*] God”, he didn’t mock their agnosticism. He rejoiced that they were as it were half way there, and sought to take them further. His position regarding the Sabbath and observance of the Law is a prime example of his patient seeking to bring men onward.

17:24- see on Mt. 6:29.

17:26 Adam was the first man, and Eve was the mother of all living human beings. From one blood all were created (Acts 17:26).

17:27 God "hath made of one blood all nations of men... and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; *that* (so that) they should seek the Lord" (Acts 17:26,27). How does geographical distribution etc. lead to men seeking the Lord?

We must draw near to Him (Ps. 73:28); and yet He is already near, not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27). David often speaks of drawing near to God, and yet he invites God to draw near to him (Ps. 69:18). Yet David also recognizes that God “is” near already (Ps. 75:1). I take all this to mean that like us, David recognized that God “is” near, and yet wished God to make His presence real to him. Truly can we pray David’s prayers. So often, prayer is described as coming near to God (Ps. 119:169 etc.)- and yet God “is” near already. Prayer, therefore, is a way of making us realize the presence of the God who is always present.

17:28 Many New Testament quotations of the Old Testament- many of those in the early chapters of Matthew, for example- are picking up words and phrases from one context and applying them to another, often slightly changing them in order to fit the new context. Paul himself did this when he quoted the words of the poet Aratus “We are all the offspring of Zeus” about our all being the offspring of the one true God.

Paul quoted from Greek poets, famous for the amount of unbiblical nonsense they churned out, in order to confound those who believed what the poets taught (Tit. 1:12; Acts 17:28). What we are suggesting is epitomized by Paul’s response to finding an altar dedicated to the worship of “The Unknown God”, i.e. any pagan deity which might exist, but which the people of Athens had overlooked. Instead of rebuking them for their folly in believing in this, Paul took them from where they were to understand the one true God, who they did not know (Acts 17:22–23).

Paul sought by all means to close the gap which there inevitably is between the preacher and his audience. Thus in Athens and Lystra he mixes quotes from the Greek poets with clear allusions to God’s word. His speeches in those places quote from Epimenides and Aratus, allude to the

Epicurean belief that God needs nothing from men, refer to the Stoic belief that God is the source of all life... and also allude to a whole catena of OT passages: Ex. 20:11; Gen. 8:22; Ecc. 9:7; Jer. 5:24; 23:23; Is. 42:5; 55:6; Ps. 50:12; 145:18; 147:8; Dt. 32:8. This was all very skilfully done; surely Paul had sat down and planned what he was going to say. He tries to have as much common ground as possible with his audience whilst at the same time undermining their position. He wasn't baldly telling them their errors and insisting on his own possession of truth; even though this was the case. He didn't remove the essential scandal of the Gospel; instead Paul selected terms with which to present it which enabled his hearers to realize and face the challenges which the scandal of the Gospel presented. And Paul's sensitive approach to the Jews is just the same. *If we are out to convert men and women, we will be ever making our message relevant. If we tell the world, both explicitly and implicitly, that we don't want to convert them, then we won't. If we want to convert them, if we earnestly seek to persuade them and vary our language and presentation accordingly, then we will.*

17:29 If we truly realize that we are made in God's image, then we will not worship any idol: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God [i.e. in His image], we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29). Thinking this through, is the implication not that humanity alone is made in God's image; *nothing* else is His image. Yet idolatry, in all its forms and guises throughout history, is based around the supposition that those idols are in fact an image of God and as such demand worship. God has revealed Himself through *people*, not through things which they have created.

17:30- see on Mt. 24:14.

Preaching is motivated by His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:14). Baptism saves us "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21 cp. Rom. 4:25; Col. 2:13). We who were dead in sins were "quickened together with Christ" (Eph. 2:5). If we believe in Christ's resurrection, we will therefore repent, confess our sins and know His forgiveness. Thus believing in His raising and making confession of sin are bracketed together in Rom. 10:9,10, as both being essential in gaining salvation. Because He rose, *therefore* we stop committing sin (1 Cor. 6:14). We can't wilfully sin if we believe in the forgiveness His resurrection has enabled. Men should repent not only because judgment day is coming, but because God has commended repentance to us, He has offered / inspired faith in His forgiveness *by the resurrection of Christ* (Acts 17:30,31 AV mg.). The empty tomb and all the Lord's glorification means for us should therefore inspire personal repentance; as well as of itself being an imperative to go and share this good news with a sinful world, appealing for them to repent and be baptized so that they too might share in the forgiveness enabled for them by the resurrection. Because the Lord was our representative, in His resurrection we see our own. We are therefore born again unto a living and abounding hope, by our identification with the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3).

The very fact that judgment day will surely come is therefore in itself a *command* to all men to repent (Acts 17:30,31)- and therefore it is a command to preach repentance.

17:31 The resurrection of Jesus was to give assurance "to all men" (Acts 17:31). But how? They haven't seen Him. There is no Euclidean reason for them to believe in His resurrection. How is it an assurance to all men? Surely in that we are the risen Lord's representatives "to all men", and through us they see the evidence of Christ risen, and thereby have assurance of God's plan for them. In the same way, the wicked and adulterous generation to whom the Lord witnessed were given the sign of the prophet Jonah- that after three days, the Lord would re-appear. But that sign was only given to them through the preaching of the apostles- that generation didn't see the risen Lord Himself (Mt. 16:4). But the witness of the disciples was as good as- for in their witness, they represented the Lord.

On account of the Lord's resurrection, God has commanded all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30,31)- again, a reference to the great commission. But God's command of men to repent is only through our preaching of that message. Matthew and Mark record how the apostles were *sent* to preach the Gospel and baptize, for the *forgiveness* of sins (cp. Acts 2:38). Luke records the Lord stating that the apostles knew that *forgiveness of sins* was to be preached from Jerusalem, and therefore they should be witnesses to this.

Acts 17:31 reasons that the very existence of the future judgment seat and the Lord ordained as judge of living and dead is a command to repent. At the Lord's resurrection, a day was appointed for human judgment, and therefore a knowledge of the Lord's resurrection means we are accountable to that day, and must therefore repent and prepare. It is by this logic that Paul argues that the Lord's resurrection is a guarantee that judgment day will come. "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord... [which involves that] we shall all [therefore] stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written... Every knee shall bow to me [as Lord and judge]..." (Rom. 14:9,10).

We will be judged in the man Christ Jesus (Acts 17:31 R.V. Mg.). This means that the very fact Jesus didn't pre-exist and was human makes Him our constant and insistent judge of all our human behaviour. And exactly because of this, Paul argues, we should right now repent. He is judge exactly because He is the Son of man.

17:34 Men heard Paul's preaching and 'clave' unto *him*, as they did to other preachers (Acts 17:34; 5:13); but conversion is a cleaving unto *the Lord Jesus* (Acts 11:23; 1 Cor. 6:17 Gk.). Thus Paul "spoke boldly in the Lord [Jesus], which gave testimony unto the word of his grace" (Acts 14:3). To this extent does the preacher manifest his Lord.

18:4 According to the Western text of Acts 18:4, Paul "inserted the name of the Lord Jesus" at the appropriate points in his public reading of the Old Testament prophecies. This was after the pattern of some of the Jewish targums (commentaries) on the prophets, which inserted the word "Messiah" at appropriate points in Isaiah's prophecies of the suffering servant (e.g. the Targum of Jonathan on the Prophets).

18:4,5 Acts 18:4,5 implies that when Paul first came to Corinth, he concentrated on his tent making business, and confined his preaching to arguing with the Jews at synagogue on the Sabbath. But when Silas and Timothy came, their presence made him "pressed in the spirit" to launch an all-out campaign. No longer was he the self-motivated maverick. He needed the presence of others to stir up his mind and prod him onwards. He admitted to those he converted in Corinth as a result of this campaign that such preaching was against his will, he had had to consciously make himself do it (1 Cor. 9:17). Indeed, the Lord Jesus Himself had had to appear to Paul in a vision and encourage him not to suppress his preaching on account of his fear of persecution (Acts 18:9). Therefore he later told the Corinthians that he feared condemnation if he gave in to his temptation not to preach (1 Cor. 9:16). See on Acts 27:21.

18:5 In Corinth, "Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews..." (Acts 18:5 RV). The AV has "pressed in the spirit"; knowing the Lord's word somehow compelled Paul to testify of it.

18:6 "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6) seems to also be a flash of unspirituality. For later, Paul realizes that he may be condemned if he doesn't preach the Gospel; he realized that he perhaps *wasn't* free of his duty of preaching. Yet for all his "from henceforth I go unto the Gentiles" , Paul *still* preached to the Jews (Acts 18:8; 19:8); which would suggest these words were said in temper and perhaps unwisdom. He himself seems to recognize this when he wrote to Timothy at the very end of his life of how we must with meekness instruct those who oppose themselves (2 Tim. 2:25), whereas his own response to those who "opposed themselves" (Acts 18:6) had been to say, without meekness, that he was never going to 'instruct' Jews ever again.

18:6 The idea of being a watchman seems to have fired his preaching zeal, Ez. 3:18; 18:13 cp. Acts 18:6; 20:26.

18:9- see on Acts 18:4,5; 1 Cor. 8:9.

18:9,10 This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures [here Is. 43:5] are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

18:16 "Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark (cp. the rejected cast to outer darkness) and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them" (Ps. 35:5,6). "The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind (spirit- the Angels made spirits) driveth away" (Ps. 1:4; Job 21:18). The account of Gallio driving the Jews away from his judgment seat is maybe to enable to us to imagine the scene (Acts 18:16).

18:18 Paul was called to be a preacher of the Gospel, and yet he speaks of his work as a preacher as if it were a Nazarite vow- which was a totally voluntary commitment. Consider not only the reference to him shaving his head because of his vow (Acts 18:18; 21:24 cp. Num. 6:9-18), but also the many descriptions of his preaching work in terms of Nazariteship: Separated unto the Gospel's work (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15; Acts 13:2); "I am not yet consecrated / perfected" (Phil. 3:12)- he'd not yet finished his 'course', i.e. his preaching commission. He speaks of it here as if it were a Nazarite vow not yet ended. Note the reference to his 'consecration' in Acts 20:24. His undertaking not to drink wine lest he offend others (Rom. 14:21) is framed in the very words of Num. 6:3 LXX about the Nazarite. Likewise his being 'joined unto the Lord' (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 14:6,8) is the language of Num. 6:6 about the Nazarite being separated unto the Lord. The reference to having power / authority on the head (1 Cor. 11:10) is definitely some reference back to the LXX of Num. 6:7 about the Nazarite. What are we to make of all this? The point is perhaps that commitment to active missionary work is indeed a voluntary matter, as was the Nazarite vow. And that even although Paul was called to this, yet he responded to it by voluntarily binding himself to 'get the job done'. And the same is in essence true for us today in our various callings in the Lord's service.

18:27 Apollos "helped them much which had believed through grace: *for* he mightily convinced the Jews, showing publicly by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:27,28 RVmg.). He helped / inspired the other believers in that he publicly converted others; thus an upward spiral of converting was initiated.

19:8- see on Acts 18:6; Lk. 1:14.

19:9 Paul preached in Ephesus from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Acts 19:9 Western text)- the siesta period. Whilst working with his own hands to support himself, he somehow persuaded men and women to break their usual sleep pattern to come and hear him. F.F. Bruce has commented that more Ephesians were awake at 1 a.m. than 1 p.m.

19:9 First century preaching wasn't merely bald statement of facts nor a pouty presentation of propositional Truth. A very wide range of words is used to describe the preaching of the Gospel. It included able intellectual argument, skilful, thoughtful use and study of the Scriptures by the public speakers, careful, closely reasoned and patient argument. Their preaching is recorded through words like *diamarturesthai*, to testify strenuously, *elegcho*, to show to be wrong, *peitho*, to win by words, *ekithemi*, to set forth, *diamar*, to bear full witness, *dianoigo*, to open what was previously closed, *parrhesia*, to speak with fearless candour, *katagellein*, to proclaim forcefully, *dialegesthai*, to argue, *diakatenchein*, to confute powerfully. The intellectual energy of Paul powers through the narrative in passages like Acts 19: "disputing and persuading... disputing daily... Paul purposed in the spirit... this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people".

19:18,19 After seeing what happened to the sons of Sceva, it would appear that some who had 'believed' went up to a higher level of commitment: "Many also of them that had believed came, confessing and declaring their deeds. And not a few of them that practised magical arts brought their

books together, and burned them" (Acts 19:18,19 RV). This would seem to imply that despite having 'believed', perhaps with the same level of shallow conviction as some 'believed' in the teaching of Jesus during His ministry, their faith wasn't so deep. They were taken up to an altogether higher level of commitment, resulting in 'confessing and declaring', and quitting their involvement with magic. "Many that were now believers" there (RSV) "came and confessed and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men... so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed" (Acts 19:18,19). The language here seems to be intended to connect with the description of baptism in Mt. 3:6, where converts confessed and shewed their deeds *at baptism*. The way the Ephesians made their statement "before all men" again recalls the concept of baptism as a public declaration. Yet the Ephesians did all this *after* they had believed. It would seem that we are being invited to consider this as a re-conversion, a step up the ladder. The context is significant. Some who had pretended to be believers and to have the Holy Spirit are revealed for who they are: "they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all... dwelling at Ephesus. And fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified". The fact that the Lord Jesus is so essentially demanding, the way in which ultimately He will judge insincere profession of His Name- this motivated the new Ephesian converts to take their relationship with Him seriously (compare how the Lord's slaying of Ananias and Sapphira also inspired a great desire to associate with Him, Acts 5:11-14).

19:21 Paul said that he was going to Jerusalem, "Saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21). But actually he had written to the Romans that he would drop in to see them on his way to Spain (Rom. 15:23). Spain was his real ambition, to preach the Gospel in "the regions beyond" (2 Cor. 10:16 and context)- not Rome. But Acts 19:21 gives the impression that Rome was the end of his vision.

19:28 There's a definite link between shame and anger. Take a man whose mother yelled at him because as a toddler he ran out onto the balcony naked, and shamed him by her words. Years later on a hot Summer evening the man as an adult walks out on a balcony with just his underpants on. An old woman yells at him from the yard below that he should be ashamed of himself. And he's furiously angry with her- because of the shame given him by his mother in that incident 20 years ago. Shame and anger are clearly understood by God as being related, because His word several times connects them: "A fool's *anger* is immediately known; but a prudent man covers his *shame*" (Prov. 12:16); A king's *anger* is against a man who *shames* him (Prov. 14:35). Or consider 1 Sam. 20:34: "So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce *anger*, and did eat no meat the second day of the month... because his father had done him *shame*". Job's *anger* was related to the fact that he felt that ten times the friends had *shamed* him in their speeches (Job 19:3). Frequently the rejected are threatened with both shame and anger / gnashing of teeth; shame and anger are going to be connected in that awful experience. They will "curse [in anger]... and be ashamed" (Ps. 109:28). The final shame of the rejected is going to be so great that "they shall be greatly ashamed... their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jer. 20:11). Seeing they will be long dead and gone, it is us, the accepted, who by God's grace will recall the terrible shame of the rejected throughout our eternity. Their shame will be so terrible; and hence their anger will likewise be. Because Paul's preaching 'despised' the goddess Diana, her worshippers perceived that she and they were somehow thereby shamed; and so "they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:27,28). It's perhaps possible to understand the wrath of God in this way, too. For His wrath is upon those who break His commands; and by breaking them we *shame* God (Rom. 2:23); we *despise* his desire for our repentance (Rom. 2:4).

19:31 In Paul's inspired thought, on the cross the Lord "gave himself" for us (Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14). And yet he uses the same Greek words to describe how are to 'give ourselves' for our brethren (2 Thess. 3:9), to 'give ourselves' in financial generosity to their needs (2 Cor. 8:5), and in Acts 19:31 we meet the same phrase describing how Paul 'gave himself' into the theatre at Ephesus, filled with people bent on killing him, taking the conscious choice to risk his life in order to share

the Gospel with others. In this I see a cameo of how the choice of preaching the Gospel is in fact a conscious living out of the Lord's example on the cross. Paul was discouraged from doing so by his friends and brethren; and yet surely he had his mind on the way the Lord 'gave himself' for us in His death, as a conscious choice, and so he brushed aside his reserve, that human desire to do what appears the sensible, safe option... in order to bring others to the cross of Christ. And day by day we have the same choice before us.

20:10 A cameo of Paul's attitude is presented when Eutychus falls down from the window; Paul likewise runs down afterwards and falls on him, on the blood and broken bones (Acts 20:9,10). The language of Paul's descent and falling upon Eutychus and Eutychus' own fall from the window are so similar. Surely the point is, that Paul had a heart that bled for that man, that led him to identify with him.

Believe that you really will receive; avoid the temptation of asking for things as a child asks for Christmas presents, with the vague hope that something might turn up. Be like Paul, who fell upon the smashed body of Eutychus with the assurance: "Trouble not yourselves [alluding to his Lord in the upper room]; for his life is in him" (Acts 20:10).

20:18- see on 2 Tim. 4:2,3.

20:19- see on Lk. 3:5.

20:19,20 "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts 20:19). "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly" (Acts 20:20). "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:30). These are allusions to Moses. "The man Moses was very meek" (Num. 12:3). The humility of Moses really fired Paul. As Moses shewed God to Israel and publicly taught them. As Moses likewise warned in his farewell speech that false prophets would *arise* - and should be shunned and dealt with (Dt. 13:1).

20:20 Paul reminisced how he had taught that ecclesia both publicly, and from house to house (Acts 20:20). Luke used the same phrase "house to house" in Acts 2:46 to describe house churches. Surely Paul was recalling how he had taught the Ephesian church both "publicly", when they were all gathered together, and also in their house churches. Aquila had a house church in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19), and so did Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16,18; 4:19). Another indication of this structure within the Ephesian church is to be found in considering how Paul wrote to Timothy with advice, whilst Timothy was leading that church. Paul advises him not to permit sisters to wander about "from house [church] to house [church]" carrying ecclesial gossip (1 Tim. 5:13).

20:20 - see on 2 Tim. 4:2,3.

20:21- see on Acts 13:24,25.

20:22 Consider the following passages in the Spirit's biography of Paul: "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" and therefore he preached to them (Acts 17:16). In Corinth, "Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:5). "Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem" (Acts 20:22) is difficult to divorce from the previous passages. It may be that the Holy Spirit confirmed the desire of Paul's own spirit; but I am tempted to read this as yet one more example of where he felt overwhelmingly compelled to witness. "Paul purposed in the spirit... to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21). It was as if his own conscience, developed within him by the word and his experience of the Lord Jesus, compelled him to take the Gospel right to the ends of his world. His ambition for Spain, at a time when most men scarcely travelled 100km. from their birthplace, is just superb (Rom. 15:24,28).

20:26 We are covered with His righteousness, and therefore have a share in His victory; and yet it also means that we must act as He did and does. Paul felt so truly and absolutely forgiven that he could say that he was "pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26). Yet as he said that, he must

surely have had the blood of Stephen on his mind, trickling out along the Palestinian dust, as the clothes of the men who murdered Stephen lay at Paul's feet as a testimony that *he* was responsible for it. But he knew his forgiveness. He could confidently state that he was pure from that blood. Righteousness had been imputed, the sin covered- because he was in Christ.

20:27 To help them combat this apostasy, and to set them an example in faithfulness to the word, Paul pointed out that "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Exactly as Moses completely revealed all God's counsel to Israel (Acts 7:33; Dt. 33:3).

20:28 "Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass... forgive him" (Lk. 17:3) is alluded to in Acts 20:28, where Paul says we should *take heed* of the likelihood of false teachers. Surely what he's saying is 'Yes, take heed to forgive your brother personal offences, take heed because you'll be tempted *not* to forgive him; but have the same level of watchfulness for false teaching'.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28). "Take heed unto yourselves" is repeated so many times in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

Note how the *episkopoi* were overseers *in* the flock, not over it (Acts 20:28 Gk. cp. AV).

20:29- see on 2 Tim. 4:2,3.

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. This is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32). "After my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves" (Dt. 31:29). "Take heed unto yourselves" is repeated so many times in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9). Exactly as Moses completely revealed all God's counsel to Israel (Acts 7:33; Dt. 33:3).

20:23- see on Acts 21:4.

Philip prophesied by the Holy Spirit about Paul: "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hand of the Gentiles". They "shall" do this, he said. And many other prophets said the same (Acts 20:23). "And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:11,12). Those brethren evidently understood the word of prophecy as conditional- its' fulfilment could be avoided by Paul not going to Jerusalem. Indeed, there were prophecies that said he should *not* go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4). Yet Paul went, knowing that if he died at Jerusalem then the will of God would be done (Acts 21:14). All this surely shows that prophecies are open to human interpretation; they can be seen as commandment (e.g. not to go to Jerusalem), but it all depends upon our perception of the wider picture.

20:24- see on Acts 18:18; 28:31; 2 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 4:7.

20:26- see on Acts 18:6.

By preaching, they were freed from the blood of men (20:26); evidently alluding to how the watchman must die if he didn't warn the people of their impending fate (Ez. 3:18). In line with this, "*necessity* is laid upon me... woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

20:28 I want to put two passages from Paul together in your minds. He tells the Ephesian elders to "take heed to yourselves" before adding "and to all the flock" (Acts 20:28). To Timothy likewise: "Take heed to yourself, and to your teaching [of others]" (1 Tim. 4:16). Clearly enough, Paul saw that who we are is related to the effectiveness of our preaching. The preacher is some sort of reproduction of the Truth in a personal form; the word made flesh. The Truth must exist in us as a living experience, a glorious enthusiasm, an intense reality. For it is primarily *people* who communicate, not words or ideas. Personal authenticity is undoubtedly the strongest credential in our work of communicating the message.

There are several NT passages which make an explicit link between God and Jesus in the context of the salvation of men. Phrases such as “God our Saviour, Jesus...” are relatively common in the pastorals (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Tit. 1:3,4; 2:10 cp. 13 and see also Jude 24; 2 Pet. 1:1). Acts 20:28 even speaks as if God’s blood was shed on the cross; through ‘His’ blood the church was purchased; and yet Paul told the very same Ephesian audience that it was through the blood of Jesus that the church was purchased (Eph. 1:6,7); such was the extent of God manifestation on the cross. These and many other passages quoted by trinitarians evidently don’t mean that ‘Jesus = God’ in the way they take them to mean. But what they *are* saying is that there was an intense unity between the Father and Son in the work of salvation achieved on the cross. The High Priest on the day of Atonement sprinkled the blood eastwards, on the mercy seat. He would therefore have had to walk round to God’s side of the mercy seat and sprinkle the blood back the way he had come. This would have given the picture of the blood coming out from the presence of God Himself; as if *He* was the sacrifice. See on Jn. 19:19.

Exactly because Christ died for us, because the ecclesia has been purchased with the Lord’s blood, we are to seek to feed it and not draw men away after ourselves (Acts 20:28,29). This means that the fact Jesus died to redeem the whole ecclesia should lead us to value and care for those whom He has redeemed.

20:29,30 Paul told the Ephesian elders that wolves would enter the flock and work havoc. But therefore, he told them, “take heed...” (Acts 20:29,30). His prophecy, certain of fulfilment as it sounded, didn’t ‘have’ to come true. Likewise the Lord categorically foretold Peter’s denials; and yet tells him therefore to watch, and not fall into the temptation that was looming. Peter didn’t *have* to fulfil the prophecy, and the Lord encouraged him to leave it as an unfulfilled, conditional prophecy. He warns him to pray “lest ye enter into temptation” (Mk. 14:38)- even though He had prophesied that Peter *would* fail under temptation.

20:31 The Biblical record contains a large number of references to the frequent tears of God’s people, both in bleeding hearts for other people, and in recognition of their own sin. And as we have seen, these things are related. Consider:

- “My eye pours out tears to God” [i.e. in repentance?] (Job 16:20)
- Isaiah drenches Moab with tears (Is. 16:9)
- Jeremiah is a fountain of tears for his people (Jer. 9:1; Lam. 2:8)
- David’s eyes shed streams of tears for his sins (Ps. 119:136; 6:6; 42:3)
- Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37)
- Blessed are those who weep (Lk. 6:21)
- Mary washed the Lord’s feet with her tears (Lk. 7:36-50)
- Paul wept for the Ephesians daily (Acts 20:19,31).

We have to ask whether there are any tears, indeed any true emotion, in our walk with our Lord. Those who go through life with dry eyes are surely to be pitied. Surely, in the light of the above testimony, we are merely hiding behind a smokescreen if we excuse ourselves by thinking that we’re not the emotional type. Nobody can truly go through life humming to themselves “I am a rock, I am an island...and an island never cries”. The very emotional centre of our lives must be touched. The tragedy of our sin, the urgency of the world’s salvation, the amazing potential provided and secured in the cross of Christ...surely we cannot be passive to these things. We live in a world where emotion and passion are decreasing. Being politically correct, looking right to others... these things are becoming of paramount importance in all levels of society. The passionless, postmodernist life can’t be for us, who have been moved and touched at our very core by the work and call and love of Christ to us. For us there must still be what Walter Brueggemann called “the gift of amazement”, that ability to feel and say “Wow!” to God’s grace and plan of salvation for us.

Acts 20:28-31 records Paul predicting the apostasy that was to come upon Ephesus; but he pleads with the elders to take heed and watch, so that his inspired words needn't come true.

20:32- see on Mt. 25:34.

20:33 "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" (Acts 20:33). This is the spirit of Moses in Num. 16:15: "I have not taken one ass from them". Paul maybe had these words in mind again in 2 Cor. 7:2: "We have wronged no man... we have defrauded no man".

20:34 Paul told those Ephesian elders, beset as they already were with the evident beginnings of apostasy: "*These hands* (showing them) have ministered unto my necessities... I have shewed you all things, how that *so labouring* ye (too) ought to support the weak (implying Paul worked at tent making not only for his own needs but in order to give support to the spiritually (?) weak), *and to* (also) remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:34,35). Paul seems to be unashamedly saying that those words of Jesus had motivated his own life of service, and he had shown the Ephesians, in his own life, how they ought to be lived out; and he placed himself before them as their pattern. The Lord Jesus recognized, years later, that the Ephesians had followed Paul's example of labouring motivated by Christ as he had requested them to; but they had done so without *agape* love (Rev. 2:3,4).

20:35 Paul reminds the Ephesians to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said..."; not, 'how it is written' (for the Gospels were in circulation by this time). He jogged their memory of one of the texts they ought to have memorized (Acts 20:35). See on Acts 6:4.

21:4- see on Acts 20:23.

Paul was clearly told by the Spirit that he "should not go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). Yet Paul chose to go up to Jerusalem, with the Holy Spirit warning him against it in every city he passed through (Acts 20:23; 21:11). What are we to make of this? Was a spiritual man like Paul simply out of step with the Spirit on this point? Maybe- in the light of all we've seen above. It's possible to get fixated on a certain project and ignore God's clear testimony. Or it could be that Paul knew the Lord well enough to realize that although God was telling him what would happen, he could still exercise his own love for his brethren to the maximum extent. For it was for love of his brethren and his dream of unity between Jew and Gentile that he personally took the offerings of the Gentiles to the poor saints in Jerusalem.

21:7- see on Acts 4:23.

21:8- see on 1 Cor. 7:17.

21:11,12- see on Acts 20:23; 21:4.

21:13 "Why make ye this ado and weep?" (Mk. 5:39) is unconsciously alluded to by Paul in Acts 21:13: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?". If this is a conscious allusion, it seems out of context. But as an unconscious allusion, it makes sense.

21:14- see on Acts 20:23.

Luke and other early brethren seemed to have had the Gethsemane record in mind in their sufferings, as we can also do (Acts 21:14 = Mk. 14:36).

21:15 Paul took up his baggage at Ephesus and went on to Jerusalem (Acts 21:15 RV); the baggage would have been the bits and pieces raised by the donors to the Jerusalem Poor Fund. Those who couldn't send money had sent what little they could spare in kind- presumably clothes and even animals, or goods for re-sale in Jerusalem.

21:17 Luke was a Gentile (so Col. 4:11 implies). Note how the other Gospel writers speak of the *sea* of Galilee, whereas the more widely travelled Luke refers to it only as a lake. While Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years, Luke was a free man (Acts 21:17; 24:27). It seems that during that

period, Luke may have spent the time travelling around the areas associated with Jesus, interviewing eye witnesses- especially Mary, the aged mother of Jesus, from whom he must have obtained much of the information about His birth and Mary's song. His preaching of the Gospel in Luke and Acts is made from his perspective- the fact that salvation is for all, not just Jews, is a major theme (Lk. 2:30-32; 3:6; 9:54,55; 10:25-34; Acts 1:8; 2:17).

21:19-24- see on Gal. 2:12.

21:20- see on Acts 8:1.

21:24- see on Acts 18:18.

21:27 God has recorded Paul's life in Acts is done in such a way as to show the similarities between him and Christ; thus the Spirit records that men "laid hands on" Paul (Acts 21:27), just as it does concerning the Lord Jesus (Mt. 26:50).

21:39 "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city" (Acts 21:39) seems rather proud, especially when we learn that Tarsus was famed for being a proud city. She inscribed upon her coins: "Tarsus, the Metropolis, First, Fairest and Best" (W. Barclay, *Ambassador For Christ* p. 25).

22:3 It is quite possible that Paul heard most of the speeches recorded in the Gospels, and saw many of the miracles. The reason is as follows. Every faithful Jew would have been in Jerusalem to keep the feasts three times per year. Jesus and Paul were therefore together in Jerusalem three times / year, throughout Christ's ministry. It can be demonstrated that many of the miracles and speeches of Jesus occurred around the feast times, in Jerusalem. Therefore I estimate that at least 70% of the content of the Gospels (including John) Paul actually saw and heard 'live'. Another indirect reason for believing that Paul had met and heard Jesus preaching is from the fact that Paul describes himself as having been brought up as a Pharisee, because his father had been one (Acts 23:6). Martin Hengel has shown extensive evidence to believe that the Pharisees only really operated in Palestine, centred in Jerusalem, where Paul was "brought up" at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Hengel also shows that "brought up" refers to training from a young child. So whilst Paul was born in Tarsus, he was really a Jerusalem boy. Almost certainly he would have heard and known much about Jesus; his father may even have been amongst those who persecuted the Lord. See Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: S.C.M., 1991).

Paul says he was "*taught*" according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" by Gamaliel, receiving the highest wisdom possible in the Jewish world; but he uses the same word as Stephen in Acts 7:22, describing how Moses was "*learned*" in all the wisdom of Egypt. Remember he heard Stephen's speech live. Paul felt that he too had been through Moses' experience- once mighty in words as the rising star of the Jewish world, but now like Moses he had left all that behind in order to try to save a new Israel from Judaism and paganism. As Moses *consciously* rejected the opportunity for leading the 'world' of Egypt, so Paul probably turned down the chance to be High Priest. God maybe confirmed both him and Moses in their desire for humility by giving them a speech impediment (the "thorn in the flesh" which Paul was "given", 2 Cor. 12:7?).

22:4- see on Acts 26:10,11.

22:5 Paul was called "brother" even before his baptism, and even after his baptism, he refers to the Jews as his "brethren" (Acts 22:5,13). Of course, he knew all about the higher status and meaning of brotherhood in Christ; but he wasn't so pedantic as to not call the Jews his 'brethren'. He clearly didn't have any of the guilt-by-association paranoia, and the associated standoffishness it brings with it, which have so hamstrung our witness to the world.

22:6 In the same way as Paul would've been trained to write and present an encomium [see on Gal. 1:10], so he would've been trained in the rhetoric of how to make a public defence speech. There was a set format for defending oneself, as there was for the encomium. And in his defence speeches

recorded in Acts, Paul again follows the accepted order of defence speeches- but his *content* was absolutely radical for the first century mind. Quintilian in his *Instructions To Orators* laid down five sections for such a speech- and Paul follows that pattern exactly. There was to be the exordium [opening statement], a statement of facts (*narratio*), the proof (*probatio*), the refutation (*refutatio*) and the concluding peroration. The speeches were intended to repeatedly remind the judges of what in fact was the core issue- and Paul does this when he stresses that he is on trial (*krinomai*) for "the hope of the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6; 24:21; 26:6,7,8). Yet as with his use of the encomium format, Paul makes some unusual twists in the whole presentation. It was crucial in the set piece defence speech to provide proof and authorized witness. Paul provides proof for the resurrection in himself; and insists that the invisible Jesus, a peasant from Galilee, had appeared to him and "appointed [him] to bear witness" (Acts 26:16; 22:15). That was laughable in a court of law. Yet the erudite, cultured, educated Paul in all soberness made that claim. Aristotle had defined two types of proof- "necessary proof" (*tekmerion*), from which irrefutable, conclusive conclusions could be drawn; and "probable proof", i.e. circumstantial evidence (*eikota / semeia*). Paul's claim to have seen Jesus on the Damascus road was of course circumstantial evidence, so far as the legal system was concerned- it could not be proven. Yet Paul calls this his *tekmerion*, the irrefutable proof (Acts 22:6-12; 26:12-16). Luke elsewhere uses this word and its synonym *pistis* to describe the evidence for the Lord's resurrection (Acts 1:3; 17:31). Paul's point of course was that the personal transformation of himself was indeed *tekmerion*, irrefutable proof, that Christ had indeed risen from the dead. And so it should be in the witness which *our* lives make to an unbelieving world. Significantly, Paul speaks of the great light which his companions saw at his conversion, and his subsequent blindness, as *eikota*, the circumstantial evidence, rather than the irrefutable proof (Acts 22:6,9,11; 26:13). Now to the forensic mind, this was more likely his best, 'irrefutable' proof, rather than saying that the irrefutable proof was simply he himself. Yet he puts that all the other way round. Thus when it came to stating 'witnesses', Paul doesn't appeal to his travelling companions on the road to Damascus. These would've surely been the obvious primary witnesses. Instead, he claims that "all Judeans" and even his own accusers "if they are willing to testify", are in fact witnesses of his character transformation (Acts 22:5; 26:4,5). The point is of tremendous power to us who lamely follow after Paul... it is our personal witness which is *the* supreme testimony to the truth of Christ; not 'science proves the Bible', archaeology, the stones crying out, prophecy fulfilling etc. It is we ourselves who are ultimately the prime witnesses to God's truth on this earth. All this was foolishness in the judgmental eyes of first century society, just as it is today. Our preaching of the Gospel is likewise apparent foolishness to our hearers, like Paul it is not "in plausible words of wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:1-7), even though, again like Paul, many of us could easily try to make it humanly plausible. Paul's credibility as a preacher was in his very lack of human credibility- he was hungry and thirsty, poorly dressed, homeless, having to do manual work (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 11:27); he was the powerless one, beaten, imprisoned and persecuted (1 Cor. 4:8-12; 2 Cor. 6:4,5). It's hard for us to imagine how unimpressive and repulsive this was in first century society. And yet it was exactly this which gave him power and credibility as a preacher of Christ's Gospel. And he sets before us a challenging pattern.

22:7- see on Mt. 26:39.

22:14- see on Col. 1:9.

22:16 The urgent appeal for repentance was quite a feature of their witness (2:38; 5:31; 7:51; 11:18; 17:30; 18:18; 20:21; 26:20; Heb. 6:1). There needs to be a greater stress on repentance in our preaching, 20 centuries later. This is why baptism was up front in their witness, for it is for the forgiveness of sins; thus in 22:16 they appealed for repentance and baptism in the same breath.

The language of washing away of sins refers to God's forgiveness of us on account of our baptism into Christ. In some passages we are spoken of as washing away our sins by our faith and repentance (Acts 22:16; Rev. 7:14; Jer. 4:14; Is. 1:16); in others God is seen as the one who washes

away our sins (Ez. 16:9; Ps. 51:2,7; 1 Cor. 6:11). This nicely shows how that if we do our part in being baptised, God will then wash away our sins.

22:18 The Lord Jesus told Paul about the Jews: "...get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me" (Acts 22:18). And yet Paul always appealed first of all to the Jews, despite his emotional turning unto the Gentiles at one stage. Even by Acts 28:17, he started preaching "to those that were of the Jews first" (RVmg.). The principle of "to the Jews first" was paramount and universal in the thinking of Paul. And despite the Holy Spirit repeatedly warning him not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22,23; 21:11), he went there. He hoped against hope that even in the light of the foreknowledge that Israel would reject the Gospel, somehow they might change.

22:19- see on Acts 26:10,11.

He recounts in Acts 22:19-21 how first of all he felt so ashamed of his past that he gently resisted this command to preach: "I said, Lord... I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed... and he said unto me, Depart... unto the Gentiles". The stress on "every synagogue" (Acts 22:19; 26:11) must be connected with the fact that he chose to preach *in the synagogues*. He was sent to persecute every synagogue in Damascus, and yet he purposefully preached in every synagogue there (Acts 9:2,20). His motivation was rooted in his deep recognition of sinfulness. Likewise Peter preached a hundred metres or so from the very place where he denied the Lord.

22:20- see on Rom. 1:32.

22:22 It might seem that it was impossible that Paul, having been beaten and in chains, guarded by soldiers, could make a hand gesture, say a few words in Hebrew, and quell a raging crowd (Acts 21:31-34; 22:22). Yet it was because he spoke to them in Hebrew, in their own language and in their own terms, that somehow the very power and realness of his personality had such an effect. It reminds us of how the Lord could send crowds away, make them sit down...because of His identity with them, His supreme bridge building.

22:25,28 Paul seems to enjoy putting the wind up the soldiers by waiting until they had bound him for torture before asking, surely in a sarcastic way, whether it was lawful for them to beat a Roman citizen. The fact he asked the question when he knew full well the answer is surely indicative of his sarcasm. The chief captain commented, under his breath it would seem, that it had cost him a fortune in backhanders to get Roman citizenship. Paul picked up his words and commented, with head up, we can imagine: "But *I* was free born" - I was born a citizen, never needed to give a penny in backhanders to get it either. Surely there is an arrogance here which is unbecoming. And it was revealed at a time when he was in dire straits himself, and after already being in Christ some time. It may indicate that he was tempted to adopt a brazen, almost fatalistic aggression towards his captors and persecutors- what Steinbeck aptly described as "the terrible, protective dignity of the powerless". One can well imagine how such a mindset would start to develop in Paul after suffering so much at the hands of men. Compare this incident with the way he demands the magistrates to come *personally* and release him from prison, because they have unfairly treated him (Acts 16:37).

22:26 We read (almost in passing) that Paul five times was beaten with 39 stripes (2 Cor. 11:22-27). Yet from Acts 22:26 it is evident that Paul as a Roman citizen didn't need not have endured this. On each of those five occasions he could have played the card of his Roman citizenship to get him out of it; but he didn't. It wouldn't have been wrong to; but five times out of six, he chose the highest level. It may be that he chose not to mention his Roman citizenship so as to enable him access to the synagogues for preaching purposes. The one time Paul didn't play that card, perhaps he was using the principle of Jephthah's vow- that you can vow to your own hurt but chose a lower level and break it.

23:1 Reflect upon Paul's claim that he had lived in all good conscience before God all his life (Acts 23:1). The Lord Jesus Himself informs us that Paul kicked against the pricks of his own conscience

(Acts 9:5). And in any case, Paul elsewhere says that his good conscience actually means very little, because it is God's justification, not self-justification through a clear conscience, which is ultimately important (1 Cor. 4:4 RSV). It seems Paul was aware of his weak side when he comments how despite his own clear conscience, God may see him otherwise (1 Cor. 4:4 RSV); and surely this was in his mind. So how true were Paul's words in Acts 23:1? It seems that he said them in bitter self-righteousness. Soon afterwards he changes his life story to say that he had always *tried* to have a good conscience (24:16).

23:1 To address the Sanhedrin as “brethren” has been described as “almost recklessly defiant” (William Barclay, *Ambassador For Christ* p. 132). The usual address was: “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel”. But Paul instead treated them as his equals.

23:3 Paul's words of Acts 23:3 were surely said in the heat of the moment: "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!" . Yet even in hot blood, not carefully thinking through his words (for this doesn't seem the most appropriate thing to come out with!), Paul was still unconsciously referring to the Gospels (Mt. 23:27 in this case).

23:3-6 Having started on the wrong footing by this statement, it was perhaps this arrogant mood which lead him to curse the High Priest as a "whited wall" (23:3-6). It seems to me that Paul realized his mistake, and wriggled out of it by saying that he hadn't seen that it was the High Priest because of his poor eyesight- even though Paul would have recognized his voice well enough. Another possibility is that "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest" is to be read as Paul claiming that he didn't recognize this high priest, as Christ was his high priest, therefore his cursing was justified. But he thinks on his feet, and suggests that he is being persecuted only because of his belief in a resurrection- with the desired result ensuing, that there was a division between his accusers.

23:6- see on Acts 22:3; Acts 22:6.

Paul's general attitude was akin to that of his Lord, in that he was not hyper careful to close off any opportunities to criticize him. This fear of and sensitivity to criticism is something which seems to have stymied parts of the body of Christ. He says things like “I am a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6), not “I was a Pharisee and now repudiate their false doctrines”.

The Two Pauls

Paul saw himself as two people. Consider how this dualism is to be found in many places:

The Natural Paul

Paul could say: “I am a Pharisee...I am a man which am a Jew” (Acts 23:6; 21:13,39; 22:3; 2 Cor. 11:22) Circumcision and being Jewish has ‘much advantage’ (Rom. 3:1,2). “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel” (Phil. 3:5). He argues that all Jews are “the seed of Abraham”, including himself, by birth (2 Cor. 11:22).

“We who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:15)

The Spiritual Paul

But he also stresses that “they are not all Israel who are of Israel” because only “the children of the promise”, those baptized into Christ, are counted as the seed (Gal. 3:16,27-29; Rom. 9:8). The spiritual Paul is neither Jew nor Gentile. The ‘gain’ of being personally Jewish Paul counted as loss (Phil. 3:3-7). His circumcision meant nothing (Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 7:19). “We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit... and have no confidence in the flesh [i.e. the fact of literal circumcision, see context]” (Phil. 3:7)

This contrasts sharply with Paul's whole message that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, and both groups are

all equally sinners (Rom. 3:9,23). He speaks of “theirs is the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship... theirs are the patriarchs” (Rom. 9:4,5). He clearly dissociates himself from Jewry. He had to *become like a Jew* in order to save them, although he was Jewish (2 Cor. 9:20). He carefully kept parts of the law (Acts 18:18; 21:26; 1 Cor. 8:13). To the Jew he became [again] as a Jew; and to the Gentiles he became as a Gentile (1 Cor. 9:20). He acted “To them that are without law, as without law...”. He was “dead to the law” (Gal. 2:19) He was a Jew but considered he had renounced it, but he became as a Jew to them to help them. He saw no difference between Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:27-29) but he consciously acted in a Jewish or Gentile way to help those who still perceived themselves after the flesh. “...(being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ)” (1 Cor 9:21).

I am carnal (Rom. 7:14)

But in Christ he was not carnal (1 Cor. 3:1 s.w.)

No flesh may glory before God (1 Cor. 1:29)

Paul, in his spiritual man, as counted righteous before God, could glory (Rom. 15:17).

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect”

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect...” (Phil. 3:12,15). In 1 Cor. 13:10, he considers he is ‘perfect’, and has put away the things of childhood. Thus he saw his spiritual maturity only on account of his being in Christ; for he himself was not “already perfect”, he admitted.

“I laboured more abundantly than they all...

... *yet not I*, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor 15:10)

God set the apostles *first* in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 12:28)

God set the apostles *last* in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 4:9)

“I live...

... *yet not I*, but Christ liveth in me [the new ‘me’]... I [the old ‘me’] am crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20)

“I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office” (Rom. 11:13). He considered himself rightfully amongst the very chiefest apostles (2 Cor. 12:11).

He “supposed”, the same word translated “impute” as in ‘imputed righteousness’, that he was amongst the chiefest apostles (2 Cor. 11:5). He knew this was how his Lord counted him. But he felt himself as less than the least of all saints (Eph. 3:8). “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:9-10).

24:16- see on Acts 23:1; Heb. 9:24.

A personal focus upon the man Christ Jesus ought to lessen the degree to which our faith is focused upon the church, without making us out of church Christians. We need to toughen up, to realize more keenly the self-discipline and self-sacrifice which following the man Jesus requires of us. Paul "exercised" himself in his spiritual life (Acts 24:16), the Greek word *asko* being the source of the English word ascetic. It should not be that our Christianity gives us merely a headful of vital truths but a life unable to fend off sin. We must translate our doctrines into the practice of a transformed life. On-our-knees prayer, fasting, real sacrifice of time, money and human possibilities... this is what the life of Christ is about. This, too, is what forges real personality.

24:21- see on Acts 22:6.

24:25 The very fact of judgment to come is in itself a demand for righteousness and temperance (Acts 24:25). Felix realized this and trembled, in anticipation of rejection at the judgment. As the Lord had explained in Jn. 5, when a man hears the word of the Gospel, he hears the call to go to judgment. And if he rejects it, he rejects himself from the Lord's presence in the future. Likewise Acts 17:31 reasons that the very existence of the future judgment seat and the Lord ordained as judge of living and dead is a command to repent.

24:26- see on Lk. 8:3.

25:10-12 Paul's appeal to Caesar seems to have been quite unnecessary, and again it seems to have been the outcome of bitter exasperation and almost pride: "I ought to be judged", as a Roman citizen..."no man may deliver me...", "as thou very well knowest"; the response of Festus seems to be appropriate to Paul's arrogance: "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar thou shalt go" (25:10-12). The word used to describe Paul's "appeal" is that usually translated "to call on (the name of the Lord)", perhaps suggesting that this was whom Paul should have called in, not Caesar.

26:6- see on Acts 22:6.

26:8 If we have really died and resurrected with the Lord, we will be dead unto the things of this world (Col. 2:20; 3:1). This is why Paul could say that the greatest proof that Christ had risen from the dead was the change in character which had occurred within him (Acts 26:8 ff.). This was "the power of his resurrection"; and it works within us too. The death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth aren't just facts we know; if they are truly believed, there is within them the power of ultimate transformation.

26:11 I am convinced that a major reason for the success of the early church was that they weren't paranoid about issues of fellowship and guilt-by-association; they were simply radical preachers. They preached an exclusive message, but they wished to be inclusive rather than exclusive. The Lord Himself taught that the time would come when His followers would be disfellowshipped from the synagogues. But He doesn't teach them to leave the synagogues, even though first century Judaism was both doctrinally and morally corrupt. Acts 26:11 would seem to imply that there were Christians "in every synagogue".

26:10,11 Paul's progressive appreciation of his own sinfulness is reflected in how he describes what he did in persecuting Christians in ever more terrible terms, the older he gets. He describes his victims as "men and women" whom he 'arrested' (Acts 8:3; 22:4), then he admits he threatened and murdered them (Acts 9:3), then he persecuted "the way" unto death (Acts 22:4); then he speaks of them as "those who believe" (Acts 22:19) and finally, in a crescendo of shame with himself, he speaks of how he furiously persecuted, like a wild animal, unto the death, "many of the saints", not only in Palestine but also "to foreign [Gentile] cities" (Acts 26:10,11). He came to appreciate his brethren the more, as he came to realize the more his own sinfulness. And this is surely a pattern for us all.

26:12- see on Acts 22:6.

26:13- see on Acts 22:6.

26:16 The apostles in their letters usually open by reminding their readers that they are slaves of the Lord Jesus- this is how they saw themselves. Paul was called to be a slave of the Gospel (Acts 26:16; Gk. *hypereten*- a galley slave, rowing the boat chained to the oars). There were slaves who were made stewards or managers [‘bishops’] of the Master’s business, but essentially they themselves were still slaves.

26:16-19 The Lord Jesus seems to have encouraged Paul to see Moses as his hero. Thus he asked him to go and live in Arabia before beginning his ministry, just as Moses did (Gal. 1:17). When he appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, he spoke in terms reminiscent of the Angel's commission to Moses at the burning bush: “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the (Jewish) people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to...turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance... Whereupon... I (Paul) was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:16-19). Moses was promised that he would be protected from Pharaoh so that he could bring out God's people from the darkness of Egyptian slavery ("the power of Satan"); going from darkness to light is used by Peter as an idiom to describe Israel's deliverance from Egypt, which the new Israel should emulate (1 Pet. 2:9). Moses led Israel out of Egypt so that they might be reconciled to God, and be led by him to the promised inheritance of Canaan. As Moses was eventually obedient to that heavenly vision, so was Paul- although perhaps he too went through (unrecorded) struggles to be obedient to it, after the pattern of Moses being so reluctant.

26:18 Paul was to bring others to the light just as John had (Lk. 1:77,79 = Acts 13:47; 26:18,23).

God’s manifestation of His word through preaching is limited by the amount of manifestation His preachers allow it. Through the first century preaching of the Gospel, men and women were "turned from darkness to light... *that* they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified" (Acts 26:18).

Salvation involves us receiving “an inheritance among them which are sanctified” (Acts 26:18). It is *not* a purely personal matter. It is part of a shared experience, something we obtain a part in. Christ *is* His body. He doesn't exist separate from His body; for all existence in the Bible is bodily existence. And *we* are His body. He is us. Likewise we are the branches of the Christ-vine (Jn. 15). Because we are all in the one body of Christ, therefore we are intimately associated with the other parts of the body.

The Power of Satan

Comments

1. Verse 17 shows that the “they” and “them” referred to are the Gentiles. Are we to think that the Jews were not under “the power of Satan”? At the time Paul was writing there were very many sinful Jews, consciously persecuting the Christians. So this verse cannot be referring to the entire human race.
2. There is no specific indication here that “Satan” is a personal being.

Suggested Explanations

1. There are some clear contrasts drawn here:

To open their eyes	(They were blind).
To turn them from darkness	to light.
From the power of Satan (sin)	unto God (cp. 1 Jn. 1:5).
(Unforgiven)	receive forgiveness of sins.

(Gentiles without inheritance by faith in “the hope of Israel”)

them (the Jews) that had access to sanctification by faith.

The Word of God is a light (Ps. 119:105) and is associated with open eyes (Ps. 119:18). We are sanctified by the Word (Jn. 17:17). We have seen in our exposition of John 8:44 that it is by the Word that the power of Satan is overcome; i.e. Satan in the sense of the power our evil desires have over our unregenerate heart. ‘Satan’ is therefore the antithesis to the light of God’s word – it refers to the flesh, which is the opposition of the Spirit word.

2. Ephesians 4:17–20 almost seems to directly allude back to this passage in Acts 26:18: “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ...”. Being under the power of Satan is therefore a result of having an empty, vain, fleshly mind (i.e. the Satan of evil desires in our mind having full power) and being ignorant, without understanding. Matthew 13:19 says that Satan (cp. Mk 4:15) has power over a person because of their lack of understanding of the Word. Ephesians 4:17–20 is referring to the same thing as “the power of Satan” defined in Acts 26:18. “To open their eyes” implies to have the eyes of understanding opened (cp. Eph. 1:18).

3. Acts 26:18 implies that it was “the power of Satan” that stopped the Gentiles from sharing the inheritance of the Gospel which was preached to the Jews in the promises (Gal. 3:8; Jn. 4:22). We have shown elsewhere that “Satan” is often connected with the Law and the Jewish system. Maybe this is another example. Note too the allusions in this verse to Isaiah 42:6,7: “I... will... keep you, and give you for a... light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house”. This equates the power of Satan with a prison house, and the Law is likened to a prison in Galatians 3:23 and 4:3.

There are allusions in Acts 26:18 to the Jews’ crucifixion of Jesus: “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Lk. 22:53); “Satan” (the Jews) has desired to have you” (Lk. 22:31), Jesus warned the disciples at the last supper. The previous verse (Acts 26:17) shows Jesus strengthening Paul to be brave in his mission to the Gentiles – “delivering you from the [Jewish] people, and from the Gentiles”. Jesus Himself was “delivered to the Gentiles” (Lk. 18:32–33) for crucifixion by the Jews, and Mark 15:15 implies Jesus was delivered to “the people”, too. The phrase “the people” frequently occurs in the crucifixion records. It is as if Jesus is saying: ‘I was delivered to the Gentiles and (Jewish) people because of My preaching; I am now commissioning you to preach, facing the same battle against (the Jewish) Satan and man’s blindness to the Word of God, due to his love of the flesh, as I did; but I will deliver you from the Gentiles and Jewish people, rather than deliver you to them, as I was. You are going to spend your life going through the same experiences as I faced in My last hours’. Thus, in yet another way, we can understand how Paul could say “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20).

26:19- see on Acts 13:9.

26:20- see on Mt. 3:8; Acts 13:24,25.

It seems likely that Paul went to hear John the Baptist preach; "there went out to him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem" (Mk. 1:5), and at this time Paul was living in Jerusalem. I believe Paul heard John and was convicted by him of Christ. John preached the need to "bring forth fruits meet

unto repentance" (Mt. 3:8); and Paul made those his own watchwords in his world-wide preaching (Acts 26:20).

Paul took a prophecy concerning how Christ personally would be the light of the whole world (Is. 49:6), and applies it to himself in explanation of why he was devoted to being a light to the whole world *himself* (Acts 13:47- although 26:23 applies it to Jesus personally). Paul even says that this prophecy of Christ as the light of the world was a *commandment* to him; all that is true of the Lord Jesus likewise becomes binding upon us, because we are *in* Him. Note that Paul says that God has commanded *us* to witness; it wasn't that Paul was a special case, and God especially applied Isaiah's words concerning Christ as light of the Gentiles to Paul. They apply to *us*, to all who are in Christ. And when on trial, Paul explained *his* preaching to the Jews "and then to the Gentiles" as being related to the fact that he had to "shew" the Gospel to them because Christ rose from the dead to "shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:20,23). In other words, he saw his personal preaching as shewing forth the light of Jesus personally.

We have suggested elsewhere that Paul was first called to the Gospel by the preaching of John the Baptist. He initially refused to heed the call to "do works meet for repentance". But, fully aware of this, he preached this very same message to others (Mt. 3:8 cp. Acts 26:20).

Men "should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:18-20). As with Mt. 21:28-31, this refers primarily to baptism. "Repent and turn to God" surely matches "Repent and be baptized" in Acts 2:38. Turning to God is associated with baptism in Acts 9:35; 11:21; 15:19; 1 Thess. 1:9. Following conversion, our works should match the profession of faith we have made. But there is no proof here for the equation 'Forgiveness = repentance + forsaking'. The "works" seem to refer to positive achievement rather than undoing the results of past failures. Works meet for repentance are fruits of repentance (Mt. 3:8 cp. Lk. 3:8). We have shown that there are different degrees of fruit/ repentance which God accepts, and that this fruit is brought forth to *God*, and that its development takes time. We cannot therefore disfellowship a believer for not bringing forth fruit in one aspect of his life.

26:22 The apostles bore witness to the Lord Jesus (e.g. Acts 26:22; 1 Cor. 15:15 s.w.), and He in turn bore witness to the [preaching of] the word of his grace (Acts 15:8). In their witness lay His witness.

26:23- see on Jn. 9:4.

26:26- see on 2 Cor. 3:12.

26:27 "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest" (26:27) suggests that Paul in full flow, even shackled and in prison clothes, had a fleck of arrogance and aggression in his presentation.

26:28 Paul was not against using persuasion; he didn't just 'preach the truth' and leave it for others to decide. Agrippa commented: "With but a little [more] persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that whether with little [persuasion] or with much, not only thou but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am" (Acts 26:28,29 RV). Paul wasn't against using persuasion to bring men unto his Lord, and neither should we be.

27

Paul's Shipwreck

There is no doubt that the great apostle Paul was a clear type of the Lord Jesus. He confidently holds himself up as an example to us to follow, so that we might follow the Lord Jesus. The links between Paul's sufferings and those of his Lord have been tabulated elsewhere⁽¹⁾. I get the feeling that there are times when Paul consciously alludes to Christ's words, and appropriates them to himself. For example, in v.34 of Acts 27 we read of how he promised them that "not an hair (would)

fall from the head" of any of them, just as Christ promised his disciples (Lk.21:18); and the way in which Paul twice encouraged them "be of good cheer" (v.22,25) as they huddled together breaking bread is also quoting the very words of the Lord Jesus, in the same context (Jn.16:33); and remember that Jesus also said those words when the disciples were struggling in another great storm (Mk.6:50). The way Paul broke bread in v.35 is also an echo of the way Christ did it: "When he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat...and they also took some". We get the impression that Paul was slowly, deliberately copying the example of Jesus in the upper room (1 Cor.11:23,24). So it is as if Paul is seeing himself as typical of Christ, and those in the ship with him as typical of Christ's followers. The way the Angel appeared to him at night to strengthen him (v.23) also echoes the experience of Christ in the Garden.

If we study carefully this record of Paul's shipwreck, it becomes apparent that it is written in a way which is not just a narrative of certain historical events. All through there are phrases and ideas which connect with other Scripture. After all, if God's Spirit wrote this record, there are going to be connections with other Spirit-inspired Scriptures; for the Spirit of God is *one* (Eph.4:4), its end product is unity, of whatever sort. So when we start to put together all the links with other parts of the Word which we find in Acts 27, it becomes crystal clear that we are really intended to see these events as parabolic of the drama of our salvation. Now I want to labour this point about the Spirit-word having connections with other parts of the Word. Seeing types and parabolic meaning in Bible passages is not just a kind of hobby, an enthusiasm, for some who are keen on that kind of thing. We really are intended by God to make these connections. This is one reason why He wrote His word as He did.

Ship, Storm and Sea

So let me give you an example of the sort of thing I mean. If you look at this whole story from a macro perspective, as it were half shut your eyes and just see the general outline, some bells should start ringing. There were a group of sailors, with an immensely spiritual man in their midst, caught in a freak, unexpected storm which threatened their life, filled with panic and desperation. Then the spiritual man stands up in their midst and inspires them with his words, and on his account they are saved by God and miraculously reach land. Of course - I hope!- our minds go back to the storm on Galilee, with the Lord Jesus standing up in the midst of those terrified men. And when we analyze the record in detail, we find this similarity confirmed. "A tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon" 'beat' (Gk., AVmg.) against the ship (v.14). The same Greek word for "beat" occurs in Mk.4:37, in the record of the Galilee storm. The disciples' comment must have been echoed by Paul's fellow passengers: "What manner of man is this...?" . Closer study of Mk.4:37-41 reveals many links with Jonah's experience; and Acts 27 also has connections with this, admittedly different ones. The progressive lightening of the ship by throwing everything overboard (v.18,38) is a clear link back to Jonah 1:5. On Christ's own authority, we can interpret Jonah as a type of Christ, who saved the ship's crew (cp. the church) by jumping overboard to his three day death (cp. Christ). Thus the boat passengers in both Jonah and Acts 27 represent ourselves, and their physical rescue points forward to our spiritual salvation. When Paul tells them to eat food "for your *health*" (v.34), he uses the Greek word normally translated "salvation". And Young's Literal Translation brings out the correct sense of Acts 28:1: "They, having been saved..." . They escaped safely to "the land" (v.44 Gk.), symbolic of the Kingdom.

Now you might have noticed that several times we read about them using the anchors. Then in v.41 we read of the forepart sticking fast and remaining "unmoveable". There are connections here with Hebrews 6:19, which speaks of the hope of the Gospel as "an anchor of the soul... which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus". The idea of Christ as a forerunner, the firstfruits, is surely to be connected with "the forepart" of the vessel remaining unmoveable. As they crawled up the shore on Malta, Paul and the others would have looked back to

that unmoveable bow of the ship; perhaps they went to see it the next morning, as it stood proudly amid the calmed waters. That sight would have stayed with Paul; perhaps the Spirit used that memory when it inspired Paul to use the same Greek word (the only other occurrence in the NT) in Heb.12:28: "We receiving a Kingdom which *cannot be moved* , let us *hold fast* " (AVmg.), as the bow of the ship "stuck fast" . This is all further proof that we should see the incidents of Acts 27 as parabolic of deeper spiritual things.

Forgotten Feasts

As always with this kind of thing, just one or two connections don't clinch the point. But what we want to do this morning is to go through this chapter, looking at the more evident pieces of evidence, pausing to draw the exhortations. So let's start in v.2. "Adramyttium" means 'the house of death'. That speaks for itself. You can easily jot that in the margin of your Bibles. Now down to v.9: "Sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past" . Pliny records that long distance sailing was supposed to finish on the Day of Atonement; and seeing that this was the only Jewish feast which involved fasting, it is likely that they set sail just after the day of Atonement (so the Greek implies). The Day of Atonement was on the 10th day of the seventh Jewish month. We can assume that they left Lasea (v.8) on about the 12th day of the seventh month, just after the day of Atonement on the 10th, when navigation was supposed to cease. But three days later (v.19), Paul and Luke were throwing overboard the loose tackling of the ship, in the midst of the storm. This would have been the fifteenth day of the seventh month; exactly when the feast of Tabernacles began. This feast lasted seven days (Ez.45:25 styles it "the feast of the seven days"). During that period, Paul and Luke were probably fasting, and doubtless sharing in the fear which gripped that vessel. It was obviously impossible to keep the feast. The sensitive Jewish-Christian mind of the first century would immediately have picked up on this; and if he (or she) grasped the idea that these events were parabolic, they would have seen in this the powerful demonstration that in Christ it is impossible to go on keeping the Mosaic feasts.

Spiritual Magnetism

Paul was clearly held in some esteem on that ship. Even as a prisoner, he was able to muscle in on the discussions about whether or not to go on sailing: " Paul *admonished* them" (v.9) implies that he knew that he commanded enough respect to put his point quite forcibly. And v.11 is written in a rather strange way. It doesn't say that the Centurion disbelieved Paul; but rather that he believed the shipmaster more than Paul's *words* . He evidently had a great respect for Paul as a person. And as Paul stood on that cold, windswept deck, shouting above the noise of the wind (v.21), you get the picture of a man whose magnetism was fully effective on that rough crowd of seamen and prisoners. Such was his authority that a word from him resulted in them ditching the lifeboat; the only human chance of salvation. Once they did that, they were completely dependent on the spiritual vision of this extraordinary man Paul. His repeated exhortation " Be of good cheer...be of good cheer" (v.22,25) was taken to heart by them: " Then were they all of good cheer" (v.36). And like a father with sick children, Paul got them, against their will initially, to sit down to a good wholesome meal. The uncanny appeal of Paul is brought out when we consider the implication of v.35: Paul prayed in the presence of them *all* , all 275 of them, presumably mustered on the deck, and then solemnly ate in front of them, passing the food on to them. Paul's magnetism is most clearly shown by the Centurion being willing to allow all the prisoners to make their own way to land, rather than allow Paul to be killed (v.43). Of course our mind goes back to how the jailor at Philippi was literally on the verge of suicide because he just *thought* that his prisoners had escaped (actually, none of them had). Yet among those 276 desperate men, there must have been some who secretly despised Paul. The Centurion " kept them from *their purpose* " of killing Paul (v.43). This may suggest that even in their personal desperation, some of the men on that ship were prepared to kill Paul, due to their own sense of inadequacy, and jealousy of his spirituality.

In all this we have a cameo of the position of the Lord Jesus amongst them who are called to salvation. We should be sensing, here and now as we face the emblems of his sacrifice, as we sense his presence in the midst of us this morning, something of his magnetism, something of the feeling of the disciples on Galilee when they muttered: "What manner of man is this"; something of the wonder of those soldiers when they returned to their C.O. with the quiet comment: "Never man spake like this man" . Or the wonder of another Centurion: "Truly this was *the Son of God*. Truly this was a *righteous man*" (Mt.27:54; Lk.23:47; imagine his tone of voice, and which words he emphasized in that sentence). Now each of us here ought to know this feeling. But I fear that we come here, to this table of the Lord, week by week, and somehow the sense of *marvel*, the sense of *wonder*, at the personality of the Lord Jesus, just isn't there. Do we really *know* Him as we should? Do we really feel and respond to that spiritual magnetism which exudes from him, now just as much as in the first century? Are we really metal to the spiritual magnet of His perfect personality? These are things which no magic set of words from me can put right. *Do you know Christ as your personal saviour?* Well hacked, well worn words, I know. But they are right at the crux, at the very heart, of our spiritual lives. This ought to make us really sit up, take a hold on ourselves, realizing that time is *so short* to improve our knowing of Christ.

Verse 12 says that their temporary harbour " was not commodious" to stay in, so they left, "if by any means they might attain to Phenice" . Now I just don't think it's accidental, or irrelevant, that this very phrase was used by Paul a few years (or months?) later, once he got to Rome and sat down to write to the Philippians. He wrote of how he struggled to know the real spirit of Christ's self-crucifixion, having counted all the things of this life as dung, losing them all so that he might know the real mind of the crucified Christ, "*If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead* " (Phil.3:11). The horrific memory of the shipwreck would have stayed with him all his days. Under the Spirit's guidance, he would have recalled the spirit in that ship, as they all set sail if by any means they might attain unto Phenice. That run down old town of 'Fair Havens', its name promising what it certainly wasn't, full of lonely old men sitting in cheap tavernas... it must have been some depressing place, to make the sailors take the risk of sailing further on in such unpredictable weather. We might be able to imagine or remember towns like that which we know. And that run down ghost-town, Paul said, was typical of how we should see our lives in the world, worth making any sacrifice to leave, if by any means we might attain to a better resting place.

Fortnight of Fear

It is difficult for us to imagine what that fortnight in the storm was like. Verse 21 speaks of the "harm" which they experienced, using a Greek word which is usually used about mental harm or damage. They were deeply perplexed in mind and body. Their helplessness amidst the fury of those winds is brought home by the Spirit: "We let (the ship) drive...and so (we) were driven...being exceedingly tossed with a tempest...no small tempest lay on us (i.e. smothered us)...we were driven up and down in Adria". Our brief life of probation is described in widely different terms by the Spirit. Here we get the idea that it is a totally horrific experience, full of fear, first of one thing (e.g. of grounding on quicksands), and then of another (being broken on rocks). In other places our experience of life now is likened to a plodding on through the wilderness, in others to a short sharp battle, in others to the monotonous tramping out of corn by an ox, the patient waiting of the farmer, or the lonely, dogged endurance of the long distance runner. And in yet other passages we are promised a life of "all (possible) joy and peace through believing" , dashing on from victory to victory, more than conquerors, caught up with the ecstasy of the triumphant march in Christ, all our lives long. We must see our experience of spiritual life in holistic terms, we mustn't just emphasize one of these aspects. The way these different aspects all merge together in our spiritual experience is, to me, one of the most wonderful things about a balanced life in the Truth. An unbalanced approach will lead to us doggedly clinging on to the doctrines of the Truth, rejecting any suggestion that there should be an element of spiritual rapture and ecstasy in our lives. Or it may lead to an over

emotional, watery sort of spirituality which reacts against any hint that we ought to be gritting our teeth and holding on to our faith, fearing the ferocious satan of our own evil natures.

In our own strength, we really are like those sailors. "All hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (v.20). When they waved goodbye to the lifeboat, that really was the end of even the wildest dreams of salvation. They fixed their faith on the serene old man who spoke in calm confidence of his deep relationship with the true God. It has been said, quite rightly, that a healthy fear of the judgment seat is vital if we are to be saved. "Let us therefore *fear*", Paul wrote (Heb.4:1), and later in Hebrews he holds up Noah as our example, in that he was "moved with (motivated by) fear" in working out his own salvation (Heb.11:7). The parable of the shipwreck certainly brings home to us this aspect of fear in our spiritual journey. So, there should be some element of fear in our spirituality. It is sometimes said that fear just means respect. This is sometimes true, but not always. The fear of the men in that boat was real fear, not just respect. Of course we must be balanced; a life of excessive fear of being spiritually drowned does not consider those other aspects of our walk in Christ which we mentioned earlier. But this morning, as we face the supreme holiness of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, and the supreme justice and righteousness of the Most High God, Yahweh of Israel, a righteousness which is absolute and cannot be compromised at all; and as we consider the filth of our own natures, the endless list of failure, half hearted spiritual effort, even at times willful ignorance of God's ways; there must surely be a significant element of fear within us, of panic and desperation as we sense the cage, the trap, of our own sinfulness. Do we really *love* righteousness? Do we so *hate* sin? So love God, so hate our sins, that we can enter into the feelings of those men in the storm, as they were driven up and down by the Mediterranean winds? We noted earlier the way in which the record stresses the power of those winds; and winds are a fairly common symbol of the pressure upon the believer from the surrounding world, and from the innate, sinful promptings of our own natures (Eph.4:14; James 1:6; 3:4; Jude 12). The howling of those winds must have militated against their having a total trust in Paul's words. When he spoke of how the Angel had appeared to him, no doubt they kind of believed him. But the record shows that in practice they tried to work out their salvation their own way. Despite having been told that they would all be saved if they stayed with Paul, some of them tried to escape using the lifeboat. The soldiers' suggestion that they kill Paul and the prisoners shows a like lack of appreciation. Yet they all took Paul's exhortation to "be of good cheer". Psychologically, he did cheer them up. They felt better after breaking bread with him and hearing his words. But they still tried to get out of that mess their own way. You can see the similarity with us this morning, as we sit here in the presence of the Lord Jesus, hearing him speak for these few moments, above the winds of temptation and this world. The words of the hymn come powerfully to mind: "O let me hear thee speaking / In accents clear and still / Above the storms of passion / The murmurs of self-will".

Loving His appearing

The description of Malta as a "land which they knew not" (Acts 27:39) is evidently similar to the account of Abraham going to a land which he knew not (Heb. 11:8,9). The land was a strange land, just as Malta was perceived as a "barbarous", i.e. pagan, land (Acts 28:2). The desperate situation of Paul and those with him therefore points forward to an awful time of tribulation for the believers just prior to being 'saved' into the Kingdom. This climaxes in coming to the place where two seas meet (Acts 27:41)- surely a reference to the judgment seat. There, it becomes apparent what is to 'remain unmoveable' and what is to be 'broken' or dissolved. These very same Greek words occur in 2 Pet. 3:10-12, about the breaking up or dissolving of all things at the Lord's return; and of the unmoveable quality of the Kingdom which we shall receive, when all other things have been shaken to their destruction and dissolution (Heb. 12:27,28).

One of the signs that they were nearing the end of their ordeal was that "neither sun nor stars in many days appeared" (v.20). Now this sounds very much like Lk.21:25-27: "There shall be signs in

the sun and in the...stars...the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear... then look up... then shall they see the Son of man coming". As soon as it was day, we read in v.39, they grounded the ship and swam to land, reaching their salvation at daybreak. This fits in to place alongside the many links between the second coming and daybreak. The men somehow sensed ("deemed" , v.27) that they were approaching land. It is quite likely that the spiritually aware will have a sense of the nearness of Christ's return. Christ too referred to this when he spoke of how in the Spring we have an innate sense that Summer is coming; so, He reasoned, you will be able to sense my return. Now if we really *know* Christ, have a real two-way, ongoing relationship with him, as a pupil-disciple to his teacher-master, then we will surely have this sense. "They *drew near* to some country" really implies that they were being drawn near; the Greek word is always used elsewhere about the believer drawing close to the Lord. 1 Pet.3:18 is the best example: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins...that he might *bring us* (same word) to God" . Now in our typology that would suggest that in some way Christ guides us into the Kingdom, helps us through the last lap. Watch out for other types and hints that this is the case. And talk about it to some dear old brother in his late eighties whose known the Lord all his days.

On that last night, the sailors prayed for the day to dawn (v.29 Gk., RVmg.). "The day" is an idiom for the Kingdom in Rom.13:12. This fits in alongside the many other connections between intense prayer and the second coming ⁽²⁾. If we *know* Christ, as we've been saying, then we will long to share his glory, we will long to see his beauty with our own eyes. So *are we* praying earnestly for the day to dawn? Or are we just content with the knowledge that it will come, like a slow train coming? Those men prayed for the dawn so intently because they knew that if the winds blew for much longer, they just couldn't hold on, they would be swept away. They feared "lest we should be cast on rocky ground" (Acts 27:29 RV)- replete with reference to the parable of the sower. There are many indications that the body of Christ will be weak and sickly when he returns. The sailors [=us] even at the very end disbelieved the prophecy that the ship would be destroyed- for they sought to "bring the ship safe to shore" (Acts 27:22,39 RVmg.). Even for the wise virgins, the coming of Christ awakes them from their spiritual slumber. Unless the days are shortened, even the elect will be carried away with the ways of the world (Mt.24:22). If we can really see the spiritual dangers of the last days, if we can sense our real spiritual state, we will realize that we urgently need the coming of Christ, for the simple reason that we are all so weak spiritually that we will effectively lose our faith unless he's back soon. And in response to the elect's prayers, the days will be shortened. The Lord will help us through the final lap.

It was on the very last, fourteenth night, that some in the ship lost their faith in Paul. They tried to get away from the ship in the lifeboat, "under colour as though they would have cast (more) anchors out" (v.30). The Greek for "under colour as though" is always used elsewhere in the context of spiritual pretence, especially in prayer (Mk.12:40; Mt.23:14; Lk.20:47). Under the appearance of trying to make the salvation of the others more certain (by casting more anchors), these men were trying to leave the ship because they honestly thought that the rest of them stood no chance. Is there here some prophecy of how just prior to the Lord's return, some will try to leave the body of Christ, under the appearance of spiritually strengthening the rest of us? But the watchful Paul spotted what was going on, and somehow got them to abandon it. What this typifies is beyond even my imagination. "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (v.31) sounds like Christ's words of Jn.15:6: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth..." . But there is a twist here in v.31; as if our all remaining together in the Christ-ship is somehow related to our collective salvation.

And so finally, there they were, crawling up the shore on Malta, the waves breaking over their heads, the backwash pulling them back, but struggling on up the beach in the early hours of that morning, cold and soaked, perhaps with hypothermia setting in, but brimming over with the joy of their miraculous salvation. Now that is the picture, in this type, of our salvation. As we enter the Kingdom, we will be at our most bedraggled, the weakness of our natures will then be made fully apparent to us. "They knew not the land" , only once they were saved did they know the name of it

(27:39; 28:1). The total foreigners who gave them such a warm welcome perhaps point forward to the Angels welcoming us into the Kingdom. As Abraham went forth into a land which he knew not, so in many ways we do not know much about the Kingdom, our salvation. Remember that the 1000 years of the Millenium is just going to be a speck of a few millimetres in the infinity of our salvation; let's not think that the Kingdom is just the Millenium. We simply lack the ability to really understand what God's nature is really going to be like. We can only describe things with words and colours, perhaps words aren't enough to describe it, language is too limited, there must be other paradigms beyond words to express God's nature, the nature of our salvation; yet we now just cannot enter into them. We know that the arena of our salvation will be this earth. But if I point to say that square meter over there, all I know is that it will one day be in the Kingdom, I have some idea what might go on there during the Millenium, but through eternity, no. It's like if I gave you some Chinese writing to read, you wouldn't know how to pronounce the letters, whether to start reading from the top or bottom of the page, to start from the left or the right. So we would be with information about the Kingdom. But like those sailors, we are driven on by our desperate fear of our own sinfulness, of the eternal death which we are so close to, yet captivated by the words and assurance of the Lord Jesus in our midst, knowing that where he is, both physically and spiritually, indeed in *whatever* sense, there we earnestly wish to be for eternity.

So in the midst of this spiritually difficult life, a world which daily buffets us with its winds, which continually says to us "*Where is thy God?*", we are to break bread with the Lord Jesus. As God gave Paul all the men who sailed with him, so we have been given to the Lord Jesus (v.24). Of those whom God gave Jesus, He lost none (Jn.17:12). In many ways our lives are a case of hanging on, of hanging in there with Christ, abiding in him and he in us, through our constant meditation upon him and his word. We are all lacking in this; so let's be fired up this week to do something about it. But in the midst of their horrific experience, those mixed up men became "of good cheer" on account of doing this. And so it is with us. Week by week, we are throwing overboard the human things upon which we lean, upon which we hope, those things which promise us a Kingdom in this life; and more and more we fix our gaze upon the Lord Jesus, upon his assurance in the midst of this storm: "Be of good cheer". So let us now be silent for some minutes, to fix our minds upon him, to *know* Him, to look ahead to hearing those simple words from his lips as we tremble before him at the judgment, our love and joy blending with our fear: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom".

Notes

- (1) See Harry Whittaker, *Studies In The Acts Of The Apostles* (Cannock: Biblia, 1996) .
- (2) See my *The Last Days* pp.35,43,114,142,202,212,241.

27:18 The record of Paul's shipwreck is described in language which clearly reflects the LXX description of Jonah's sea voyage (e.g. Acts 27:18 = Jonah 1:5); to suggest that like Jonah, Paul was also fellowshipping the cross. Paul made a supreme effort to fellowship the Lord Jesus, to absorb the spirit of Christ deeply into his own mind. God confirmed him in his efforts, by working in his life to give him circumstances which recalled the experiences of Christ, and which thereby encouraged him to do this even more successfully.

27:21 On the voyage to Rome, it was only after much "abstinence" that Paul openly preached to the crew and other prisoners (Acts 27:21)- as if he struggled against a shyness in public testifying. See on Acts 18:4,5.

27:25 Mary was an inspiration to Paul in his trial (Lk. 1:45 = Acts 27:25).

27:31- see on Acts 15:1.

28:3 Acts 28:3–6 describes how a lethal snake attacked Paul, fastening onto his arm. The surrounding people decided Paul was a murderer, whom "vengeance suffers not to live". Their

reading of the situation was totally wrong. But Paul did not explain this to them in detail; instead, he did a miracle – he shook the snake off without it biting him. The Lord Jesus did just the same.

28:15 When some members of the Rome ecclesia (who were rather weak, 2 Tim. 4:16) came to meet him at Appii, Paul took courage at the very sight of them; one gets the picture (from the Greek) of him seeing them, recognizing who they were, and feeling a thrill of courage go through his soul (Acts 28:15; note how Luke says "he" rather than "we" , as if emphasizing that Paul was more encouraged than he was by these unknown brethren showing up). Here was no self-motivated old brother, indifferent to what his younger and weaker brethren could do for him by way of encouragement.

28:17 One can only be impressed by the way that within only three days of arriving in Rome after an awesome journey, Paul began preaching by inviting the local Jews to come to him. He would have had so much else to attend to surely, quite apart from getting over the trauma of the journey

28:20 Paul realized the methodology we use with people can affect their conversion. And he knew that personal contact was by far the best. "For this cause therefore did I intreat you to *see* AND to speak with me" (Acts 28:20 RV). He called men to have a personal meeting with him, rather than just to hear the theory. Not just to hear him, but to *see* him... for we are the essential witnesses. Paul could have written to the Jews in Rome from prison, but he realized that true witness involves personal contact wherever possible.

28:31 We read in Acts 28:31 that whilst in Rome, Paul taught the things of the Kingdom and the Lord Jesus. But his letter to the Romans places the emphasis upon the reign of grace. He speaks of how grace "reigns", as if grace is the dominating, ruling principle in the lives of those who have now sided with the Kingdom of God rather than that of this world. Testifying the Gospel of God's grace is paralleled by Paul with testifying about the Kingdom- and he says this again in a Roman context (Acts 20:24,25).

28:31- see on Eph. 6:19.

The Structure Of Romans: The Power Of Basics

I am somewhat cynical of attempts to break down the books of the Bible into sections and sub-sections. These break downs may assist our interpretation, but I somehow doubt whether the writers or the Spirit of God behind them consciously intended to write in that way. However, in Romans there is a very distinct structure which cannot be denied. The structure of Romans is clear. The letter begins with a brief introduction regarding the Gospel, and concludes with a major dissertation about the preaching of the Gospel. This introduction and epilogue are evidently linked; thus " ..stablish you according to my Gospel" (16:25) looks back to " ...that ye may be established" (1:11); "your obedience is come abroad unto all men" (16:19) is "your faith is spoke of throughout the whole world" (1:8); and the idea that the Gospel is preached " for obedience to the faith" is the start and end point of the letter (1:5; 16:26). The main body of the letter in between this introduction and epilogue is comprised of a purely doctrinal section (chapters 1-11) and then a practical section (12-15). The purpose of this study is to show how the basic doctrines of the Gospel are to be the basis for our way of life. The practical teaching of Paul is consistently built upon the doctrinal exposition he has given in the first part of the letter; "I beseech you *therefore*" (12:1) is the turning point. The doctrinal section itself has a climax half way through, in the first part of chapter 6 concerning baptism. This is the fulcrum of the whole theological argument contained in Romans 1-8; and this is the section most frequently alluded to in the practical section: as if to say that the fact of our baptisms and what it means for us in an ongoing sense must be the basis for our daily living.

Romans 12-16 [practical commandments]

12:1 We must live the practical life of obedience "by the *mercies* of God"

12:1 *Present* your *bodies* (12:1) occurs later in 14:10 [we will *stand before* the judgment seat] and in 16:2 [*assist*] Phoebe-
yield yourselves to her in helpful support.

12:1 Offer your *body* as a living sacrifice

Romans 1-11 [exposition of the Gospel]

This Greek word occurs only in 9:15: "I will have *compassion* on whom I will" . The mercy / compassion of God is shown to us by grace, by some kind of predestination, and not because we deserve it. In view of these "mercies" , therefore we ought to live the life Paul now outlines. Our understanding of the grace of predestination isn't something academic or philosophical- the mercy and grace shown in it *beseech* us to live a better life. And according to Eph. 15,6,11,12 RV, predestination is not something that should merely confuse us, but rather it is there "to the end that..." we might praise God in lives of gratitude.

Baptism is a promise to *yield* [s.w.] our *bodies* to God's service (6:12,13,19). This means the Romans were to *assist* / *yield to* Phoebe and *present* themselves in practical service (12:1); we will present ourselves / yield ourselves before the Lord when we come before His final judgment (14:10), and so we ought to now, as we vowed at baptism.

Through baptism we show that we have died, the *body* of sin has been destroyed (6:6), we were crucified with Christ. So therefore, 12:1 is

	saying, don't be frightened to sacrifice / give up the things of this life. The appeal to present ourselves as "living men" after baptism (6:13) is surely to be connected with the appeal to present ourselves as living sacrifices in 12:1.
12:2 be not conformed to <i>this world / age</i>	Only three verses earlier in 11:36 the same word is used about how Christ will be glorified "for ever" (AV), the <i>world / age</i> [to come]. Live for that age, live the Kingdom life of glorifying Christ <i>now</i> , if you do that you can't be conformed to <i>this</i> age, but to the future one.
12:4,5 We are each <i>members of His body</i> , each of us must play our part in the body / ecclesia of Christ; we each have an <i>office / deed</i> in it.	6:13,19; 7:5,23 the members of our own personal bodies, every part of our physical and spiritual / emotional life, must be given to the service of Christ; we died with Him. By doing this, we will have our part in the body of Christ; we will be members of His body, if each of our own members has been submitted to Him. We must mortify the <i>deeds</i> of the body (8:3)- and then we will have part in the office / deeds of the body of Christ. This is why personal spirituality is a condition for ecclesial office.
12:6 We each have <i>gifts</i> of serving	But the <i>gift</i> emphasized earlier in Romans is that of forgiveness, justification, salvation (5:15,16; 6:23). The response to this gift is to serve practically; therefore the gift of God's salvation and grace is thereby also a gift / ability to serve His people (as in 1 Pet. 4:10).
12:8 He that <i>sheweth mercy</i> ; the Greek can mean both to shew mercy (as here; 9:16; Jude 22) and to obtain mercy (11:30,31; 1 Cor. 7:25; 2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:13,16). To obtain mercy, to really believe it, means we will shew it.	The same phrase 'to shew mercy' is used in 9:15,16,18; 11:3-32 re. our obtaining mercy on the basis of God's pure and predestined grace rather than our works. Rooted in this experience, we must likewise show mercy to others on the basis of grace rather than their behaviour towards us.
12:10 give <i>honour</i> to each other	9:21 God gives <i>honour</i> on the basis of grace rather than works; He decides to honour one rather than another. In this sense we must honour all of our brethren, for who they are before God rather than for their works.
12:11; 14:18; 16:18 <i>serve</i> Christ	6:6; 7:6,25 On account of your baptism don't <i>serve</i> sin but <i>serve Christ</i>
12:12 <i>rejoice in hope</i> as you go about your	<i>Rejoice in hope</i> because of the atonement, because of the death of Christ for you (5:2), after the pattern of Abraham's joyful hope, thanks to

service of others in the ecclesia

having been given the same promises which we have been (4:18 cp. Jn. 8:56). Such service in joy is difficult when the work we do for our brethren is repetitious- stamping envelopes or cooking food, e.g. Joy in service will only come from a conscious holding in our minds of the personal wonder of the promises, and the fact that the Lord died for us and really has given us such great salvation...and that we are doing what we are doing purely as response to that.

12:12 Patient in tribulation

Tribulation works patience because of our experience of the atonement (5:3). The love of Christ in the cross was so great that no amount of tribulation [poverty or sick and crying children, e.g.] should separate us from it; and therefore we can be patient whilst experiencing it (8:35).

12:16 Mind not high things but be like-minded towards each other. Be not wise in your own conceits, because of your own possibility of failure.

11:20 Be not high-minded but fear- if God rejected the Jews, you are only a Gentile, and of the same sin and failure-prone nature. Consideration of God's dealings with Israel and their failures should lead us to an appropriate attitude of mind.

12:17 *recompense* to no man evil for evil; if we want to be judged by grace then we must show it. If we give evil for evil then this is how our sins will be judged at the last day.

2:6 God will *render* [s.w.] to each man according to his ways. If we want judgment by grace, then we must shew it now. If we do and show evil, we will receive it (2:9). And we all do evil at times (7:19). If we are to receive grace rather than evil for that evil, we must show it to others in our judgment of them.

12:19 Give place to God's *wrath*- don't avenge yourselves.

The wrath of God is really against sin right now, and it will be at the judgment (1:18; 2:5,8; 3:5; 4:15; 9:22). The more we believe this, the less likely we will be to avenge sin against ourselves. Likewise the more we understand how God justifies us, *and the wonder of it*, the less likely we will be to justify *ourselves* and to be sensitive to what others may or may not imply about us.

12:20 Feed your enemy, love him- if he doesn't respond, your love of him will heap coals of fire [condemnation] upon him

5:10 We were enemies but reconciled by God's love; and yet we face condemnation if we refuse that reconciliation. From that experience we must be moved to love our enemies, to ever seek reconciliation; indeed we will be compelled to do this almost unconsciously, if we truly believe we were enemies and alienated, and yet by grace have been reconciled.

13:2 Don't resist God through resisting / objecting to the powers

9:19 Who hath resisted His will? Pharaoh tried to but was brought to destruction because of this. We must learn the lesson, and show it in submission to the powers of Government in that they are manifesting the

of Government	will of God towards us- even if it means persecution.
13:2 Otherwise you will receive <i>damnation</i>	2:2,3; 3:8; 5:16- which <i>must</i> come against sin, because of Adam's sin (5:16). Understanding the need for damnation of sin means we will not commit it so quickly.
13:7 render to all their duesGive " custom"	2:6 God renders to all according to their works, and we are to manifest God's judgment in little things like paying our taxes fairly; we must think of the future judgment, the way all will receive their dues (although ours will be ameliorated by grace), and be influenced by God's judgment in the way we give others their dues. As God gives an " end" [s.w. 'custom'] to sin and righteousness (6:21,22).
13:8 Loving our neighbour fulfils the law	8:3,4 Christ died that we might fulfill the Law; He fulfilled it in His death, and in that we have a part in that death through baptism, we also must fulfill it in spirit. To fulfill the law is to love each other; Christ died that the law might be fulfilled, i.e. that we might love each other. This is why the remembrance of the Lord's death is in the <i>agape</i> , the love-feast, where we discern His body, our brethren, and resolve to love them to the end. John saw the same link when he wrote of how because Christ lay down His life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for each other (1 Jn. 3:16; 4:9-11).
13:11 Awake out of sleep	This phrase is used in Romans only of the resurrection of the Lord (4:24,25; 6:4,9; 7:4; 8:11,34; 10:9). Because He rose and we are in Him and share in His resurrection and newness of life by baptism, therefore we shouldn't be apathetic in our service. This is the power of His resurrection and our association with it in baptism (6:4,9).
13:12 Put on the <i>armour</i> of light- as we put on Christ by baptism. Live the spirit of baptism in an ongoing sense.	At baptism we yield our members as <i>instruments</i> [s.w. 'armour'] of righteousness (6:13). Keep on doing this, keeping on and on arming yourself, clothing yourself, yielding yourself, just as you did at baptism. "Walk..." (13:13) as you began walking at baptism "in newness of life" (6:4).
13:13 Live with no strife or envy	1:29 there was strife and envy amongst the condemned Israel who walked through the wilderness. By having these things we show ourselves to be condemned.
13:14 Don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh but put on Christ	6:12 Put on Christ by baptism, and therefore don't obey the flesh "in the lusts thereof". The language is so similar that surely Paul is teaching that baptism is an ongoing experience, in essence. Consider how the fire and water baptized Israel in the Red Sea, and yet continued over them throughout the Wilderness journey.
14:1 Receive the <i>weak</i>	Abraham was not weak in faith (4:19) and we should seek to be like

<i>in faith</i>	him; but receive those who are in his seed by baptism, but don't make it to his level of personal faith
14:5 Let yourselves be <i>fully persuaded</i>	As Abraham was "fully persuaded" (4:21)
14:23 He who <i>doubts</i> is damned	Abraham didn't <i>stagger</i> [s.w.] (4:20); ultimately, he must be our example, even if some in the ecclesia will take time to rise up to his standard, and unlike him are "weak in faith" .
14:7,8 No man lives or dies to <i>himself</i>	6:11,13,16 we share in the life and death of Christ, and therefore we <i>ourselves</i> are given to Him [s.w. <i>himself</i> in 14:7,8]. We are dead with Him. Because we are baptized into Christ, our own death and life are now not for ourselves. Therefore what we eat and drink is part of a life lived for the Lord, and therefore these things are irrelevant. The physicalities of life are necessary; but these shouldn't be of any major importance because our life is given over to Christ. This is a fundamental challenge, repeated in 2 Cor. 5:15: because of Christ's death and resurrection for us, we don't live to ourselves but to Him. The argument in Romans 14 is that therefore, .all the physical things of our lives are merely incidental. This is an unusual yet powerful way of telling the Romans not to get distracted by the issue of what some ate or drank: we are dead with Christ, our lives are only for Him, therefore what we physically eat to keep ourselves going, along with <i>all</i> the more material issues of life, are incidental to the main purpose of life. We live in a world which increasingly glorifies the frittering away of time and economy on the incidentals of life; yet the Gospel should make us see these things for what they are. Rom. 14:17 seems to have the same idea: "[the gospel of] the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness [a word used 33 times in the doctrinal section, regarding the righteousness of God imputed through the Gospel] , peace [cp. 2:10; 3:17; 5:1; 8:6] and joy [5:2] in the Holy Spirit. He who in these things serveth Christ...". Note how the Gospel is paralleled with the service of Christ; to believe it is to live a life of service.
14:13 Let us not judge one another <i>any more</i>	6:6 <i>henceforth</i> we should not serve sin. One example of this is that after baptism, living the life of Christ, we no longer judge each other. To do so is to serve sin.
14:18 we "serve Christ" by the life of righteousness, joy and peace. By being factious we no longer serve Christ (16:18)- we are no longer living out the baptism vow of serving	6:6; 7:6 we serve Christ after baptism- not so much in works but in attitudes.

Christ.	
15:4 By the comfort of "the scriptures" we have hope	Paul quotes "the scriptures" to support his exposition of the Gospel: 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2. His argument in practice gives comfort and hope.
15:9 The believing Gentiles will "sing unto thy name"	10:13; 9:17 The believer calls upon himself the name of the Lord in baptism; through God's work with the gentiles, His Name is declared through all the earth. The believer, baptized into the Name, will praise that Name and declare it in song and witness throughout the earth.
15:13 <i>abound</i> in hope	5:15 the grace of God <i>abounds</i> to us [s.w.]; but grace is something purely abstract unless it is really <i>felt</i> . In this case our abounding in hope will reflect the abounding of grace which we perceive. Romans 5 almost plays logical games in order to show just how abounding that grace is.
15:21 Paul preached because he wanted to take the Gospel to those "who have not heard"	10:14-18 argues that men will only hear the Gospel if there is a preacher; but it is prophesied that they have all heard, because Psalm 19 prophesies that the message has gone into all the earth. Yet the connection with 15:21 suggests that Paul saw that prophecy, which he so confidently quotes in the past tense, as if it has already happened, as dependent upon his own effort in witness. In this we see the limitation of God within human effort to witness.
15:28 Paul speaks of sealing unto the Gentile believers the "fruit" of their generosity.	6:22 After baptism we are to bring forth fruit to God. But we can help others do this, as Paul helped the Gentiles to be generous.
16:2 "assist" Phebe	6:13,16,19 We must <i>yield ourselves</i> [s.w.] to the service of God. But this is shown by yielding our services to His servants. It is a strange way of describing assistance to Phebe if this is not an intentional allusion [bear in mind how many other references there are to Rom. 6 in the practical section of the letter].
16:17 "the doctrine which ye have learned"	6:17 the form of doctrine delivered to them before baptism. Anyone who teaches anything which affects the basic Gospel is to be avoided. This is because the doctrines of the Gospel affect the way of life we lead, not because the intellectual tradition of the church has been insulted ⁽¹⁾ .
16:26 Making the Gospel known	9:22,23 as the power and riches of God were made known [s.w.] to the world of Egypt. He is likewise manifesting Himself through us in the work of witness.

The structure of Romans concludes with a section about the preaching of the Gospel, as if to say that the Gospel is in itself an imperative to go forth and live a life dedicated to the ministering of it to others. It will be apparent from the above analysis how central is Romans 6 to Paul's later appeal for a way of life in harmony with the Gospel he has expounded. The point is, the reality of the atonement that has been achieved in Christ, the fact we are baptized into it... if we believe these things rather than simply know them, these are imperatives which will force / compel us into the way of life we ought to lead. This is the *power* of the Gospel and a living faith. This is why it matters, and matters eternally, what we believe.

Note

(1) On the other hand, this is why any teaching which does not have a practical effect on our lives cannot be considered a matter of fellowship, in that it is not part of the saving Gospel. The size of the temple Ezekiel describes, whether Melchizedek was Shem or not... these issues are not part of the basic Gospel, quite simply because they don't affect how we live our lives. They are matters of Biblical exegesis which are helpful in perceiving a wider picture in our survey of Bible teaching, but they are not part of the Gospel which Paul expounds in Romans. And seeing that our "fellowship [is] in the Gospel", they are not part of any basis of fellowship. The simple test as to whether something is fundamental is simply this: What effect does it have on our lives in Christ?

1:1 - see on Acts 18:18.

Time and again Paul brings before us the fact he really is our example; thus he begins his Roman epistle with a description of himself as Paul... called to be an apostle, separated...", but soon goes on to point out that the Romans were "*also* the called of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1,6).

apostle- the word literally means one who is sent, and is translated "he that is sent" in Jn. 13:16. It could be argued that all who have received the great preaching commission [which is all of us] have received in essence the same calling and apostleship which Paul did- and he therefore can hold himself up to us all as an example, seeing we have in principle received the same calling which he did. He uses the term "apostle" in Rom. 16:7 concerning brethren who were imprisoned with him who were clearly not amongst the apostles originally chosen by the Lord Jesus. He says in :5 that we have received apostleship because our Lord rose from the dead; because He rose, all in Him are sent to take that good news to others. And he uses the same word for 'calling' in :6, suggesting his calling and apostleship are to be ours.

Separated unto the Gospel- a reference to Acts 13:2 where Paul was separated to go on a missionary journey; although he felt he had been separated unto this from the womb (Gal. 1:15). God has likewise separated each of us unto certain callings, but only later in our lives is this made apparent to us.

1:2 Abraham was a prophet (Gen. 20:7) as was Sarah (Ps. 105:15). In line with Gal. 3:8, Paul may have the patriarchs in mind here.

1:3 The same Greek words translated 'Word' and 'made' in Jn. 1:14 occur together in 1 Cor. 15:54- where we read of the word [AV "saying"] of the Old Testament prophets being 'made' true by being fulfilled [AV "be brought to pass"]. The word of the promises was made flesh, it was fulfilled, in Jesus. The 'word was made flesh', in one sense, in that the Lord Jesus was "*made...* of the seed of David according to the *flesh*" (Rom. 1:3)- i.e. God's word of promise to David was fulfilled in the fleshly person of Jesus. The Greek words for "made" and "flesh" only occur together in these two places- as if Rom. 1:3 is interpreting Jn. 1:14 for us.

made- Gk. *ginomai*, to be made, come into being- a nail in the coffin for the idea of a personal pre-existence of Christ.

1:4 More strictly, "the resurrection *of* the dead". "*From*" would require *ek*, which isn't present. The

Lord's resurrection is in this sense ours, and ours is His. There is in this sense only one resurrection- that of the Lord.

1:5 Collective societies are all about submission and obedience to those above you in the hierarchy- yet repeatedly, Christians are exhorted to be obedient and submissive to the Lord Jesus and the new community in Him (Rom. 1:5; 6:16,17; 2:8 etc.). And even within the new community, Paul's own example showed that acceptance in the eyes of those who appear to be the pillars of the society of Christ is also of little ultimate value if they have fallen away from the understanding of grace (Gal. 2:9). To keep using the word "radical" doesn't do justice to the colossal change in worldview that was required on conversion to Christ. Reflecting on all this, it seems to me that the reason the Jewish people crucified their Messiah was above all because He so powerfully turned their whole worldviews upside down- and they just couldn't handle it, just as so many families today turn against the one who truly turns to Christ.

Paul makes a number of allusions to the great commission, in which he applies it to both himself and also to us all. The weak argument that it was 'only for the disciples who heard it' evaporates when it is accepted that Paul wasn't one of the 12, and yet the commission applies to him. Consider Rom. 1:5 RV: "...through whom we have received grace and apostleship, for the obedience to the faith among all the nations, for his name's sake". These words are packed with allusion to the great commission. And Paul is not in the habit of using the 'royal we' to refer solely to himself. He clearly sees all his readers as sharing in just the same calling. The early preachers travelled around "for his name's sake" (3 Jn. 7), even though they were not in the original band of disciples. Having alluded to the great commission, Paul goes on in that context to rejoice "that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:7 RV). He saw their example of faith in practice as being the witness that fulfilled the great commission; and goes on to speak of his sense of debt to spread the word to literally all men, hence his interest in preaching at Rome (Rom. 1:14,15). And here we have our example; "as much as in me is", we should each say, we are ready to spread the Gospel as far as lies in our power to do so.

we is usually used by Paul in Romans regarding him plus his readership, i.e. all of us. We are all sent ones, apostles- see on 1:1.

Obedience to the faith among all nations... for His name- a reference to the great commission, which was enabled and necessitated by the Lord's resurrection. John speaks of preachers going forth to preach for His Name's sake (3 Jn. 7). We are not to merely inform them, but preach aiming towards a response- our apostleship, our being sent ones, is "for", *eis*, elsewhere translated "to the intent that". We should preach towards a response, expecting the ultimate obedience of at least some of our audience. In 6:16 Paul specifically associates obedience [s.w.] to the Gospel with baptism- this should be our initial aim and focus in witness. Peter likely does the same in 1 Pet. 1:2,22.

1:6 We are also called to be apostles- see on 1:1.

1:7 *to all-* not just the leadership. Paul valued everyone, including the illiterate majority of the ecclesia to whom the letter would be read out loud, and upon whom the complexity and depth of much of his argument in this letter would likely have been lost.

1:8 The fact we praise God and come directly to Him *dia*, through the Lord Jesus, does not mean that our words come to the Father through the Son as if He were a sieve or telephone line. We come direct to the Father *dia*, on account of, for the sake of, the work Christ achieved. The following are a few of many examples which give the flavour of *dia*: John was put in prison *dia Herodias*, for the sake of Herodias (Mt. 14:3); the Pharisees transgressed the commandment of God *dia*, on account of, through, their tradition (Mt. 15:3); the disciples couldn't heal *dia*, for the sake of, their unbelief (Mt. 17:20); the Angels of the "little ones" *dia*, for their sakes, behold the face of the Father (Mt. 18:10); because the Pharisees pretended to be pious they would *dia*, on this account, receive greater condemnation (Mt. 23:14); the faithful will be persecuted *dia*, for the sake of, Christ's name (Mt.

24:9); *dia* the elect's sake, on their account, the days will be shortened (Mt. 24:22). "I thank my God *dia* (through) Jesus Christ my Lord" (Rom. 1:8) doesn't therefore necessarily mean that Paul prays to God 'through' the Lord Jesus as some kind of connecting tunnel; he thanks God on account of, for the sake of Christ. The very same Greek construction occurs a few chapters later: "Who shall deliver me...? I thank God, through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:24,25). He thanks God that his deliverance is possible on account of the Lord Jesus.

First- the most important thing for Paul was that those he had expended spiritual effort for were strong in the faith. We sense the same in John's letters of 2 and 3 John. Our focus should be on helping others reach the Kingdom.

1:9 *The Gospel-* Frequently Paul uses the word "Gospel" as meaning 'the preaching of the Gospel'; the Gospel is in itself something which *must* be preached if we really have it (Rom. 1:1,9; 16:25; Phil. 1:5 (NIV),12; 2:22; 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:5; 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:8). The fact we have been given the Gospel is in itself an imperative to preach it. "When I came to Troas for the Gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:12 RV) has the ellipsis supplied in the AV: "to preach Christ's Gospel" [although there is no Greek word in the original there matching 'preach'] .

Mention- the idea of the Greek word is of remembrance. Paul was bringing others to remembrance before God. Paul is surely alluding to Is. 62:6,7: "On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth". Paul saw the Gentile believers in Rome as spiritual Jerusalem. It's not that God forgets and needs reminding, but rather that by our prayers for others we as it were focus His special attention upon them. Paul several times states that he is day and night, continually in prayer for others. He likely had the Isaiah passage in mind; his brethren in Christ were now for him the Jerusalem upon whom his hopes were set, rather than upon the physical city as had been the case in Judaism.

There is a mutuality between God and His children in prayer. We 'make mention' of things to God (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek word used has the idea of bringing to mind, or remembering things to God. And He in response 'remembers' prayer when He answers it (Lk. 1:54,72; Acts 10:31 s.w.). What we bring to our mind in prayer, we bring to His mind. Those who pray for Jerusalem "keep not silence"- and therefore they give God "no rest" (Is. 62:6,7). But the Hebrew word for "keep not silence" and for 'give no rest' is one and the same! There's a clear play on words here. If we give ourselves no rest in prayer, then we give God no rest. His Spirit or mind becomes our spirit or mind, and vice versa. And hence the telling comments in Romans 8 about our spirit / mind being mediated to God in prayer through Jesus, in His role as 'the Lord the Spirit' (Rom. 8:26,27). Yet God Himself had stated that He will not rest nor hold His peace for Zion's sake (Is. 62:1). Yet His doing this is conditional upon His prayerful people not allowing Him to rest due to their prayers.

Without ceasing... *always* is a double repetition to emphasize how constant was Paul's prayer for others. In case it seemed he was exaggerating, he calls God as a witness. His prayerfulness- the hours spent on his knees and the amount of mental energy in daily life- was amazing, and inspirational.

1:10 Realize that prayer may be answered in totally unexpected ways. Paul prayed that he would have "a prosperous journey" in coming to see the Romans (Rom. 1:10). Little could he have realized, sitting in Corinth as he wrote, that the answer would involve many months of imprisonment in Jerusalem, a shipwreck that lead to an ecclesia in Malta... and so much other grief. But from God's viewpoint, the prayer was answered. See on Rom. 1:14.

the will of God- Paul felt that his prayers could influence or at least engage with God's will; he prayed that he might at some time [Gk.] be helped by God on the road [AV "have a prosperous journey"] to visit the Roman believer. He asks this not 'If it be God's will' but he asks this might be so *en* or in the will of God. He didn't see God's will as something to be passively accepted but rather engaged with in prayer.

1:11 Paul so longed (the Greek is very intense, s.w. "lust") to see the Romans so that he could give them some spiritual gift. Why was his physical presence so necessary in order to give this gift? Perhaps he refers to a literal laying on of hands which would've been necessary to impart the Spirit gifts? But that gift was so that they might be "established", confirmed and set in their way. Was there, therefore, a gift of spiritual confirmation which could only be given by the literal physical presence of Paul? Or was the miraculous gift he intended to impart intended to be a part of establishing them as group?

1:12 *That is*- Some manuscripts add "However". Paul didn't want it to appear that he was viewing himself as superior to them in imparting a spiritual gift to them, so he goes on to speak of how spiritual strengthening is a mutual experience in which he also would benefit from them.

mutual faith seems to suggest that their strength of faith would affect Paul's faith and his faith would affect theirs. Hence the value of positive spiritual fellowship in Christ.

1:13 *hindered* s.w. 'forbid' in Acts 16:6, where he was forbidden to preach in Asia. It seems Paul often worked against situations where He was forbidden to go somewhere- he still preached in Asia, still went up to Jerusalem, and still insisted on going to Rome. See on Rom. 1:15.

1:14 Paul had a debt to preach to all men (Rom. 1:14). But a debt implies he had been given something; and it was not from "all men", but rather from Christ. Because the Lord gave us the riches of His self-sacrifice, we thereby are indebted *to Him*; and yet this debt has been transmuted into a debt to preach to all humanity. Reflection upon His cross should elicit in us too an upwelling of pure gratitude towards Him, a Christ-centredness, an awkwardness as we realise that this Man loved us more than we love Him... and yet within our sense of debt to Him, of ineffable, unpayable debt, of real debt, a debt infinite and never to be forgotten, we will have the basis for personal response to Him as a person, to a knowing of Him and a loving of Him, and a serving of Him in response. If we feel and know this, we cannot but preach the cross of Christ. In Rom. 1:14 Paul speaks of his "debt" to preach to both "Greeks and Barbarians" as the reason for his planned trip to Rome- for in that city there was the widest collection of "Greeks and Barbarians". And yet he later speaks of our 'debt' [Gk.] to love one another (Rom. 13:8). The debt of love that we feel on reflecting upon our unpayable debt to the Father and Son is partly an unending 'debt' to loving share the Gospel of grace with others, to forgive the 'debts' of others' sins against us. We have a debt to preach to the world; we are their debtors, and yet this isn't how we often see it (Rom. 1:14). Time and again we commit sins of omission here.

Barbarians- Paul felt a debt to preach to them, the total savages [from his perspective]. And so on the way to Rome, God arranged for him to be shipwrecked on Malta, and thus meet and convert such Barbarians- for the word occurs only four other times in the NT and two of them are in describing the people whom Paul met on Malta (Acts 28:2,4). See on Rom. 1:10.

Unwise- the Greek word is elsewhere always translated "fools" in the AV, and has the idea of stupidity, foolishness. Paul the intellectual felt a debt to preach to those who would have exasperated and irritated him in normal life.

1:15 *As much as is in me*- a window into the totality of Paul's desire to spread the Gospel and upbuild the believers. But the phrase could also indicate an obsession with going to Rome, as was noted by Agrippa (Acts 26:32). See on Rom. 1:13.

To you- the "you" in the context is the believers in Rome. Paul wanted to build them up in their faith on the basis of the preaching of the basic doctrines of the Gospel. Thus there is a special emphasis in this letter on the implications of basic doctrine, as explained in our introduction to the letter on Romans 1:1.

1:16 Paul knew that his salvation partly depended upon not being ashamed of Christ's words before men; hence his frequent self-examination concerning whether he was witnessing as he should. Thus when he declares that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, he is expressing his certainty of salvation; he is implying that therefore Christ will not be ashamed of him at the judgment (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:8,12,16 = Mk. 8:38).

When Paul warns Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel, he is therefore exhorting him by his own example (Rom. 1:16 s.w. 2 Tim. 1:8,12). Note the theme of not being ashamed in 2 Tim. 1:8,12,16.

The doctrines of the Gospel are power to all those who have already believed. Paul was going to Rome to visit the believers, and wanted to upbuild them by discussing the doctrines of the Gospel with them (1:15).

1:17- see on Rom. 4:13.

Having spoken of how the faith of the Romans is spoken of throughout the "world", Paul goes on to comment that the preaching of the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God "from faith to faith", or "by faith unto faith" (Rom. 1:17 RV). The righteousness of God is surely revealed in human examples rather than in any amount of words. Could Paul not be meaning that the faith of one believer will induce faith in others, and in this sense the Gospel is a force that if properly believed ought to be spreading faith world-wide? This means that spreading our faith is part and parcel of believing the Gospel. Whatever, there is here clearly inculcated the idea of an upward spiral of spirituality- from faith unto [yet more] faith. Faith, like unbelief, is self confirming.

A righteousness of God- a kind of righteousness which is given from God, given by Him; and Paul will go on to explain that is "of God", given from Him to us, by our faith in Him and in the simple fact that He has indeed given us this gift in Christ.

The just shall live by faith- the quotation from Hab. 2:4 is in the context of human pride: "Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith". Paul is interpreting this verse as talking about faith in righteousness being imputed to us, which leads to us being just or justified before God. The practical result of this is humility- for we realize through this process that we have absolutely nothing to be "puffed up" about. Our uprightness isn't because of our own works but because of God's righteousness being imputed to us by grace through faith.

1:18 *is revealed*- it will be revealed from Heaven at the Lord's return, and yet in a sense, judgment is now, God's feelings about sin aren't restrained or passive until judgment day, they are revealed even now.

Paul tellingly spoke of how people hold down the [conscience of] the truth on account of their unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18 Gk.). When they come to know God, they darken their foolish hearts (1:21). And so it was with the preaching of the Gospel in Acts. Those who heard it were pricked in their conscience: some responded by wanting to kill the preachers (Acts 5:33; 7:54); others followed their conscience and accepted baptism (Acts 2:37). We too have our hearts pricked by the Gospel- and we either effectively shut up the preaching, or respond.

Paul could say that "the preaching of the cross *is* (unto us which are saved) the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Not 'it was when we were baptized'; the power of that basic Gospel lasts all our lives. To the Romans likewise: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (i.e. I don't apologize for preaching the same old things): for it is the power of God unto salvation... for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith (i.e. faith gets built up and up by that basic Gospel)" (Rom. 1:18). The Galatians needed to keep on 'obeying the Truth' as they had done at baptism (Gal. 3:1); conversion is an ever ongoing process (cp. Lk. 22:32). It is "the faith which is in Christ", the basic Gospel, which progressively opens up the Scriptures and enables them to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15).

Who hold the truth- The point has been made that the Greek word for "hold" can mean 'to hold down' in the sense of repressing the Truth. But apart from the fact that Truth can ultimately never be held down, the word does carry the possible meaning of holding fast, possessing, retaining, and is translated like this in places. It could be that there were some in the Roman ecclesia who did indeed possess the Truth, but did so in unrighteousness- and thus God's wrath was especially against such people. This would fit in with the impression we have from the other NT letters, including those of the Lord Jesus to the churches in Revelation, that there was serious, gross misbehaviour going on in the early churches- and Rome would be no exception. This group of people were those to whom God had shown the truth about Himself (1:19). The following verses go on to allude to Israel's perversions in the wilderness- and they were a people who knew God rather than ignorant Gentiles. This group know God but don't glorify Him (1:21).

1:19 *that which may be known*- Gk. *gnostos*. This may be a strike at incipient Gnosticism; for Paul says that such knowledge, such *gnosis*, is shewed to people *by God*. There are only some things which God makes known to us about Himself; we do not have the total truth about God, we see but parts of His ways and hear only a little portion of Him (Job 26:14). Our perception and definition of "the truth" needs to bear this in mind. Absolute truth claims aren't simply ignorant, they lead to all manner of relationship breakdown, arrogance and deformation of spirituality both in ourselves and others.

1:20 *Invisible things... are clearly seen*- a paradox, seeing the invisible. Such vision is only by faith. In the context, Paul is referring to those responsible to God. They are those who 'see' by faith, they are therefore inexcusable. One can have faith, even the faith that sees the invisible, and yet still 'not get it'. See on Rom. 8:19.

Things that are made. The translation here is difficult. The invisible things of God are clearly seen in the things He makes- but the only other usage of the Greek word is in Eph. 2:10: "We are His *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus". The idea could be that the things of God are made visible, the abstract things of His power, personality and Name are made concrete and tangible- in us His people. We are living witnesses to His power and Divinity.

Without excuse- a legal term. The court of Divine judgment is sitting right now, and we who are His people are without excuse for our sin. Paul is building up slowly towards the crescendo of presenting us all as serious, inexcusable sinners, who can be saved by grace alone.

1:21 Only those who 'know God' have the potential to give Him glory and true thanks; but the problem is that some can know God and yet not go forward from that point to glorify God. Knowledge of God isn't therefore an academic matter in itself; it leads on to gratitude towards Him and glory of Him.

Fundamentally praise is mental appreciation of Yahweh's Name, seeing His characteristics expressed in all things around us, e.g. food, weather, situations in life etc. Knowledge of God (and this doesn't *only* refer to abstract doctrine, but to an awareness of how He works and expresses Himself in our lives) is therefore proportionate to the quality of our praise (Rom. 1:21).

Imaginations- Gk. dialogismos. Their internal dialogues with themselves, the internal self, the mind at its deepest and most personal level, became vain- when the true knowledge of God should have made them so much more dynamic, purposeful and productive. The focus of the Bible is so often upon the 'heart', the most intimate and internal thought processes.

The foolish heart of Israel was darkened / blinded, the Greek implies (Rom. 1:21). God gave them a mind which wanted to practice homosexuality and lesbianism (v.28), and therefore they received a recompense appropriate to the delusion which they had been given (v. 27 Gk.) . Note that their punishment was to be given and encouraged in homosexual tendencies (diseases like AIDS are the result of upsetting nature's balance rather than the recompense spoken of in Romans 1). Christian men in the first century gave themselves over to sexual immorality (Eph. 4:19), and therefore God "gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:24,26,28). "Blind yourselves and be blind", God angrily remonstrated with Israel; yet God had closed their eyes, confirming them in the decision for blindness which they had taken themselves (Is. 29:9,10 RVmg.). Later in Romans, Paul speaks of the Jews as the ones whose hearts were darkened (Rom. 11:10).

1:22 *became fools*- "Became" implies that this is all talking about the people of God, who once were wise, but *became* fools. S.w. Mt. 5:13 about the salt "which loses its taste", lit. 'becomes foolish'. However it is God who makes worldly wise people foolish (1 Cor. 1:20 s.w.), just as in v. 21 it is God who darkens eyes. There's a downward spiral, in which God is active and the dynamic within it.

1:23- see on Rom. 5:12.

Again a paradox is presented- the uncorruptible, unchangeable God is changed by mere men. Perhaps the point is that the glory of God, the extent to and form in which He is glorified, is to some extent in our hands. We can in this sense deface His image by the distorted reflection of it which we give. Note how they turned the image of God into the image of man; whereas the Lord Jesus, as a man, became in the image of God (Phil. 2:7). The implication from Paul's reasoning is that whatever we worship becomes God to us, and therefore we have re-cast God into that image. In a world of obsessions, we are to 'worship' God alone, and not reduce Him to the petty things which people waste their devotions upon.

The commands concerning Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land form a large chunk of the Mosaic Law, and thus these were only relevant to the younger generation and the Levites who were to enter the land of promise (note how only those who were numbered and over 20 at the time of leaving Egypt were barred from the land; the Levites were not numbered). This younger generation were in sharp contrast to those aged over 20 at the Exodus. The extent of spiritual despair and apostasy amongst the condemned generation cannot be overstated. They neglected the circumcision of the children born to them then (Josh. 5:5,6), thus showing their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant. There is good reason to believe that Romans 1 is a description of Israel in the wilderness; notice the past tenses there. Rom. 1:23 charges them with changing "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like... to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things", clearly alluding to Ps. 106:20 concerning how Israel in the wilderness "Changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" by making the golden calf. The effective atheism of Rom.1 is matched by Ps. 106:21 "They forgot God their saviour". The long catalogue of Israel's wilderness sins in Ps. 106 is similar to that in Rom.1. "Full of envy" (Rom. 1:29) corresponds to them envying Moses (Ps. 106:16), "whisperers" (Rom. 1:29) to "murmurers" (Ps. 106:25), and "inventors of evil things" (Rom.1:30) to God being angered with "their inventions" of false gods (Ps. 106:29). Because of this "God gave them up" to continue in their sexual perversion and bitterness with each other even to the extent of murder (Rom. 1:27,29). A rabble of about 2 million people living in moral anarchy with little law and order, driven on in their lust by the knowledge that God had rejected them is surely a frightening thing to imagine. The emphasis on sexual sin in Rom.1 is paralleled by 1 Cor. 10 stressing the frequent failure of Israel in the wilderness in this regard.

Against such an evil and God forsaking background that young generation rebelled, to become one of the most faithful groups of Israelites in their history. As such they set a glorious example to the youth of today in rebelling against a world that mocks any form of true spirituality.

1:24 *gave them up*- s.w. Acts 7:42, where God turned from Israel because of their apostasy and “gave them up” to worship idols. Again, God works with His sinful people by propelling them in a downwards spiral. In this context He did this by giving them over to their own sexual lusts, which resulted in their dishonouring their own bodies. God can confirm people in their sexual lusting; and by implication, He can also hold people back. The perversions of homosexuality spoken of in v. 26 are all this come to its ultimate term- when people are made to feel that they were ‘born gay’. Unbridled sexual lust leads to self harm, a sin against self, in the sense that such behaviour is a dishonouring [Gk.: shaming, despising] of one’s own body. This suggests that the body naturally has honour- Paul is attacking the view that the body is evil and to be despised, that God is angry with human flesh as flesh. We take that glory and honour away from our bodies by sexual misbehaviour. Paul uses the Greek word for ‘dishonour’ only once more in Romans, in 2:23, where he says that sin is a dishonouring *of God*. To dishonor ourselves, our own body, is to dishonor God. For we are made in His image and likeness. Lack of self respect, an incorrect understanding and perception of who we are, is what so often leads us to sin.

1:25 *changed*- Gk. ‘exchanged’. These people once held God’s Truth, but exchanged it for a lie. The same word occurs in 1:26, where we read that women changed / exchanged “the natural use into that which is against nature”. Sexual sin, not least lesbianism, is a lie. The born gay argument, along with the argument that we can sexually sin and it’s all going to be OK, is one of the greatest lies.

The creation [created thing]- the context of this verse, both before and after, speaks in a sexual context. The ‘created thing’ may refer to the human body- for worshipping the created thing is parallel with dishonouring the human body in v. 24. Praise and worship should be directed ultimately to God; sexual immorality seeks to break the connection between God and the human body, the awareness that the human being is made in the image of God. Treating people merely as bodies is to sever them [in our minds] from their connection to God. By perceiving their connection to God, we will never treat humans as merely bodies; nor will we perceive ourselves in that way either. The Creator is to be blessed by us for ever- and so we should start living like that now, rather than praising things He has created for what they are in themselves.

1:26 *vile*- s.w. ‘dishonour’, 1:24. The dishonouring of bodies by homosexuality and sexual immorality is a result of allowing ‘dishonourable’ lusts / thoughts to be worked out in practice; the performing of mental fantasy in the flesh. Paul teaches that God propels those who wish to give free reign to their fantasies- He gives them over to their own lusts. Paul is using the example of homosexuality as part of a build up to a crescendo of demonstrating the depth of human depravity, and the subsequent depth of God’s grace. He demonstrates the seriousness of human sin by showing that God pushes people downwards in a downward spiral of lust, if this is what they themselves truly wish- and Paul cites homosexualities as the parade example of this, whereby God so confirms sinners in their lusts that they even feel that what is truly “against nature” is in fact normal and natural.

These things are "against nature" (1:26); it is therefore impossible that by 'nature' some people are born with these "vile affections". "Nature" is used in Romans in the sense of "God's creative order". It would be inappropriate and even cruel of God to create men with natural desires and then tell them that these are in fact not natural, and He holds them guilty for having them. "Nature" (Gk. *physis*) was used in contemporary Greek in the context of the God-designed, natural intention for heterosexual relationships; Strong suggests it refers to “natural production (lineal descent)”- Paul may be referring to how homosexuals can’t reproduce. Plutarch speaks of "union contrary to nature"; Josephus comments that "The Law recognizes no sexual connections except for the *natural*

union of man and wife". *Physis* is rendered "by birth" in Gal. 2:15 RSV. The homosexual is behaving "against nature", against the way in which he was born. Seeing Paul makes no distinction between different types of homosexuality, it is clear that all homosexuality is "against nature", against the order of our birth and the Genesis creation. This disallows the speculation that some people are born homosexual 'by nature'. If we accept this, we *must* see in Rom. 1 a distinction between different kinds of homosexuality. And yet this distinction is totally absent. It makes an interesting study to observe how gay 'Christians' wriggle on the hook of Romans 1. Their explanations are so mutually contradictory and logically flawed that it is evident that they are 'getting round' and 'explaining away' a passage which simply flattens their position. Thus some of them claim that in Romans 1 Paul is only condemning homosexual prostitution, because he was ignorant of any other kind of homosexuality. This implies that had Paul known of the concept of homosexual orientation, he would have written differently. This is a denial of Paul's inspiration, and as we demonstrated in the first section of this study, to reject the inspiration of the Bible is effectively a rejection of God. On the other hand, it has been claimed that "nature" in Rom. 1 refers to natural orientation, and what Paul is saying is that it is wrong for born homosexuals to change to heterosexism, and vice versa. However, this is assuming that Paul and the Bible are aware of the notion of homosexual orientation. In this case, the other Bible passages which condemn homosexuality outright do so in the full knowledge of the supposed 'fact' that some are born homosexual, and yet they make no reference to this fact (even if it is granted that Romans 1 does). If this were the case, these people are condemned for who they are by birth. The whole situation would then be morally and logically fallacious. We just have to accept that there can be no getting round the fact that the Bible does not recognize the concept of being 'born gay'. Homosexuals are behaving "against nature", against God's intended order at creation, and are thereby perverts of His way. The Greek *para* ("against") means just that. Thus Paul's accusers complain that he "persuadeth men to worship God *contrary* (para) to the law" (Acts 18:13); false teachers create divisions "*contrary* (para) to the doctrine which ye have learned" (Rom. 16:17).

1:27 Paul speaks of how sinful behaviour ends up in people doing things 'contrary to nature'; and yet he uses a similar phrase to describe how being 'grafted in' to the true hope of Israel, with all it implies in practice, is likewise "contrary to nature" (Rom. 1:26,27 cp. 11:24). We walk against the wind, go against the grain, one way or the other in this life. And, cynically speaking, it may as well be for the Lord's cause than for the flesh. See on Mt. 3:11.

The recompense refers not to AIDS but to God's confirming of homosexuals in their sin to the extent that they believe it is natural and somehow coded into their bodies.

Error- s.w. deception. Homosexual sin is therefore the result of deception. Earlier Paul has said that God has given over homosexuals to their own lusts, to the point they believe that their sin is natural; here he says that homosexuals have been deceived. The deception is also by God, just as He sends "strong delusion" [s.w. "error"] upon those who don't love the Truth, so that they believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:11).

1:28- see on Rom. 1:21.

Even as- the context is the last clause of 1:27, that homosexuality is an appropriate punishment for the sin of homosexual lust. Paul here repeats that point- that God gave them over to that kind of "reprobate mind". That God 'gave them' this mindset is laboured three times (1:24,26,28).

Retain... in their knowledge- same Greek words only in Rom. 10:2, where Paul says that Israel do not hold or retain the knowledge of God. So here in 1:28 Paul seems to have his mind on Israel again, who didn't any longer retain or hold God in their knowledge, and so their zeal became not according to knowledge (10:2). Of course the Jews would've insisted that they *were* mindful of God, they didn't become atheists, far from it. But God wasn't held in their knowledge, He wasn't

the defining reality in their thinking. *Retain* is the Greek word 'echo' - our minds should be an echo of God's.

Even in this life, those who will be rejected have "a reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:28)- they have the mind of the rejected, the unaccepted [this is how the Greek word is used in every other occurrence in the NT]. The mindset the rejected have in that awful day, is the mindset which they have now. This is how important our thinking is. Our thoughts, the thoughts of yesterday and today and tomorrow, will either accuse or excuse us in the last day, when God shall judge us according to our "secrets", our inner thinking (Rom. 2:15,16).

The context of Rom. 1 is the power of the Gospel. Paul's discussion of homosexuality is part of his demonstration that there is an antithesis to Gospel power; namely, the power of sin. He develops this theme later in chapters 7 and 8, where he shows that the compulsive, ever growing power of sin in the unbeliever or apostate is the antithesis of the power of the Spirit at work in the faithful believer. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce this theme, and Paul is citing homosexuality as an example of the power of sin at work within men, as the antithesis to the power of the Gospel. He makes the same point in 1 Tim. 1:9-11. Paul argues that homosexual desire is God's punishment for men's sinful lusts. The point is being repeated at least three times, such is the emphasis:

What men did	What God did
Thought they were wise	Made them fools
"Became vain in their imaginations"	Darkened their foolish heart (1:21)
Had evil "lusts of their own hearts"	<i>Through</i> these lusts God gave them over to dishonouring their bodies between themselves
Changed God's truth (i.e. His word, Jn. 17:17) into a lie	Gave them vile affections which resulted in them committing homosexual acts
They refused to acknowledge the claims of God (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.)	God gave them a mind "void of judgment" between right and wrong (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.), so that they committed homosexual acts
Homosexually lusted for each other	Gave them an appropriate punishment for their error, i.e. homosexual desire.

It is clear from all this that God does something to the minds of men who justify homosexual lust; He makes them lust even more, and they therefore commit homosexual acts, and He then makes them want even more of such gratification. This is a classic example of the downward spiral an apostate believer enters; God pushes such people into ever increasing confirmation in their evil way. The fact homosexuals feel convinced they were born like it is an example of God confirming these people in their desires. It must be noted that the text of Rom. 1 is largely concerned with attitudes of mind; people have homosexual lust in their minds, and God confirms this by giving them a homosexual mindset. This shows that it is not enough to simply abstain from homosexual acts; the

homosexual mindset is in itself sinful. "The lusts of their own hearts" is paralleled with "to dishonour their own bodies"; "vile affections" with lesbian *acts*; "a reprobate mind" with *doing* those things which are abhorrent. For this reason alone it is impossible to accept the reasoning of Rom. 1 and also believe that some people are created by God constitutionally homosexual, with these "vile affections" as part of their natural fabric. It has been pointed out by many commentators that Paul in Rom. 1 is alluding to passages in the Wisdom of Solomon; and those passages are saying that God confirms men in the unrighteous desires they have chosen to follow. God often punishes men by turning them over to their sin completely. For example: "In return for their foolish and wicked thoughts which led them astray to worship irrational animals... thou didst send upon them a multitude of irrational creatures, that they might learn that one is punished by the very things in which he sins... therefore those who lived unrighteously thou didst torment through their own abominations" (Wisdom 11:15,16; 12:23). Rom. 1:29-31 associates homosexuality with a descending spiral of all sorts of other sins: envy, murder, inventors of evil things etc. This confirms that homosexuality is part of a general picture of sinfulness which is in opposition to the system of righteousness developed by the Gospel.

1:29 The extent of spiritual despair, despondency and apostasy amongst the condemned generation cannot be overstated. They neglected the circumcision of their children (Josh. 5:5,6), showing their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant with them. There is good reason to think that Rom. 1 is a description of Israel in the wilderness. Rom. 1:23 accuses them of changing "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to... fourfooted beasts, and creeping things", clearly alluding to Ps. 106:29 concerning how Israel in the wilderness "changed their glory (i.e. God) into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" by making the golden calf. The effective atheism of Rom. 1 is matched by Ps. 106:21: "They forgot God their saviour". The long catalogue of Israel's wilderness sins in Ps. 106 is similar to that in Rom. 1. "Full of envy" (Rom. 1:29) corresponds to them envying Moses (Ps. 106:16), "whisperers" (Rom. 1:29) to "murmerers" (Ps. 106:25), "inventors of evil things" (Rom. 1:30) to God being angered with "their inventions" of false gods (Ps. 106:29). Because of this "God gave them up" to continue in their sexual perversion and bitterness with each other, even to the extent of murder (Rom. 1:27,29). They were a rabble of about 2 million people living in moral anarchy, driven on in their lust by the knowledge that God had rejected them. The children of that generation who later turned out faithful- indeed the generation that settled Canaan were perhaps the most faithful generation in Israel's history- must have had to violently rebel against the attitude of the world and older generation around them.

Being filled- by God.

Murder- one can only be filled with murder if we understand murder here as an attitude of mind, in the sense of 1 Jn. 3:15- hating our brother is murder. The context is speaking of how God is doing things to the *mind*, the mental attitude, of sinners.

1:30 *inventors-* the mind is creative, inventive, and must be channelled positively rather than towards the invention or creation of sinful things. Note that the origin or creation of evil in the sense of sin is within the human being, not in some cosmic Satan figure.

Disobedient to parents- this may appear a lesser sin compared to those which surround it. But Paul several times does this- listing what some would consider an apparently minor sin within a list of what some would consider major sins- to demonstrate that the apparently minor sin is indeed that serious.

1:31 "Without understanding" translates the Greek *asunetos*; "covenant breakers" translates *asunthetos*. The alliteration between the words is common in the Bible, and suggests that the Bible was recorded in such a way that it could be easily memorized by the initial hearers- for the majority of believers over history have been illiterate.

“Covenant breakers” and “without natural affection” may be understandable in a moral, sexual context. For in 1:27 Paul has written of homosexuality as a leaving of the natural intent of the body.

“Implacable”, Gk. ‘without [accepting a] libation’ suggests that unforgiveness, or being “unmerciful”, is as bad as all manner of major sexual sin listed in the same list. Yet so often those sins remain unforgiven by those who consider themselves more spiritual than those who fail in such areas; yet such unforgiveness is of the same category as the grossest moral failure. Gk. ‘without an offering’, i.e. unwilling to accept a sacrifice in order to grant peace. This is a clear allusion to what God does for us; indeed most of the terms in v.31 are the very opposite of what God does in the atonement. His reconciliation of us must be the basis for our lives and mental attitudes.

1:32 *Who knowing*- the relevance of this verse is to those who know God’s judgments, those who are responsible to Him. Those described in Rom. 1:32 know the judgment of God; they know it will come. But they have a mind “void of [an awareness of] judgment” (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.). We can know, know it all. But live with a mind and heart void of it. Tit. 1:16 AVmg. uses the same word to describe those who “profess that they know God” but are “void of judgment”. We can know Him, but have no real personal sense of judgment to come. These are sobering thoughts.

Commit- Gk. keep on practicing, in an ongoing way.

Such things- some of the “things” listed in the preceding verses might appear to some to be minor sins. But they are “worthy of death” if we live in them. We need to think through that list in 1:29-31. Disobedience to parents, lacking “natural affection”, not being faithful to a covenant, implacable, not showing mercy- any one of those “things” if lived in as a way of life is “worthy of death”. Refusing to fellowship one’s brethren, refusing to forgive, ignoring elderly parents... is “worthy of death”.

Have pleasure in- Gk. ‘to assent to’, ‘to feel gratified with’. We can so easily ‘feel gratified with’ those who commit those sins through vicariously participating in them through watching and reading of them, and psychologically feeling gratified by the sin. Paul seems to be speaking here directly to the online entertainment generation... Paul may have written this with his memory upon how when Stephen had been stoned, he had stood there looking on and “consenting” with the murder, stone by stone- without throwing a single stone himself (s.w. twice, Acts 8:1; 22:20).

Paul warned the Romans that those who “have pleasure” in (Gk. ‘to feel gratified with’) sinful people will be punished just as much as those who commit the sins (Rom. 1:32). But he uses the very word used for his own ‘consenting’ unto the death of Stephen; standing there in consent, although not throwing a stone (Acts 8:1; 22:20). He realized that only by grace had that major sin of his been forgiven; and in that spirit of humility and self-perception of himself, as a serious sinner saved by grace alone, did he appeal to his brethren to consider their ways. ‘Feeling gratified with’ such sins as are in this list is what the entertainment industry is so full of. We can’t watch, read and listen to this kind of thing by choice without in some sense being vicariously involved in it- and this seems to be exactly what Paul has in mind when he warns that those who feel gratified in those sins shall share in their judgment. This is a sober warning, relevant, powerful and cutting to our generation far more than any other. For given the internet and media, we can so easily feel gratified in others’ sins.

Paul reels off an awful list of sins in Romans 1, and builds up to a crescendo at the end of the passage. We’re left waiting, with dropped jaws, for him to come out with some yet more awful sin. And Paul fulfils that expectation by listing the sin of having pleasure in those who commit sin (Rom. 1:32). Immediately we who are not grossly perverted and immoral are shaken from our seats. For in our generation like no other, one can secretly view sin, in movies, novels and on the internet, and vicariously get involved with it whilst not ‘doing it’ with our own bodies. This sin really is serious. It tops and caps and concludes the list of awful sins. And yet the whole section goes on to talk about the danger of condemning others for such sins (2:1). It could be that Paul is suggesting

that by condemning others, eagerly exploring their sins in order to pass condemnation upon them, we are thereby gratifying ourselves through vicarious involvement in those very sins. In this case, the psychology presented would've been 2000 years ahead of its time.

Those described in Rom. 1:32 know the judgment of God; they know it will come. But they have a mind "void of [an awareness of] judgment" (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.). We can know, know it all. But live with a mind and heart void of it. Tit. 1:16 AVmg. uses the same word to describe those who "profess that they know God" but are "void of judgment". We can know Him, but have no real personal sense of judgment to come. These are sobering thoughts.

2:1 *Inexcusable*- s.w. only in Rom. 1:20, where lesbians and homosexuals are described as "without excuse", inexcusable. The whole point is that those who are judgmental, in the sense of condemning ahead of time, are in the same category. The point is very powerful and telling. Perhaps Paul purposefully talks about lesbianism in Romans 1 because he knows it will shock and encourage his readers to condemn lesbians etc., and thus he has set them up for 'condemnation'. Remember that Paul isn't merely playing mind games with his readership- he's building us up to a crescendo of conviction of sinfulness, which will form the backdrop for the good news of God's amazing grace; and this, rather than ranting about sin for the sake of it, is the theme of Romans. "Inexcusable" is a Greek legal term, without defence / legal answer to make. As if whenever we judge others, we are ourselves standing condemned and speechless at the judgment seat of God. The rejected in the last day will be speechless, without any legal answer to make (Mt. 22:12). If we judge others, then we right now are condemning ourselves, speechless and ashamed before the Divine judgment seat. In this sense "wherein", or insofar as, we judge others- we condemn ourselves. We "do the same things", not literally, but insofar as by being judgmental or unmerciful (the context is Rom. 1:31), we are sinning in the same category of mortal sins which they are; for judgmentalism is as bad as the list of major moral failures Paul has been listing at the end of Romans 1.

O man- Paul is writing with at least some reference to himself personally. To be judgmental and feel spiritually superior to others would've been frequent temptations for him. Paul often writes assuming his readers' response being in a certain way. Here he assumes that having read his talk of lesbianism and a whole catena of other sins in 1:29-31, that we will be shaking our heads and judging those sins. But here in 2:1 he plays on that expected response from us ["Therefore..." is without referent unless it is to our assumed response to 1:29-31] and basically says: "Thou art the man!". He confidently asserts that we who judge [in the sense of condemn] are doing the same things. He may mean that we all at times commit the sins of 1:29-31 and so are guilty. Or he may be saying that the very act of judging / condemning others is as bad as 'doing those same things'. We must of course 'judge' in the sense of having an opinion; but to condemn people in the way that only God can is just as bad as lesbianism or whatever other sin in 1:27-31 we may wish to condemn.

Wherein you judge- the implication could be that if you condemn a person for a sin [in the sense of prejudging God's personal condemnation of them], then you are counted as having performed the very sin which you so despise and condemn.

Condemn yourself- By condemning others we are as if we were playing judge, and whilst at it, we're reading out our own sentence of condemnation. The practical result of all this must be faced- there will, presumably, be some otherwise good living, upright Christian folk who come to the day of judgment and are condemned to darkness and gnashing of teeth simply because they in their brief lifetimes condemned some of the other sinners who are with them thrown out into condemnation. It may appear bizarre- hardened sinners like lifetime perverts and lesbians are there on the left hand side of the judgment seat along with the upright, righteous pillars of church life who never smoked, got drunk, had a telly or broke the speed limit. But they condemned their sinful brethren, those with whom they share condemnation. And that's why they are there. This reality needs far more than some passing grunt of approval or sober nod of the head from us as we consider it. All this is not to say that we in this life can't tell right from wrong- that's the point of v. 2. We are indeed sure of

what the judgment of God is about these gross sins, but we are sure of what *God's* judgment is- and that, surely, is where the emphasis should be: "the judgment *of God*".

We *know* right now the principles on which God will judge us. We can judge what is acceptable to the Lord (Eph. 5:10- judgment day language). We can judge / discern those things which are excellent in His eyes (Phil. 1:10). We are *sure* of what the judgment of God is going to be against persistent sinners (Rom. 2:2); and yet if we condemn them, we can be equally sure that even now we are condemned of ourselves, seeing that if we condemn, we will be likewise (Rom. 2:1). The wrath of God is right now revealed, constantly disclosed, against sin (Rom. 1:18).

It is difficult to read Rom. 2:1 without seeing an allusion to David's condemnation of the man who killed his neighbour's only sheep: "Thou art inexcusable, O man, *whosoever thou art* that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself". Surely Paul is saying that David's massive self-deception and hypocrisy over Bathsheba can all too easily be replicated in our experience.

2:2 *we are sure*- again, it is only the believer, the person who knows God's word, who is aware and certain of the judgment of God. We can be certain that judgmentalism, lack of mercy and all the moral sins in the list at the end of Romans 1 will all lead to condemnation; yet we still do them, especially the sin of condemning others. This is the paradox Paul is bringing out- that we can be sure, intellectually and spiritually persuaded, that sin [including judging and being unmerciful to others] will result in condemnation- but this doesn't seem to mean we stop doing them. This is all part of Paul's build up to the crescendo of conviction of human sinfulness which so urgently necessitates our acceptance of God's grace.

Commit- Gk. 'to practice continually', rather than occasional failure.

Judgment... against them- Language of the law court, whereby a judgment [the contents of the judgment, rather than the act of judgment; a noun rather than a verb] is read out *against* a person. The oft made distinction between the person and the sin doesn't seem Biblical- God's judgment is against persons, not abstractions. It is individuals and not concepts which come before God's judgment.

2:3 *Do you think...*? There is the strong sense in human nature that 'this won't happen to me, yes it will happen to most people who do that, but not to me'. This aspect of our nature is at its most acute when it comes to committing sin. Others will die, for sure, truly, definitely, for doing those things (2:2)- but I will not. No wonder the sin within us is at times described as 'the devil', a liar, a deceiver. Yet this whole process of thought is described here as a 'reckoning' [AV "thinkest...?"], a process of discussion with ourselves. But it all takes place deep in the subconscious; for we don't literally have this kind of conversation with ourselves. We see here how the Bible tackles sin at its root- deep in the heart, within the subconscious thought processes, rather than blaming some supernatural cosmic dragon. Such an explanation is utterly primitive and has no praxis, compared to the Biblical definition of sin and the devil.

does the same- I suggested under 2:1 that this may refer to *effectively* doing the same, by condemning the individuals.

Escape the judgment- Gk. 'to flee'. The rejected will ultimately flee from God's presence at judgment day. Paul appears to be playing on that idea- they think they can run away from it, and in the end they shall run from it in condemnation. All the same, apart from this word play, Paul is highlighting the basic human tendency to think that 'It won't happen *to me*. I can do the same as *they* do, they may suffer the consequences of it, but in my case, I will not'. Paul is addressing himself to our deepest psyche and internal thought processes: "Do you think [*logizomai*, to reason out] this [within yourself], O man... ?". This sense that 'I in *my* case can get away with it and not pay the price' is especially pronounced in spiritual matters; the idea is that we can sin and not die because of it. The psychology of criminal behaviour has emphasized this facet of the human mind,

but in fact we all have it.

The rejected going away into... (Mt. 25:46) is only a reflection of the position they themselves adopted in their lives. They thought that they could flee away from the judgments of God (Rom. 2:3 Gk.)- and so they will flee from His judgment seat, although so so unwillingly.

The rejected going away into... (Mt. 25:46) is only a reflection of the position they themselves adopted in their lives. They thought that they could flee away from the judgments of God (Rom. 2:3 Gk.)- and so they will flee from His judgment seat, although so so unwillingly.

2:4 *Despises*- we can despise God's grace if we condemn others; for who are we to say that God in the end will not save the sinners of 1:26-31? By condemning others [which is the burden of 2:1-3] we are despising God's grace, limiting it, counting it as not very powerful nor wonderful. And by condemning others we fail to realize that God's limitless grace and goodness- the very grace we wish to limit by condemning others- is in fact leading us personally to repentance from the sins which will in their turn condemn us too.

Forbearance- Gk. self-restraint. God restrains Himself by His grace. Not condemning us is a struggle for Him, and we despise that characteristic of His, ignore and downplay His marvellous internal struggle, if we simply write people off as 'condemned'.

Leads- Gk. 'is leading you', continuous present- all the while we are despising His grace, thinking others can't possibly be saved by it, He by grace is trying to patiently lead us to repentance. The only other time in Romans the word is used is in Rom. 8:14, where we learn that all the children of God are "led by the spirit of God" [just as God leads, same word, His children unto glory, Heb. 2:10]. This leading is therefore specifically to repentance, to actual concrete change in our lives in specific areas, not just a general sense that we are 'led on the journey of life'. It's amazing that God tries to lead even the self-righteous, proud and judgmental of others to repentance. In Rom. 8:14 we read that all God's true children are led of the Spirit. Here in Rom. 2:4 it is the goodness, the kindness, the grace of God which leads us- to the end point of repentance. We are being led somewhere- to change, not just led on some road to Wigan Pier, to nowhere, led for the sake of being led... a journey for the sake of a journey. It's common to speak of 'being on a journey', but the question is, are we arriving anywhere, are we coming to radical change, *metanoia*, or not?

Repentance- from being judgmental? For that is the context of 2:1-3.

The context of Paul's challenge about whether we despise God's rich grace is his plea for us not to be judgmental and unmerciful. If we consider our brethren condemned by God and refuse to show them mercy and sympathy, then we are despising God's goodness; we're saying that all the riches of His grace aren't enough to save that person. Thus our condemning of others is effectively a limiting and despising of God's saving grace. All the time we are despising God's grace like this, God's grace is leading [continuous present tense] *us* to repentance of the sins which shall condemn *us*. The implication is that focusing upon judging others results in little attention to ones own need for repentance. This would explain why those so publically judgmental of others are so often exposed in due course as having hypocritically harboured some secret vice or moral failure in their own lives. Psychologically, this situation develops because their focus is so upon the failures of others that they perceive "sin" to be something purely external to themselves.

Paul summarises his argument of Romans chapters 1 and 2 by saying that there he has accused / charged (in a legal sense) all men and women, Jews and Gentiles, of being "under [judgment for] sin" (Rom. 3:9 Gk.). With typically devastating logic, he has demonstrated the universal guilt of man. Twice he stresses that whoever we are, we are without excuse (1:20; 2:1). All men have a conscience which is dynamically equivalent to the specific knowledge of God's law; in this sense they are a "law unto themselves" (2:14- although this phrase is used in a different sense in modern English). "By nature" (Strong: 'native disposition, constitution') they have the same moral sense that God's law teaches. This is why human beings have an innate sense of right and wrong- it's

why, e.g., there is protest at ethnic cleansing. God is understood / perceived by what He has created, namely our own bodies. But through, e.g., sexual perversion, man has distorted the image and glory of God which he was intended to be, and has worshipped the created body rather than the creator (1:20-23). Fashion, adverts and power clothing all do this, as well as the present obsession with sexual expression. The Lord Himself taught that because we are in the image of God, therein lies an imperative to give our bodies to Him. The goodness of God can lead *all men* to repentance (Rom. 2:4). God has set a sense of the eternal in the human heart (Ecc. 3:11 AVmg). An awareness of judgment is alive as a basic instinct in people. God is “not far from every one of us...forasmuch as we are [all] the offspring of God” (Acts 17:27-29- stated in a preaching context), being created in His image.

2:5 *Hardness*- Judging / condemning others is because of hardness of heart. *Hardness* implies that the mortal sin being spoken about is a hardness of heart, a condemning of others (2:1-3). Later in Romans, Paul associates hardness of heart with Pharaoh, who was in turn hardened by God in response to his own hardness.

Impenitent- Continuing impenitently condemning others’ impenitence is what will lead to our condemnation; for so long as we continue condemning, we are treasuring up condemnation to ourselves. The paradox is huge and crucially relevant. The wrath and indignation for which these people are condemned (2:8) is surely wrath and indignation against those whom they condemn, claiming to have the “wrath” of Divine condemnation against others, a wrath which only properly belongs to Him. God is leading people to repentance (2:4), but some remain impenitent. In this they fight against God. He leads people by His grace to repent of their judgmentalism and condemnation of others, but not all accept His leading.

Treasures up wrath- Every continuance in condemning others and being unmerciful is a treasuring up of condemnation in the last day, adding to it bit by bit. Each act of condemnation, each incident of rejecting others, is as it were heaping up a piece of condemnation for ourselves in the last day. Our life is a laying up of treasure against the day of judgment (Mt. 6:19,20). The Greek *orge* translated “wrath” is elsewhere translated ‘anger’, ‘indignation’. These are exactly the feelings of those who condemn others- anger and indignation. There is therefore a direct, proportionate correspondence between human condemnation, anger and indignation against the weakness of their brethren; and the anger, indignation and condemnation of God against those who condemn in this way. *Wrath... day of wrath*- your wrath with others now (2:8) is going to be related to God’s wrath against you at the last day. Again the implication is that it is because people have shown wrath, i.e. Divine condemnation, that they will suffer wrath in the day of wrath which is to come. The point is that the day of judgment is the day of God’s wrath, not ours; and the day for wrath is then, and not now. It will be “revealed” only then- not now. The emphasis is upon the judgment and wrath being “of God”, then- and not of man, nor now in this life.

Revelation of the righteous judgment- the Greek means ‘the verdict’, the judgment given. This will not be decided upon at the last day- it has already been created in this life, and we have created it ourselves- for we are our own judges. What happens at the last day is that it is revealed. The day of judgment is a metaphor- a human court sits down to assess evidence and pass a verdict. This isn’t the case with Divine judgment, as God knows the end from the beginning, and isn’t passive nor unaware of human behavior and the reasons for it- all at the very time it occurs.

There are several allusions to Job in Romans, all of which confirm that Job is set up as symbolic of apostate Israel. A simple example is Elihu’s description of Job as a hypocrite heaping up wrath (Job 36:13), which connects with Paul’s description of the Jews as treasuring up unto themselves “wrath against the day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5).

2:6 *Who will render*- the emphasis is perhaps on “will”, for Paul is addressing the subconscious mentality that we ourselves can escape judgment (see on 2:3). “Render” is the same word translated

“to give account”- we shall “give account” at the day of judgment (Mt. 12:36; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5), “render” [s.w.] to God the fruits of our lives (Mt. 21:41). So God’s rendering of account to us is really our rendering of account to Him- we are our own judges, we are working out the verdict now by our attitudes and actions.

Render- ‘to give account’. It would seem that in some sense, there will be a ‘going through’ of all our deeds, and an account given by God related to each of them. How this shall happen is unclear (e.g. through the past flooding before our eyes like a movie, which is frequently stopped for us to comment upon). But in some sense it will happen, in that not one human deed performed or thought by those responsible to Divine judgment will as it were slip away unnoticed. This isn’t only sobering, but also comforting.

It is God who will render to each person their account- therefore we should not sit as judges (the context of 2:1).

The judgement of works must be squared against the fact that we each receive a penny a day, salvation by grace. Our salvation itself is by grace, but the nature of our eternity, how many cities we rule over, how brightly we shine as stars, will be appropriate to our deeds in this life. Or it may be that in the context here, the “deeds” which will be judged are our condemnation of others. This, as explained in 2:1-3, is as bad as the “deeds” being condemned by us; and so there’s a telling appropriacy in styling such condemnations “deeds”, as if they are the actual deed performed.

2:7 *doing-* s.w. “deeds” in 2:6. Yet how can the right deeds be rewarded with eternal life, given Paul’s teaching about salvation by grace rather than works? Surely the answer is in the fact that salvation itself is by grace, the “penny a day” of the parable which all believers will receive; but our works aren’t insignificant, and they will be judged and will affect the nature of the eternal life, the salvation, which by grace we shall be given. Or it could be that the “well doing”, the ‘good deeds’, spoken of here are in fact a non-judgmental, merciful life. The good deeds are what we avoided doing, i.e. condemning others, which is the theme of this section of Romans.

Immortality- To those who earnestly seek for perfection, who would so love to be given moral perfection, who would so love never to sin again- they will be given eternal life in that state. Note the difference between the “immortality” which we seek, and the “eternal life” which we are given in response. The Greek for “immortality” is also translated “incorruption”, “sincerity”- it has a distinct moral sense to it. If we seek to live in moral incorruption, if our desire to be in the Kingdom of God is because we so yearn to live without sin and corruption- then we will not only be given that but also an eternity of life like that. But the essence is to seek to live in moral incorruption- and then the eternity will come as a natural part of that.

Glory and honour- terms frequently applied by Paul to the Lord Jesus. The righteous seek *His* glory and honour, and shall be given eternal life in which to do so. Or should we seek glory, honour- for others? For love doesn’t seek her own things (1 Cor. 13:5 s.w.). Paul could write of how he ‘sought others’ salvation (2 Cor. 12:14).

Paul tells the Hebrews [if he indeed was the author] and Romans to have the patient, fruit-bearing characteristics of the good ground (Lk. 8:15 = Rom. 2:7; Heb. 10:36).

2:8 *Contentious-* Gk. ‘factions’. The section is talking about those who condemn others (2:1) and who are unmerciful (1:31). It is this which creates faction-for if one person condemns another, they expect others to condemn them too, and cause faction over it. It’s significant that causing faction by being judgmental is chosen here as the epitome of wrong doing- despite Paul having spoken of sins such as lesbianism in the context. His argument seems to be that condemning those who commit such sins and causing faction over the matter is in fact a far worse sin. To be contentious – to be divisive, endlessly creating strife (Gk.), is the very epitome of those who will not be saved. Yet sadly, contention against other believers is falsely painted as ‘spiritual strength’. This category of people are later in this verse called indignant and angry- confirming the view that this group are

people within the ecclesia who are angry, indignant and contentious against others whom they judge (2:1-3 sets the context).

Do not obey the truth- As we have shown in comments on 2:2 that Paul has in view here those who know the Truth. The emphasis should therefore here be placed upon their disobedience to the Truth which they know. And that Truth requires mercy, grace and non-condemnation to be shown to sinners. That is obedience to the Truth. Or "the truth" may be a reference to the Law of Moses, as in Rom. 2:20; 3:7? Or to the Gospel, as elsewhere in Paul's thought.

Obey... but... obey- Paul introduces the paradox he develops so strongly in chapter 6- that we are slaves, and we obey either the flesh or the spirit. For all our fiercely claimed independence, we are presented by Paul as slaves with only two possible masters to whom we can yield obedience. What's telling in the figure is that the 'master' of the flesh is actually our own internal passions of wrath, indignation, unrighteousness. "Obey" is from a Greek word which really means to persuade. We are persuaded either by our own anger, or by the Truth of the Gospel. The same word recurs in 2:19.

Obey... indignation and wrath- As commented on under 2:5, it is those who condemn others who do so with indignation and wrath, thus heaping upon themselves Divine wrath and indignation at the last day. We all have latent wrath and indignation within us- but we are not to obey those passions in a wrong way. When we encounter the sinfulness of others, it seems that indignation and wrath are aroused and this leads some to condemn others. But if we obey those passions- we shall receive God's wrath and condemnation.

The rejected will want to be accepted. "When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you (quoted in Rom. 2:8 re. the judgment). Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Prov. 1:27,28).

2:9- see on Rom. 2:23.

Tribulation- we have the choice of tribulation now for the sake of living the truly Christian life (e.g. Mt. 13:21), or tribulation at the hands of God and His Son and their Angels at the last day.

Tribulation was exactly what the apostate Christians were trying to avoid will come upon them at judgment day. The 'persecution' or 'chasing' is perhaps a reference to the Angel of the Lord chasing the rejected like chaff away from the judgment seat- the Angel will "persecute" the rejected along dark and slippery paths (Ps. 35:6).

anguish- lit. 'narrowness of room'. They will have no place to run, compared to the sense of largeness and freedom which will be [and is with] God's accepted people.

The anguish will not just be upon 'men' but upon every individual *psuche* (s.w. heart, life, mind) of man who has been disobedient. The suggestion is that the punishment will be psychological, a mental trauma.

that does evil- 1:32 has warned that those who don't so much do the evil but vicariously agree with it are just as culpable. The 'doing' is therefore as much mental as physical.

The Jew first- because the Jews have or had greater responsibility to Divine judgment?

2:10 *honour-* the Greek word really refers to money, a financial price. There could be an allusion to the parable of the talents, whereby the faithful receives the one talent which the unfaithful hadn't used (Mt. 25:28).

The 'working good' in the context of 2:1-3 is not condemning our brother.

2:11 *no respect of persons-* i.e. both Jew and Gentile will be accepted in God's Kingdom. The spirituality of the Gentile believers will be rewarded just as much as that of Jewish believers. That the Jew-Gentile equality is such a theme in Romans would suggest that the ecclesia featured both Jews and Gentiles- hence Paul's many OT allusions in Romans, whilst at the same time making it

clear in places that he is specifically addressing Gentiles ["ye Gentiles"].

2:12 *perish*- i.e. in condemnation at the last day? For this is how the word is used in Jn. 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:12; Heb. 13:4. "Judged" is being used in the sense of "condemned". Not only those who knew the Mosaic law will appear at judgment day; some will be condemned there because of their disobedience to that law, but others will be condemned because of disobedience to other principles.

Watch out for the use of figures of speech. How we interpret the Bible accurately depends upon grasping these. Ellipsis and metaphor are the most common. Ellipsis is where as it were a gap is left in the sentence, and we have to fill in the intended sense. Thus: "For as many as have sinned without law, shall perish also without [*being judged by*] law" (Rom. 2:12).

2:13 *Not the hearers*- there would have been a great tendency in the first century as in our own to think that regular attendance at a place of worship and simply hearing God's law read was enough for salvation.

doers of the law... justified- Yet Paul elsewhere teaches that no works can bring about justification, it is not of works but of faith in God's grace. I've observed several times in these notes so far in Romans that Paul tends to use the idea of 'doing' with reference to mental attitudes rather than deeds. Or it may be that Paul is here quoting a rabbinic maxim, and agreeing with it only so far- to demonstrate that even passive religionists are all the same liable to a very real condemnation.

Mt. 7:21 = Rom. 2:13. Paul saw the "Lord, Lord" people of the parable as the Jews of the first century who initially responded enthusiastically to the Gospel.

2:14 *Gentiles*- Gentile believers in Christ. There's no article- it's not a reference to *the* Gentiles as a whole.

by nature- nobody seems to be naturally obedient to "the things contained in the law", rather is obedience and spirituality an hourly struggle. It's therefore tempting to seek to interpret this verse in the light of the immediate context- which is condemning some [Jewish?] members of the Rome ecclesia for doing that which is "against nature", i.e. lesbianism and homosexuality (Rom. 1:26). The Gentile believers *in that context of homosexuality* were "by nature" doing God's will in that area. Again, we see Paul teaching that nobody is 'born gay', such behaviour is not natural. Perhaps it is in this context that we can understand the rest of 2:14 and 2:15, which seem to suggest that conscience naturally rebels against such things. This is indeed the natural reaction to such perversion.

It's easy to get discouraged in our preaching by the apparent lack of response. But all the witnesses that we make, the points we get across, the bills we distribute, adverts we place... the people who receive them *don't* treat them as they would say a commercial advertisement. *Everyone out there has a religious conscience*- let's remember that. They know, deep down, what they ought to be doing. And our preaching invites them to do it. If there is no immediate conversion, well don't worry. *You have touched peoples' hearts* by your witness. Paul describes our witness in terms of the burning of aromatic spices during the triumphant procession of a victorious general, in our case, the Lord Jesus. His victory train goes on and on and on; and each generation of preachers is the aroma. But in Paul's image, the aroma strikes the bystanders in only one of two ways: some find it pleasing and life-giving, whereas others find it nauseating and deadly (2 Cor. 2:14-16). The point is, the fragrance of our witness penetrates *everywhere* (2 Cor. 2:14), and it is an odour which *cannot be ignored*. It is either repulsive, or life-giving. Our hearers will react in only one of those two ways, whatever their apparent indifference to us.

2:15 *also bearing witness*- Along with the witness of God's law, their conscience also happened to agree with God's law about homosexuality. 1 Cor. 4:4 warns that our conscience isn't so reliable as to justify us at the last day; but in the 'natural' revulsion of the conscience against homosexuality, conscience is a joint witness with God's law. Again, it's apparent that Paul didn't believe the 'born

gay' story.

thoughts- Gk. 'logismos'. The internal words, the conscience, accused or excused [both are legal words] the behaviour; our internal words 'bear witness' as in a court, for or against us. Judgment is ongoing; and we are at times our own accusers.

2:16 The focus upon our innermost thoughts and words spoken only within our own minds continues when we read that God will judge the "secrets" of men in the last day. It's our thoughts which are the essence of us as persons. These will be judged- and the context of 2:1-3 is of internal attitudes like judgmentalism being worthy of condemnation at the last day.

according to my [preaching of the] gospel- the Gospel as preached by Paul includes judgment to come as part of the good news. But the teaching about the judgment seat of Christ is only good news for those sure of their redemption in Christ, those who are now suffering, those who now in their thoughts and hearts are with the Lord but are condemned by others... for the day of judgment will be a turning of tables, a replacing of the external with the internal.

2:17 *you [singular] are called a Jew*- it's as if Paul is in the middle of giving a lecture and then suddenly addresses himself to one individual in the audience.

rests in [RV "upon"]- the Greek idea is of remaining. Again it seems Paul is addressing himself to Christian Jews in the Rome ecclesia who had chosen to remain in the Mosaic law.

make your boast- as in 2:23, a reference to Jewish glorying in having and obeying the Mosaic law. But Paul uses the same word another three times in Romans, about how "we" boast in our reconcillation with God (Rom. 5:11), in the hope we have of salvation (5:2), and also in our humiliations which prepare us for that time (5:3). Our witness to others is part of this confident boasting about God's grace. But we can only confidently boast of salvation and reconcillation if by faith we have assured ourselves that these things are present realities, and not merely possible futures for us.

2:17-23 Paul's rebuke of the Jews in Rom.2 for their reliance on a mixture of worldly wisdom and that of the Mosaic law has many similarities with Job:

Rom.2:17-23

"Thou art called a Jew... and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will, and triest the things that differ (AVmg.), being instructed out of the law;

and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an

instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?

Thou that preachest a man should not steal... commit adultery... (worship) idols... dost thou?

Job

A fair description of Job before his trials. Cp. Job's constant reasoning with God about things which differed from his previous concept of God; "Doth not the ear try words?" (12:11)

"I was eyes to the blind" (29:15)

"Thou hast instructed many ... thy words have upholden him that was falling... but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest" (4:3-5).

These were the 3 main things of which the friends accused Job.

Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God?"

Elihu, on God's behalf, says that Job's boasting of his righteousness implied God was doing wickedly in punishing Job (34:10)

Their belief that they possessed such great wisdom led the Jews to be self-righteous, in that they reasoned that if they were wicked, then their wisdom would reveal this to them. Job and the Jews were in this sense similar.

2:18 *know His will*- the very same Greek words which were spoken to Paul at his conversion by Ananias (Acts 22:14). This is yet another example of where Paul's conversion experience is alluded to him constantly, consciously and unconsciously, throughout his writings. Paul goes on to talk about how this individual Jew of whom he speaks could approve or prove or judge / discern excellent things- this surely is an allusion to the rabbinical process of casuistic interpretation of Scripture with which Paul had been brought up, and which dialectic is so evident in his Christian writing and reasoning. Surely the individual Jew whom Paul started addressing in 2:17 is in fact Paul himself. Perhaps he also has in mind the Lord's teaching (using the same Greek words) in Lk. 12:47, where in the context of responsibility to final judgment, the Lord warns that those who know His will shall be punished more severely than those who don't. Hence Paul's earlier comments about "to the Jew first".

2:19 This verse and 2:20-23 sound so similar to Paul. He is the Jew out of the audience whom he starts addressing in 2:17. Like Peter, his teaching of others is shot through with reference to his own failure and salvation by grace; and he is at pains to apply the exhortations, appeals and warnings he makes to himself personally.

confident- persuaded. The same word is [mis]translated "obey" in 2:8. There we read that we are persuaded either of the Gospel, or by anger, judgmentalism etc. Who did the persuading? Presumably Paul's own pride and / or the peer opinion of others in the Jewish peer group.

guide of the blind- this and the other similar phrases here and in 2:20 were all used by the Rabbis to describe their attempts to make Gentiles into Jews by proselytizing. However each phrase can equally be understood with reference to the true preaching of Christ as the light of the world.

As the Lord was the light of those that sat in darkness (Mt. 4:16), so Paul writes as if all the believers are likewise (Rom. 2:19).

Paul points out the humility which we should therefore have in our preaching: there are none that truly understand, that really see; we are all blind. And yet we are "a guide of the blind, a light to them that sit in darkness" (Rom. 2:19). Therefore we ought to help the blind with an appropriate sense of our own blindness. See on Mt. 13:16.

2:20 "Instructor of the foolish... teacher of babes" are Rabbinic terms used for Rabbis and Jewish orthodox missionaries bringing forth 'babes' of Gentile converts to Judaism. Such people had the "form of knowledge and truth" [another Rabbinic phrase] in the Jewish Law. Paul's hypothetical "O man" (2:1) is narrowing down to himself; for very few if any of the initial readership of Romans would've been former Rabbis, let alone Rabbis involved in missionary proselytizing. The only Christian former Rabbi and travelling proselytizer we meet in the New Testament is Paul himself. The allusion by Paul to himself rather than pointing the finger at any of his readership would've set them at ease, that there were no hidden messages nor hints that he was addressing a specific situation or person in Rome. He was applying his principles to himself, and by so publically doing so he appeals to each of his readers to likewise personalize the principles to ourselves.

2:21 Paul was teaching the Romans. Thus the allusion to himself is clear- he who teaches others must teach himself, must apply to himself the principles which pass his lips so easily. He may be

referring back to his theme in 2:2,3- that we have a tendency to assume that Divine truths aren't relevant to us personally, that punishment for sin and condemning others isn't, actually, going to come *on me*, although we know it will surely come *on others*. And so Paul is saying that he too must be aware of this- that he places himself in the audience of those whom he is teaching. See on Rom. 3:19.

Not steal- Stealing was felt to be a crime which could and should be openly, publically rebuked.

2:22 Sexual double standards is perhaps the most obvious example of hypocrisy. Remember the context of this passage- the list of awful sexual sins at the end of chapter 1 lead Paul in to a discourse on the sin of condemning others for their sins, his point being that to do so was a despising of God's grace; and that by condemning others for their sin we are in fact guilty of that same sin. And so Paul could be meaning that if we condemn individuals for adultery, it is as if we have ourselves committed adultery, for this would be in harmony with what he has taught earlier in this section (see on 1:32).

You who abhors idols- Jewish Rabbis like Paul were well known for their obsession with making any image of God.

Do you commit sacrilege?- Gk. 'temple robbery'. The theme which connects the three examples given by Paul is that of stealing, taking that which isn't yours. 'Do you steal?' (v.21) connects with 'Do you commit adultery?' because adultery is a stealing of that which isn't yours but which belongs to your neighbour (1 Thess. 4:6); and robbing temples is likewise stealing. Stealing was and is seen in the Middle East as the social evil and crime which could be shouted out against the most. Indeed in many cultures there is some equivalent of the English "Stop thief!".

Temple robbery was something Jews were accused of (Acts 19:37)- according to Josephus they were renowned for it, justifying it on the basis that the gods who 'owned' the treasures did not in fact exist (*Antiquities* 4:8, 10). So it's appropriate Paul would choose this example- condemning others, in this case for idolatry, but to our own personal advantage.

2:23 *You who makes your boast of the law-* Again, this is surely a reference by Paul to himself, who boasted of his Jewish roots and knowledge of the Law. The Jews boasted in God (2:17 s.w.) and in His law. Later in Romans Paul talks of how the Christian believer boasts in God on account of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:11 s.w.; AV "joy in God"). The Jewish boast in God was proven empty because of human sin and hypocrisy; whereas the Christian can boast in God because s/he is confident in His grace in Christ.

You dishonour / shame God- The same word has been used by Paul in Rom. 1:24 about homosexuals dishonouring their bodies. Relentlessly, Paul repeats his point- the apparently grosser sins such as homosexuality are just as bad and 'dishonouring' as those who know the Law, even boasting of it, and yet condemn others for sins like homosexuality.

There's a definite link between shame and anger. Take a man whose mother yelled at him because as a toddler he ran out onto the balcony naked, and shamed him by her words. Years later on a hot Summer evening the man as an adult walks out on a balcony with just his underpants on. An old woman yells at him from the yard below that he should be ashamed of himself. And he's furiously angry with her- because of the shame given him by his mother in that incident 20 years ago. Shame and anger are clearly understood by God as being related, because His word several times connects them: "A fool's *anger* is immediately known; but a prudent man covers his *shame*" (Prov. 12:16); A king's *anger* is against a man who *shames* him (Prov. 14:35). Or consider 1 Sam. 20:34: "So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce *anger*, and did eat no meat the second day of the month... because his father had done him *shame*". Job's *anger* was related to the fact that he felt that ten times the friends had *shamed* him in their speeches (Job 19:3). Frequently the rejected are threatened with both shame and anger / gnashing of teeth; shame and anger are going to be connected in that awful experience. They will "curse [in anger]... and be ashamed" (Ps. 109:28). The

final shame of the rejected is going to be so great that "they shall be greatly ashamed... their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jer. 20:11). Seeing they will be long dead and gone, it is us, the accepted, who by God's grace will recall the terrible shame of the rejected throughout our eternity. Their shame will be so terrible; and hence their anger will likewise be. Because Paul's preaching 'despised' the goddess Diana, her worshippers perceived that she and they were somehow thereby shamed; and so "they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:27,28). It's perhaps possible to understand the wrath of God in this way, too. For His wrath is upon those who break His commands; and by breaking them we *shame* God (Rom. 2:23); we *despise* his desire for our repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Break... the law?- The chapter has been arguing against judgmentalism and condemning of sinners. This is perhaps the rank breaking of the Law which Paul is talking about.

2:24 The Jews were so sensitive to honouring God's Name that they wouldn't even pronounce it. And yet their hypocrisy led to it being blasphemed world-wide. This is Paul's point- that hypocrisy is as bad a sin as the crudest, most widely spread blasphemy.

It is written- In Is. 52:5, where God says that Judah in Babylon had caused His Name to be blasphemed, but (the prophecy continues) because of that He would reveal His Name to His people as it is in His Son, and they would ultimately accept Him and thus the blasphemy of God's Name would cease. Yet Paul is writing in Romans to Jewish Christians. Clearly they had not really grasped Christ as intended.

2:25 *circumcision indeed is of profit if you obey the law*- The corollary of this is that Christ will "profit" [s.w.] nothing if we chose to be circumcised (Gal. 5:2). The analogy of a wedding ring is perhaps helpful to explain Paul's sense here. A wedding ring, a ritualistic external token, is helpful as a sign of marriage; but if one breaks the marriage covenant, the wedding ring [cp. Circumcision] becomes bereft of meaning and just a pointless external physicality.

Circumcision is made uncircumcision- Humanly speaking in the first century, this was impossible. Once the flesh was cut off, this was irreversible. But in God's opinion- and that surely is Paul's point- circumcision no longer counts if the covenant which defines the Law is broken. The Jew is therefore as the Gentile, the circumcised becomes uncircumcised because the Law, the old covenant which defined the whole relationship, has been broken.

2:26 Throughout Romans, the point is made that the Lord *counts as righteous* those that believe; righteousness is *imputed* to us the unrighteous (Rom. 2:26; 4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,22,23,24; 8:36; 9:8). But the very same Greek word is used of *our* self-perception. We must count / impute ourselves as righteous men and women, and count each other as righteous on the basis of recognising each others' faith rather than works: "Therefore we conclude [we count / impute / consider] that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law... Likewise reckon [impute] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 3:28; 6:11). We should *feel* clean and righteous, and act accordingly, both in our own behaviour and in our feelings towards each other.

The readership in the Roman ecclesia appears to have been mixed, Jew and Gentile. The Gentile world of darkness doesn't keep the righteousness of the Law. "The uncircumcision" here must surely refer to the uncircumcised Christian believers, especially those in the Roman ecclesia. Indeed, "the circumcision" in Acts 10:45; 11:2; Tit. 1:10 and Gal. 2:12 refers to the circumcised *believers in Christ*; and so it's likely that here in Romans it has the same meaning. The Gentile believers were counted as Jews, under the new definition of 'Israel' which there now was in Christ: "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

2:27 *Judge you*- The Christian Gentile believers, who were uncircumcised, would judge / condemn the Jewish Christian believer who trusted in keeping the letter of the Law and in his circumcision

rather than in Christ. They would 'condemn' them in that at the last day, those rejected will as it were be compared against other human beings and be relatively 'condemned' by their example (Mt. 12:39-41). Paul has been emphasizing the need not to condemn our brethren (2:1 etc.)- he's saying that it is God who will use us to condemn others, of His choosing, at the last day judgment. The very existence of believing Gentiles judges the Jews as condemned (Rom. 2:27), just as Noah's very example was a condemnation of his world (Heb. 11:7) and the very existence of the repentant Ninevites condemned first century Israel (Mt. 12:41). The faithful preaching of the Corinthians would judge an unbeliever (1 Cor. 14:24). The fact the Pharisees' children cast out demons condemned the Pharisees (Mt. 12:27). This is why the rejected will be shamed before the accepted; they will bow in shame at their feet (Rev. 3:9; 16:15). Perhaps it is in this sense that "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3)- rejected ecclesial elders, cp. the angels of the churches in Rev. 2,3? The point is, men's behaviour and conduct judges others because of the contrast it throws upon them. And this was supremely true of the Lord. No wonder in the naked shame and glory of the cross lay the supreme "judgment of this world"

"Shall not uncircumcision (i.e. the Gentiles)... judge thee (first century Israel), who... dost transgress the law?" (Rom. 2:27) is an odd way of putting it. How can believing Gentiles "judge" first century Jews who refused to believe? Surely there must be some connection with Mt. 12:41, which speaks of Gentiles such as the men of Nineveh rising "in judgment with this generation (first century Israel), and shall condemn it: because they repented...". I can't say there is a conscious allusion being made here. But the similarity is too great to just shrug off.

We may again need to read in an ellipsis when we read that uncircumcision fulfills the Law. The Gentile Christians fulfilled [the essence of] the Jewish Law. This was a paradox- the Law demanded circumcision, so how could the uncircumcised fulfil the Law? Another explanation is to understand that they 'fulfil the Law' in that God counts them as having done so. And as soon as we think about fulfilling the Law, our minds surely go to the fact that the Lord Jesus was the One who fulfilled the Law by His life of perfect obedience. And Rom. 8:4 makes the point that the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled "in us" because of the fact that the Lord Jesus died His representative death for us. Thereby, His righteousness is counted to us. He, the circumcised, perfect keeper of God's law, died as our representative. If we identify with Him by faith and baptism into Him, then women and uncircumcised men alike are all counted to be as Him. And in this way, uncircumcised, disobedient, law-breaking believers in Christ will as it were condemn those who have attempted to justify themselves by the circumcision ritual and obedience to the letter of the Law.

By the letter- Gk. 'gramma', s.w., "Scriptures". Neither the Scriptures nor circumcision in themselves make a person break the Law of Moses. So we must read in an ellipsis here. By trusting in our obedience to these things we can put ourselves in a position where we are coming before God on the basis of justification by our own obedience rather than our faith in Christ. In this lies the danger of 'Biblicism' when it's used the wrong way. If we are obsessed with obedience to the letter of God's Word and external, ritual signs such as circumcision, then we shall end up condemned as law breakers- because perfect obedience to God's word is actually impossible.

2:28 *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly* was a radical, hard hitting statement. And coming from a Hebrew of the Hebrews like Saul of Tarsus, it really was stinging. Self-identity in the Mediterranean world of the first century was all tied up with who one was externally. The new identity in Christ challenges our self-perceptions to the absolute core.

Rom. 2:28 explicitly states the principle of our real spiritual self being hidden, by saying that the true believer will "inwardly" (same word translated "hidden" in 1 Pet. 3:4) circumcise his heart. The works of the flesh are "manifest", but by inference those of the Spirit are hidden (Gal. 5:18,19). Mt. 6:4,6,18 gives triple emphasis to the fact that God sees in secret. He alone truly and fully appreciates our spiritual self. This is sure comfort on the many occasions where our spirituality is misunderstood, both in the world and in the ecclesia. Yet it also provides an endless challenge;

moment by moment, our true spiritual being is known by the Almighty, "Thou whose eyes in darkness see, and try the heart of man". The spiritual man which God now knows ("sees") and relates to, will be what He sees at the day of judgment. God dwells in "secret", i.e. in the hidden place, as well as seeing in "secret". God is a God who hides Himself (Is. 57:17) due to human sinfulness. If we fail to see the spiritual man in our brethren, this must be due to a lack of real spiritual vision in us. It is human sin which is somehow getting in the way.

2:29 It was indeed a radical thing for Paul to re-define self-identity from the outward and visible to the internal and invisible. External appearances were and are what define a person, both within society and to him or her self. By becoming "in Christ", this all changes- radically. "Inwardly" is the same word translated "secrets" when we read a few verses earlier that God will judge the secrets, the internal things (Rom. 2:16). This is what He looks upon.

It's significant that circumcision was in any case a private matter. The Canaanite tribes each had various markings or tattoos, usually on the face or somewhere public and visible, just as many African tribes do today. It was immediately obvious that the person was from whatever tribe. God's people, however, had a body marking on the most hidden and intimate place on a man's body, which was not on public display. This in itself reflected how relationship with God was and is something intimate, personal and not immediately visible, in a sense, to the world around us. We who line up in a supermarket look, smell, talk and chose our shopping in a virtually identical way to the world around us. Our separation unto God is internal, intimate and not externally visible. Note that Paul has been talking about not judging; and from that he moves on to talk about circumcision. The connection is in the fact that we cannot judge others because we can only view them externally; God will judge the "secrets" (2:16), the internal things, because the sign of our covenant connection with God is by its very nature internal and personal to the believer and God. We cannot possibly, therefore, judge others- for we see only the visible and external.

Circumcision under the new covenant doesn't refer to anything outward, visibly verifiable. For now "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29)- seeing we can't judge the secret things of others' hearts, how can we tell who is circumcised in heart or not? The 'sealing' of God's people today, the proof that they are the Lord's (2 Tim. 2:19), is not anything external, but the internal matter of being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), or being sealed with a mark in the mind / forehead, as Revelation puts it (Rev. 7:3; 9:4).

Praise- We will be praised by God in that He will 'go through' all our good deeds, when we fed the hungry and visited those in prison (Mt. 25:36). He will rejoice over us, glory in us, in the way that only a lover can over the beloved whom He views through eyes of love, counting perfection to us in His eyes (1 Cor. 4:5). This is the real meaning of being 'Jewish'- for Paul is making a word play on the word 'Jew' coming from 'Judah', the praised one (Gen. 49:8).

3:1 Whilst accepting Paul's Divine inspiration, I have always found the logic of this and the next few verses to be difficult and twisted. It's as if Paul wishes to say something nice about the Jews to as it were keep on board the Jews in his audience, having spoken against the significance of natural Jewishness so strongly in 2:27-29. But what he says there isn't quite compensated for by the reasoning he now comes out with- or so it seems to me. If natural descent is so irrelevant and Jewishness has been redefined, what real advantage is there, then, in being ethnically Jewish? "Advantage" translates a Greek word which is a superlative meaning more 'pre-eminence', 'exceeding abundance'. Paul appears to say that the Jews do have indeed such a superlative position; whereas elsewhere in this context Paul speaks as if the Jews are as sinful as or even more sinful than the Gentiles, and that both are "under sin" (Rom. 3:9). Both need baptism into Christ to be the true seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29). Paul's claim that their amazing blessing and advantage is because the Law was given to their fathers seems to strangely contradict the Law being elsewhere described as "weak and beggarly elements" (Gal. 4:9), "weak through the flesh", whose glory was

nothing, as dirty garments, compared to the excellency and surpassing wonder of Christ. I therefore suggest in the light of all this that we may be justified in reading Paul's words in Rom. 3:1,2 as a kind of sarcasm: "What superlative, amazing pre-eminence then has the Jew! Or what profit at all is there in being circumcised! Much every way, indeed! The important thing to note is that the oracles of God were firstly given to them..." - and then Paul builds on that point to speak of Israel's disobedience to those commandments, leading up to his crescendo of convicting Jew and Gentile as desperate sinners who must throw themselves upon God's grace.

3:2 were committed- Gk. *pisteuo*, God had faith in Israel (3:3), in giving them the commandments. He believed in them. The God who can know the end from the beginning allowed His emotion of love to take such root in Him that He as it were allowed His omniscience to be limited, just as He at times limits His omnipotence; and He desperately believed in them. For loving someone elicits also faith and hope in them.

3:3 Not believe- Israel never adopted atheism nor did they ever inform Yahweh He was no longer their national deity. Yet for all their professions of faith and loyalty to the temple cult, God viewed them as unbelievers. Or it could be that Paul's implication is that they did not believe in Christ, in their Saviour Messiah.

The faith of God- God's faith and hope in His people. See on Rom. 3:2. The awkward translations can make us miss the wonderful point here: Israel's unbelief didn't abolish [Gk.], do away with, make of no effect [AV], God's faith in Israel. Here we see His love, His grace; a faith and hope in a weak other party which can only come from very deep love. They didn't believe in Him, but He didn't stop believing in them.

"Some" Jews didn't believe (Rom. 3:3); the majority, actually, but the Father is more gentle than that. The whole tragic history of God's relationship with Israel is a sure proof of His essentially positive character. Right at their birth by the Red Sea, the Almighty records that "the people feared Yahweh, and believed Yahweh, and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:23). No mention is made of the Egyptian idols they were still cuddling (we don't directly learn about them until Ez. 20). Nor do we learn that this "belief" of theirs lasted a mere three days; nor of the fact that they rejected Moses, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. "There was no strange god" with Israel on their journey (Dt. 32:12); but there were (Am. 5:26). The reconciliation is that God counted as Israel as devoted solely to Him. The Angel told Moses that the people would probably want to come up the mountain, closer to God, when in fact in reality they ran away when they saw the holiness of God; almost suggesting that the Angel over-estimated their spiritual enthusiasm (Ex. 19:21-24 cp. 20:18). Likewise the Angel told Moses that the people would hear him, "and believe thee for ever" (Ex. 19:9). Things turned out the opposite. At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21).

3:4 Let God be true- Paul is continually using legal language. Let God be found [in a legal sense, through legal, forensic analysis] true [Gk.] and faithful by man's judgment of God. The amazing statement in 3:3- that God remains faithful even when we are not- is hard to believe. Paul understands our internal doubts as to the extent of God's grace as man effectively putting God in the dock and trying the veracity of His claims. In one of the finest paradoxes of all, Paul will go on in Romans to use this very legal language to describe how God the judge as it were turns it all around, puts man, us sinners, in the dock, and justifies us the humanly unjustifiable.

Every man a liar- in that our false accusations against the real extent of God's saving grace are exposed as untrue and lies.

That You may be justified- God comes through the trial of His grace by doubting man as justified, declared right. And yet this very term is what Paul uses to describe how God declares us righteous in His judgment of us. We judge God, but in the end, God judges us.

And overcome when You are brought to judgment [Gk.]- "Overcome" is the legal word for winning a case in court. It is our doubts as to the extent of God's grace, that He abides faithful even

throughout our unfaithfulness, which is effectively our bringing God to court, to judgment. Paul is here quoting Ps. 51:4, which were David's words of reflection upon his sin unto death, and God's forgiveness of him. He reflected that he had sinned *so that* God might be justified when He is brought to judgment by us. Again we are up against an amazing grace. God uses our sin, our doubt of His forgiveness, in order to declare Himself yet more righteous when He is put in the dock to answer against our false charges: 'Is He really able to forgive me *that*? Will He really not hold *this* eternally against me? Will I *really* be saved, sinner that I am? Can God really accept *me* after what I have done, all I have failed to do as I should, all I have not been...?'. These are the kinds of questions with which we accuse God. Effectively the case against God's grace is that He will *not* actually forgive, justify and save weak sinners. And He gloriously wins the case against us. And He even uses our sin, as He used David's (who becomes a figure of us all), in order to prove this to us and to the world. And so, in a matchless logical *tour de force*, Paul triumphs in 3:5: "Our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God", just as David sinned *so that* God's righteousness would be declared.

3:5 *Our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God*- see on Rom. 3:4 "And overcome...". God commends His love to us in that when we were still sinners, Christ died for us, the just for unjust (Rom. 5:8). Thus on all sides we have God's saving love commended to us- by our own unrighteousness on the one hand, and by God's self-commendation of His desire to save us through giving His Son to die for us, taking the initiative whilst we were as yet unborn and still from His perspective "sinners". The Greek for "commend" means literally to place beside, e.g. Lk. 9:32 "the men that *stood with him*". God and man come to stand together in that court room. Our unrighteousness and His righteousness stand together. The accused [God] comes to stand together with the accusers [our doubts, sinful man]; and then the roles change, God becomes the accuser and we become the accused, and He through His love comes to again stand with us, having condemned and yet then justified us. Truly, even under inspiration, Paul is lost for words: "What shall we say?".

David recognized that God works through our sinfulness- he is effectively saying in Ps. 51:4: 'I sinned so that You might be justified...'. These words are quoted in Rom. 3:4,5 in the context of Paul's exultation that " *our* unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God" - in just the same way as David's did! Because God displays His righteousness every time He justifies a repentant sinner, He is in a sense making Himself yet more righteous. We must see things from God's perspective, from the standpoint of giving glory to God's righteous attributes. If we do this, then we can see through the ugliness of sin, and come to terms with our transgressions the more effectively. And Paul quotes David's sin with Bathsheba as our supreme example in this. We along with all the righteous ought to "shout for joy" that David really was forgiven (Ps. 32:11)- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. And yet the intensity of David's repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord's grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). Notice too how Ps. 51:1 "Have mercy on me, O God..." is quoted by the publican in Lk. 18:13. He felt that David's prayer and situation was to be his. And he is held up as the example for each of us.

Taketh vengeance- another legal term- 'to judicially afflict'. God would not be and is not wrong to press the case against our sin to its final term- vengeance, wrath, as will be seen at the final judgment. Would He be wrong to do this to us? Of course not.

3:6 God will indeed take vengeance, press the legal case to its ultimate end, in condemning the unbelieving world. The judgment against sin cannot be minimized just because we know that it will not in fact be meted out upon those who believe in Christ- see on Rom. 3:5. I prefer to translate this verse as an exclamation: "Because how much [i.e. 'how severely!'] shall God judge the world!".

3:7 *The Truth of God*- the profound truth of Rom. 3:4, that God is willing and eager to save sinners, to remain faithful when we are unfaithful (3:3).

Abounded through my lie unto His glory- this is the same idea as in 3:5, that our unrighteousness actually commends the righteousness of God. Every man is a liar, a false accuser of God's grace (3:4) in that we all doubt the reality of God's saving grace for me personally. And Paul focuses on himself- he along with every man is one of those liars. Yet his doubt, his false accusation of God's saving grace, only abounds unto God's glory, in that God will and is finally justified in all this by forgiving, justifying and saving us.

Why yet am I also judged as a sinner?- A reference to how his opponents judged him as a sinner. But as he elsewhere says, we are to pay no attention to how men judge us, because the only judgment worth anything is God's (1 Cor. 4:3). If we are judged and justified by God, so what how men judge us?

3:8 Paul's opponents repeated the gossip ["we be slanderously reported"] and fabricated primary evidence that they had actually heard Paul say ["and... affirm"] that therefore we should sin so that blessing would come from God. Note the legal language again- they were as it were putting Paul in the dock and making affirmations against him. Vilification is something which every preacher and teacher of the Gospel has to put up with, and we shouldn't be surprised when we encounter it. Paul speaks of such slanderers and word twisters in very tough terms: "Whose damnation is just". This of course is in the context of his having just pointed out that the legal condemnation of the unbelieving world is just and right. He perceived his critics within the ecclesia as actually being in the unbelieving world. He also sees their damnation as a present thing- human behaviour is played out before the judgment seat of God right now. It's not that He is unaware of it and will only consider it at the future judgment seat. Slandorous words and fabricated evidence against God's children is seen as an 'affirmation' made in the Divine court- and it will be judged with damnation.

To God, slanderers and false teachers within the ecclesia already are given their condemnation (Rom. 3:8). "The Lord shall judge the people... God judgeth (present tense) the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day... he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows" (Ps. 7:8,11-13). God is now judging men, and preparing their final reward. For the wicked, the arrow is prepared in the bow, the sword is sharpened- all waiting for the final day in which the present judgments will be executed.

3:9- see on Rom. 2:4.

Are we better than they?- RV "in better case", do we have a better legal case than them? The "they" could be the Gentiles- as if Paul is saying that we Jews have no better case than the Gentiles. In this case our retranslation of Rom. 3:1 [see there] would be the more justified- for Paul would be saying that actually Jews have no real advantage over Gentiles. But the "they" contextually would more comfortably refer to the unbelieving world (3:6). We have no better case than them, because both Jew and Gentile are all sinners.

We have proved- to legally accuse, RV "laid to the charge". It is in fact God who does the accusing; but Paul for a moment sees us as on His side, accusing all humanity, ourselves included, of sin.

All under sin- Paul alludes here when he says that "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). And yet he also draws the contrast between being "under the law" and now after baptism being "under grace" (Rom. 6:14). Paul sees himself from outside himself when he says that he has legally accused all men of being sinners- and he includes himself in that mass of humanity. Repeatedly, he wishes to emphasize that he too is a sinner and not, as the teacher, somehow separate from sinful humanity. He sets a great example to every teacher and preacher in the ecclesia. For he previously warned against the human tendency to assume that what happens to all men will somehow not happen to *me* (Rom. 2:2,3).

Paul speaks of both Jew and Gentile as being "under the power of sin" (Rom. 3:9 RSV) – which in itself suggests that he saw "sin" personified as a power. If sin is indeed personified by the Bible

writers – what real objection can there be to the idea of this personification being at times referred to as ‘Satan’, the adversary? It has been argued that Paul was well aware of the concept of dualism which the Jews had picked up in Babylonian captivity, i.e. the idea that there is a ‘Satan’ god opposed to the true God; but he reapplies those terms to the conflict he so often describes between flesh and spirit, which goes on within the human mind.

3:10 The quotation from Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3 is about the fools who say in their heart that there is no God. Yet Paul applies this to every one of us, himself included. What he’s doing here is similar to what he does at the end of Romans 1- he speaks of the grossest sins such as lesbianism and reasons that we are all in essence guilty and condemned as serious sinners before God. Here he quotes passages which speak of effective atheism and applies them to us all, himself included- even though atheism was abhorrent to the Jews, and Paul may have seemed the last person to be an atheist. But the ‘atheism’ of Ps. 14:1 occurs within the psychological thought processes of the human mind- the fool says in his heart that there is no God. In the context of Romans, Paul is arguing that we call God a liar when we disbelieve His offer of justification and salvation. To deny this is to effectively say in our hearts that there is no God. If God is, then He is a Saviour God. To deny that He will save me is effectively to say He doesn’t exist; for a God who won’t save me may as well not exist. Far too many people claim some level of belief in God’s existence, but in their hearts deny Him, in that they personally doubt whether His promised salvation is really true for me.

3:11 *none that understands*- in the context, understands, perceives, the reality that God will really save me.

Seeks after- translating the Hebraism for ‘to worship’. Nobody really grasps the reality of personal salvation and falls to the ground in worship as they should. If we would only let ourselves go and realize that His desire to save me is greater than my failure, that my sin is no barrier to His grace- we would be the most ecstatic and profoundly devoted worshippers of Him. But actually nobody really is like this, for their faith is not total and therefore their worship cannot be either, whatever outward appearance of ecstasy and profound expressions it may appear to have, in lyrics and music.

3:12 *All gone... together become*- although quoting still from Ps. 14:1-3, the idea is very similar to “we like sheep have gone astray” (Is. 53:6). We sin because of our group mentality, the influence of others is so strong upon us, we sin because we are sheep who follow the rest of the flock rather than stand alone against sin. Peer pressure is simply far stronger than we can ever imagine. In the context, Paul is reading “all” and “together” as meaning that both Jew and Gentile have alike gone astray, united and undivided in their joint sinfulness, no matter how they may culturally differ in the flesh.

None that does good- the Greek word essentially means profitable, useful. The contrast is with how we are all become “unprofitable”- none is profitable to God. It’s not that nobody ever does any good deed; rather the idea is that we are like the vine tree, not useful of ourselves to God (Ez. 15:2-6) unless He justifies us and makes us useful in His service.

3:13 *throat... tongue... deceit... lips*- the connection is surely with how Paul has said that all men, himself included, are liars (3:4,7). Yet the lie he had there in view was the lie that God will not save me, will not and cannot justify me as He has promised. And in this we falsely accuse God, putting Him in the dock. Paul talks of this in the harshest of language here, as if we are poison spitters, the seed of the serpent, in how we speak against God. This is a theme with Paul- to use exaggerated and extreme language about our disbelief and sinfulness.

Because of God's abhorrence of sin, sins of ignorance were still counted as offences against God, requiring atonement. This should really humble us- *if we are sensitive to this fact*. It therefore follows that we should lift up our voice for understanding of God's ways, for ignorant sin is still sin to Him- even though His judgment of us may possibly take into account our level of appreciation. In this context we should also be aware that God remembers unforgiven sin. Over time we can forget

that we cursed our wife on 6.6.96 or whenever and never bowed down in repentance. But He doesn't. The haziness of our memories can work as a kind of pseudo-atonement for us. With Him there is no distinction between past and present and future. The sin remains before Him. By the law comes the knowledge of sin *to men*, but this doesn't mean they aren't culpable for those sins before God (Rom. 3:20; 7:7)- for sins of ignorance still needed atonement. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 3:13) most likely means, in this light, that it is not imputed by those who do the sin. But God still notices... We only have to consider the passion of Peter's appeal to Israel in Acts 3:17-19: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did your rulers... repent ye *therefore*". His Jewish hearers would immediately have spotted the allusion back to the Mosaic protocol about what to do when you and your rulers realized you'd committed sins of ignorance. But the sacrifice required was now not an animal- it was the sacrifice of a broken heart and a baptism into Jesus.

It should be noted that verses 13-18 are quoting from the Septuagint of Psalm 14- they aren't found in the Hebrew text. Time and again the inspired New Testament writers quote from the LXX rather than the Hebrew Masoretic text, often preferring the LXX over the MT, and in this case accepting the LXX addition of verses which the MT omits. It's hard to gauge the wider significance of this. The LXX versions of the genealogies in Genesis would, e.g., not support the contention that the Genesis 1 creation occurred 4000 years before the birth of Christ.

3:14 This and Rom. 3:16 especially could be appropriate to the descriptions of the rejected at the day of judgment. The idea being that we are all rejected, for we are all sinners; but by grace, the believers in Christ have been declared righteous. We seem to have Paul declaring the sinfulness of humanity in the most graphic terms he can- quoting verses which immediately trigger the reaction: "But that's not quite true of me. I may be a sinner, but I don't do *that*", e.g. cursing and blaspheming all day long. I think this is intentional; for Paul writes very sensitive to his audience's likely reaction. It's similar to how he speaks about the grossest moral sins such as lesbianism in chapter 1, and then proceeds to count us all guilty in essence. It's a powerful device to try to highlight to us all the extent of human sinfulness.

3:15 *Shed blood*- Paul may be quoting this and applying it to us all in the sense that he gave full weight to the Lord's teaching that the hateful thought is as bad as murder. Or he may be wishing to shock us with the extent of our sinful position (see on Rom. 3:14).

Eliphaz thought there were only a few very sinful people in the world (Job 15:35); but His words are quoted by the Spirit in Is. 59:4 concerning the whole nation of Israel; and this in turn is quoted in Rom. 3:15-17 concerning the whole human race. This same path of progressive realization of our sinfulness must be trodden by each faithful individual, as well as on a communal level.

3:16 *destruction*- Gk. 'a dashing to pieces', perhaps an allusion to how the stone of Messiah's second coming would dash the kingdoms of men to pieces at His return (Dan. 2:45; Rev. 2:27). But sinners are going now in way of such destruction. Damnation begins now- in the way of life people chose to live.

Misery- the wretchedness of the condemned. But remember Paul is applying this to us all, as apart from Christ we are all sinners, even now living out our future condemnation. Yet Paul uses the very word about himself in Rom. 7:24: "O wretched [s.w. miserable] man that I am...", going on to exalt that Christ has saved him from that position, that misery, the misery of the condemned sinner. What is true of all humanity is true of Paul too- he repeatedly emphasizes his own personal share in the condemned human situation.

3:17 *The way of peace have they not known*- Remember that Paul is writing to Christians who have known God's ways, convicting them that they with him are, naturally speaking, condemned and the most wretched of sinners. "Peace" in Paul's thought nearly always refers to peace with God through forgiveness and salvation in Christ. It is this which they have not known all the time they refuse to really believe that they have been forgiven and justified in Christ.

3:18 *No fear of God*- Again, the language appropriate to the most hardened, atheistic blasphemer is being applied to all men, including Paul and all in Christ. This is Paul's attempt to shock us into a deeper realization of how serious our position is as sinners. He has already convicted us of in essence being lesbians and homosexuals in chapter 1; he has applied the language of atheists to us in Rom. 1:28; 3:10. And now he as it were crowns it all by quoting a description of the very dregs of human society, who live with no fear of God, and applying it to us- we who fear His judgment and condemnation in our faithlessness that His grace is enough to save us. It's a paradox- if we fear God's judgment, not believing in His grace, then we are categorized along with those who have *no* fear of God.

Although I have argued that Paul is quoting from the LXX of Psalm 14 here in Rom. 3:13-18, it would seem that this verse is also quoting Ps. 36:1: "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes". This has a strange appropriacy. David says that the sin of the wicked is speaking within *his* [David's] heart. This is the same spirit in which Paul is applying the descriptions of the very worst of humanity and admitting that in essence, this is what is going on within *his* heart and within the heart of every man. Truly, bad man only do what good mean dream of.

3:19 "The law" here seems to be used in the Rabbinic sense of 'the OT scriptures'. There seems no sense if Paul is saying that the Law, the Scriptures he has just quoted, speak only to those "under the law", and that therefore the whole world is condemned and guilty before God. I think we have to read in some ellipses here; the Message seems to get it right: "This makes it clear, doesn't it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place!". This would be continuing the theme of 2:2,3- that we are not to give in to the human tendency to assume that the consequences for all men because of sin will somehow not come upon us personally. See also on Rom. 2:21.

Those verses Paul has just quoted, speaking of the worst of sinners, apply to us all (3:9,10). Paul realizes we are prone to respond that no, that's not quite me... I'm not *that* bad. And so he has warned: "Whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about *others* but to *us*" [The Message]. The intention is that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God". The Greek for "stopped", according to Vine, refers to "the effect of overwhelming evidence upon an accused party in court". It is the speechlessness of the rejected of which the Lord speaks in Mt. 22:12. Each of us should so know our sinfulness that we really feel as if we are standing at the judgment seat of Christ and have been condemned. We, along with all the world, "become guilty", become sentenced [Gk.] before His judgment seat, right now. Only by having some sense of this will we be able to have any emotion of relief, joy, gratitude, praise, exaltation etc. at the wonder of having been declared right, accepted, by God's grace in Christ.

We can however interpret "the law" as the Law of Moses. Its' purpose was "so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). Paul is quoting here from Ps. 63:11: "the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped". He's reasoning that because we're all sinners, we're all liars- for untruth is the essence of sin. We are not being true to ourselves, to God, to His word, to our brethren... we profess covenant relationship with God, to be His people, and yet we fail to keep the terms of that covenant. And the Law of Moses convicted all God's people of this, and in this way led them to the need for Christ. Yet Is. 52:15 prophesied that the crucified Jesus would result in men shutting their mouths. The righteousness and perfection displayed there in one Man, the very human Lord Jesus, has the same effect upon us as the Law of Moses- we shut our mouths, convicted of sin.

Rom. 3:19 (A.V.mg.) defines "all the world" as those "subject to the judgment of God" - which is only the responsible. The Lord Jesus took away the sin "of the world", but the Jews died in their sins; "the world" whose sins were taken away is therefore the world of believers. "Every knee shall bow to me... every tongue shall confess... so then every one of us shall give account" (Rom.

14:11,12) is another example- 'all men', 'every man' means 'every one of us the responsible'. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men" (Tit. 2:11)- certainly not to every human being that has ever lived; but to the "all men" of the new creation. For not "all men" will be saved. The Lord tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9)- for every one who has a representative part in His sacrifice through baptism. Christ "reconciled the world" in that He obtained forgiveness for us (2 Cor. 5:19)- we are "the world" which was reconciled, we are the "all things" purged by His blood (Heb. 9:22). 1 Cor. 4:9 seems to make a difference between "the world" and "men", as if Paul is using "the world" here as meaning 'the world of believers'. The Lord was "a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6), although it was only us, the redeemed, who were ransomed by Him out of sin's slavery (Lk. 1:68; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 8:13; Rev. 5:9; 14:3,4). The "all flesh" upon whom the Spirit was poured out in the first century was clearly enough a reference to those who believed and were baptized (Acts 2:17).

Sodom being a type of latter day events, it is not surprising that Scripture provides a wealth of detail concerning Sodom. The Genesis record summarizes what we glean from later revelation by saying that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen.13:13). "Before the Lord" recalls the earth being "corrupt before God" prior to the flood (Gen.6:11), another clear type of the last days. Indeed their sin being "before the Lord" may hint that Lot (or Abraham?) had preached God's requirements to them, and therefore they were consciously disobeying Him. Thus Rom.3:19 speaks of the world becoming "guilty before God" by reason of their having the opportunity to know God's word (cp. Rom.2:12,13).

3:20 *Therefore*- because we are convicted sinners facing condemnation, no good works we do in other areas can change the outcome nor displace the sins we have already committed. 'Just' one sin brings death, as evidenced by the sin of Adam and Eve. "Guilty before God" in 3:19 is reflected by "[not] justified in His sight" in 3:20. Because we are already standing dumbstruck and declared guilty before Him, we cannot be now declared right, it can't all be made OK, by doing some other good works according to that same system of law parts of which we broke. If you murder your neighbor and stand in court condemned for it, you can't put it all right by then doing the good deed of mowing your other neighbour's lawn and taking his garbage to the dump. Indeed, trying to obey "the law" in one aspect isn't going to declare us right when that same system of law condemns us. The only possible way to 'get right' would be to somehow get to the judge through another paradigm than obedience or disobedience to the law. And this is exactly what Paul is building up to. For the Judge of all the earth Himself thought up such a way. Seeing that "by the law is the knowledge of sin", or as 1 Cor. 15:56 puts it "the strength of sin is the law", a way simply has to be found for our salvation which doesn't depend upon our obedience or disobedience to the law.

3:21 *The righteousness of God*- a poor translation which is out of harmony with the context of 3:20 [see there]. The idea is that the justification of God, the way God sets a person right, without reference to the law, outside the paradigm of law- is in fact revealed (RV "has been manifested", already) within the Old Testament prophets and the Law of Moses itself. The Old Testament scriptures are described with yet another legal term- they are right now witnessing in court, attesting. It's as if we stood in the dock condemned and silent before God; but then the very law which we had broken and the Scriptures themselves take the witness box- and offer a way for us to be declared right.

3:22 God's way of putting us right operates through our faith in [RV, Gk.] Jesus Christ, which Paul will later define more concretely in chapter 6 as baptism into His death and resurrection; for this is what constitutes in the first instance our believing into Christ. Whoever, any human being, who believes into Him will be counted right by God. And therefore "all", "any", who believe will be saved, there is no difference or distinction between them in terms of their being Jew or Gentile. The same word is used in this connection in Rom. 10:12.

3:23 *For all*- the context suggests that the enormity of our condemned position before God should mean that we do not uphold any human distinctions between us, e.g. on ethnic grounds. Perceiving the enormity of our sin, how we are all in this together, and the wonder of God's saving grace, ought to be the most powerful inspiration to unity known to humanity. The "all" who have sinned could refer to 'all believers in Christ' which is the subject of the preceding verse 3:22; and 3:24 suggests that this same "all" are those who are justified freely by His grace.

Come short of the glory of God- We have all already sinned [aorist past tense] and we do now [present tense] fall short of God's glory, i.e. the complete perfection, the glory of God which was seen in the person of His Son (2 Cor. 4:6). God declared His glory to Moses in terms of His character (Ex. 33:18 cp. Ex. 34:4-6). We fall short of that perfection of the Father's character which was revealed in its fullness in His Son. Heb. 12:15 uses the same Greek word for "come / fall short" in warning lest any man "fail / fall short of the grace of God". We come far short of God's glory, but we are not to fall short of His grace whereby the righteousness of His Son, His glory, is counted to us and we are thereby declared right with Him. Jewish writings such as the Apocalypse of Moses 20.2 and 21.6 claimed that Adam "came short of the glory of God" by his sin in Eden; Paul is clearly alluding to this and is saying that Adam is everyman, we each are as Adam in Eden, with the tidal wave of realization breaking upon us as to the seriousness and eternal consequence of our so easily committed sin. It must be remembered that the Jewish writings frequently paralleled Adam with Israel (N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991) pp. 18-40 for documentation). But Paul is arguing that Adam is every single human being, not just Israel. For Adam was created well before Israel, and all humanity are his offspring, not just Israel. The universal experience of sinfulness therefore leads to the offer of God's grace to all types of human being, not just Israel; and there will be an ensuing unity between those who believe in this grace, regardless of their ethnic background.

The Bible itself continually reflects a distinction in the mind of God between the person and the behaviour, the sin and the sinner. When we allow ourselves to be offended and to offend others, we have ceased to make that differentiation. We so easily equate the person and their behaviour, and thus they offend us. Consider how we are in the habit of saying: "We're all sinners". You may think I'm being pedantic, but Rom. 3:23 says otherwise- that "all have sinned". And there's a slight and subtle difference. We have committed sin, and therefore we can be called sinners. But the Biblical focus is on the action committed rather than the branding of the person with a label.

3:24 *freely*- Gk. 'without a cause / reason, as a gift'. We are justified, declared right in our court case, for no reason. This declaring right is therefore by the purest grace imaginable. The same word is used of how we should freely, without a human reason, preach the Gospel (Mt. 10:8; 2 Cor. 11:7); our receipt of such a "free" salvation should naturally inspire us to share it with others in the same spirit. Any form of charging for the Gospel, getting personal benefit or glory out of sharing it with others, is absolutely outlawed. The free nature of the grace we have received must be reflected in our sharing it with others in the same spirit; God's giving to us has to be translated in our giving to others. Sharing the Gospel isn't, therefore, an irksome duty, something we salve our conscience with, something we are asked to participate in by a church leadership team; but a natural personal outflowing of the free gift we have received.

The redemption- We are declared right here and now, we receive redemption in that our sins are forgiven (Eph. 1:7); but redemption is in fact a process, culminating in the redemption of our body at the return of Christ, the final change from mortality to immortality in a corporeal, literal sense (s.w. Rom. 8:23), in "the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

3:25 *Set forth* - "Whom God put forward as a place of atonement by his blood" (NRSV margin) seems to be the right sense. The reference is to the mercy seat, not to the sacrificed animal. Vincent comments: "The word is used by Herodotus of exposing corpses (v. 8); by Thucydides of exposing the bones of the dead (ii. 34)". The sense of public display is picked up later in the verse in the word

“declare”. Crucifixion is by its very nature a public event. There was once a doctor in Paraguay who spoke out against human rights abuses. Local police took their revenge by torturing his teenage son to death. The local people wanted to stage a huge protest march, but the father disallowed them and chose another means of protest. At the funeral, the father displayed his son’s body as it was when retrieved from jail- naked, scarred from electric shocks, cigarette burns and beatings. And the body was displayed not in a coffin but on the blood-soaked prison mattress. This public display of a body was the most powerful witness and incitement possible. And the public nature of the display of God’s tortured son was for the same basic reason. “He was manifested, that he might put sins away” (1 Jn. 3:5) could suggest that in His atoning death, ‘He’ was manifested. There God set forth Jesus in His blood, for all to see and respond to (Rom. 3:25 Gk.). There the real essence of Jesus was publicly shown forth. And there we come to know what love is (1 Jn. 3:16).

A propitiation- the Greek word doesn’t *have* to mean “mercy seat” / atonement cover, with reference to the ark, even though this is how it is translated in Hebrews. The idea is essentially a place of atonement or the atonement victim, the sacrificed animal. Instead of that place of blood sprinkling been hidden away on the top of the atonement cover, the ark of the covenant within the Most Holy Place which the High Priest saw only once per year, God through the cross set forth publically, He declared, the place of atonement to be in the very publically displayed blood of His Son. The public nature of crucifixion therefore was appropriate. The Son of Man had to be, therefore, “lifted up” (Jn. 3:14) so that He could and can be believed in. Rom. 3:25 states that the Lord in His death was “set forth to be a propitiation”. Graham Jackman comments: “Though the primary meaning of the word ‘set forth’ (*protithemi*) seems to be that of ‘determining’ or ‘purposing’, another sense, albeit not in the New Testament, is said to be that of exposing the bodies of the dead to public view, as in a lying in state”. See on Mk. 15:29.

To declare- see on “set forth”. But the word also carries the sense of setting forth evidence, proof. The legal flavor could possibly suggest that the blood of Christ, His death upon the cross, is brought forth as a proof in the court case that actually, we really have been declared in the right. Whilst Christ’s death was multifactorial, it would be true to say that God could have saved us any way He chose, without being forced, as it were, to have a begotten Son who was publically crucified. Maybe He did this because He so so wishes us to believe, and He wanted to commend His love in all its depth and costliness as publically as possible, so that we would indeed perceive and believe it.

God’s method of declaring us right deals with the sins “that are past”, for which we stand condemned before His judgment seat with no way to make amends; and also “at this time” (3:26), right now, we are declared righteous by status, declared in the right, if we are believers into Jesus.

Forbearance- We shall all be saved by the forbearance of God, hence we should not deny to others the forbearance of God. Hence in Rom. 2:4 the same word is used, in stating that those who condemn their brethren are despising the forbearance of God, in that they are assuming that His forbearance can’t apply to the person whom they have condemned. If we are saved by God’s gracious forbearance, it’s not for us to deny this to another.

3:26 Declare... at this time- see on Rom. 3:25.

That He might be just- the whole process of justifying sinners is achieved without infringing upon the justice and integrity of God. Quite how... isn’t explained (although I am aware of many attempts to explain it, but they all seem to fail). I think we are asked to accept this on faith.

And the justifier- God’s plan of declaring us right takes care of our past sins (Rom. 3:25), right now “at this time” declares us right, and will justify us at the coming day of judgment.

In Jesus- It’s rare for Paul to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as simply “Jesus” with no title. Perhaps he is trying to bring out the simplicity of it all- that by believing in the very human Jesus, a man of our nature with one of the commonest names amongst first century Palestinian Jews, i.e. ‘Jesus’, we really can be declared right before God.

3:27 *Boasting*- the Jewish boasting about obedience to the Mosaic Law of Rom. 2:17. If we are saved by grace, any feelings of superiority are excluded. “It is excluded” is a mild way of translating the aorist- the sense is that boasting has once for all been cut off, ended, excluded; by the death of Christ, and by that moment when we believed into Christ, and stood declared righteous before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul must refer to boasting in a wrong sense, a boasting in our works and obedience; for he uses the word quite often in his letters of his boasting of God’s grace, and of the faithfulness of other brethren which had been inspired by that grace (e.g. 2 Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:4; 11:10,17).

By what law? Of works?- Boasting in the sense of feeling superior to others hasn’t been excluded by law, i.e. it’s not that we no longer boast because there’s a law that says ‘You shall not boast’. It has been cut off by the law or principle of salvation by faith rather than works. This simple reality, that we really are saved, not by works but by faith in God’s grace through Jesus, is so powerful that it quite naturally excludes boasting.

3:28- see on Rom. 2:26.

We conclude- the legal sense of the word refers to the summing up of a court case. Here again, Paul assumes the role of judge. The summary of the case is that a man is declared right by God on account of his faith in God’s grace and the blood of Christ. This is “without”, quite apart from, any acts of obedience to law.

3:29 *God of the Jews only?* Paul brings out the practical implications of the doctrine of justification by faith in God’s grace. Seeing that all men are sinners, and the basis of salvation is our faith in His grace through the blood of Christ- there can be no basic division between believers. God becomes “the God” of those He has saved, that seems to be implication- and so He isn’t the God of only the Jews.

The Roman concept of *religio* allowed each subject nation to have their own gods, so long as the cult of the emperor was also worshipped. But Rom. 3:29 states that the God of Israel was the one God of the Gentiles too. This is in sharp distinction to the way the Romans thought of the god of the Jews as just another national deity. Caesar was king of many subject kings, Lord of many conquered and inferior lords. In this we see the radical challenge of 1 Tim. 6:15,16: that Jesus Christ is the *only* potentate, the Lord of Lords, the King of all Kings.

3:30 *It is one God*- the belief which the Jews held most dear; they felt that their monotheism divided them from the rest of the world. But it is the fact that there’s only one God which binds together Jew and Gentile believers in Christ; for that one God justifies each human being on the same basis. The seriousness of our personal positions and the wonder of His saving grace is such that any ethnic difference between us becomes irrelevant.

By faith... through faith. The Greek words *ek* [“by”] and *dia* [“through”] may simply be being used in parallel, meaning effectively the same thing, as they are in Gal. 2:16. “The circumcision” refers to Jewish Christians who believed; “the uncircumcision” is perhaps also a technical term, in this context, for believing Christian Gentiles.

That God is one is not just a numerical description. If there is only one God, He therefore demands our *all*. Because He is the One God, He demands all our worship; and because He is One, He therefore treats all His people the same, regardless, e.g., of their nationality (Rom. 3:30). All true worshippers of the one God, whether Jew or Gentile, are united in that the one God offers salvation to them on the same basis. The fact there is only one Lord Jesus implies the same for Him (Rom. 10:12). Paul saw these implications in the doctrine of the unity of God. But that doctrine needs reflecting on before we come to grasp these conclusions.

Paul, writing to those who thought they believed in the unity of God, had to remind them that this simple fact implies the need for unity amongst us His children, seeing He treats us all equally as a

truly good Father: " If so be that God is one... he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and [likewise] the uncircumcision through faith" (Rom. 3:30 RV). Unity amongst us is inspired by the fact that God seeks to be one with us, exactly because He is Himself 'unity', one in Himself. The Rabbis have always been at pains to point out the somewhat unusual grammar in the record of creation in Genesis 1, which literally translated reads: "One day... a second day... a third day", rather than 'One day... two days... three days', as we'd expect if 'Day one' solely referred to 'firstness' in terms of time. "The first day" (Gen. 1:5) therefore means more strictly 'the day of unity', in that it refers to how the one God sought unity with earth. "*Yom ehad*, one day, really means the day which God desired to be *one* with man... the unity of God is a concern for the unity of the world".

3:31 *Make void*- Consider where the same word is used in the context of showing that the Law has indeed been 'made void' or done away: Rom. 7:2, we are "loosed" from the Law, "delivered from the Law" (Rom. 7:6), the Law was "done away" (2 Cor. 3:11), "abolished" (2 Cor. 3:13), "done away" (2 Cor. 3:14), "abolished... the law of commandments" (Eph. 2:15). Clearly enough, the Law is indeed "made void"- by the death of Christ. The emphasis should therefore be on the fact that it is not *us* ("we"), who made it void. We as lawbreakers have no right to simply abrogate Divine Law, to void it because we broke it and we want to avoid the consequences. It can only be done by the Divine lawmaker and His Son. Our faith in Him and His saving grace doesn't mean that *we* make the law void; we by our sinfulness and acceptance of it do in fact establish or 'make to stand' Divine law. Paul is anticipating the objections of his Jewish audience- that he was teaching that sinners could merely abrogate the Law they had broken. We sense how on the back foot Paul was- his critics must have been persistent, and his stress level must have been very high by constantly seeking to anticipate their objections and parry them [did he actually need to have done this?]. By believing in God's grace in Christ and not trying to get justification from keeping the Law of Moses, we are in a strange way fulfilling the "righteousness of the law" (Rom. 8:4). It may be that Paul here is using "law" as a reference to the Old Testament scriptures generally, which he has been quoting so freely to prove his point (he uses "law" like this in Rom. 3:19,21; although "law" in the first half of 3:31 seems to refer to the Mosaic Law specifically).

"Think not that I am come to destroy ("to make void", Darby's Translation) the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mt. 5:17) has some kind of unconscious, hard to define link with Rom. 3:31:" Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law". The Greek words for "destroy" and "make void" are different; yet the similarity of phrasing and reasoning is so similar. I can't pass this off as chance, yet neither can I say there is a conscious allusion here. There is, therefore, what I will call an 'unconscious link' here.

4:1 *What shall we say* - Paul's frequent "What then shall we say to this?" occurs at least 5 times in Romans alone (Rom. 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14,30)- and this is the classic phrase used by Jewish teachers at the end of presenting their argument to their students. Seeing then that Paul writes in a rabbinic way, as if He is giving a stream of *Midrash* on earlier, familiar writings [e.g. the words of Jesus or the Old Testament], we should be looking for how he may quote or allude to just a word or two from the Lord, and weave an interpretation around them.

Abraham our father- Paul was writing to Jewish and Gentile believers. Yet he speaks of "our" father as if he's writing mainly to Jews here- but see on Rom. 4:11. Alternatively, it could be that Paul in wishing to be as personal as possible in addressing his readers is referring to Abraham as "our father" in the sense that he personally was Jewish. Paul in this section is now exemplifying what he has taught so far in Romans from the example of Abraham. This whole 'Abraham' section is written in the style of Rabbinic *Midrash*, with Gen. 15:6 as the verse being expounded. Paul's point is that Jewish and Gentile believers can trace themselves back to Abraham because the family likeness is in faith not circumcision. Jewish proselytes were forbidden to call Abraham "our father"- C.K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last* (New York: Scribner's, 1962) p. 31.

As pertaining to the flesh- the same Greek phrase is used five times in Romans 8 in the negative sense of “according to the flesh”. The suggestion may be that walking according to the flesh rather than the Spirit was related to placing meaning on the fact that Abraham was a fleshly ancestor. Being or emphasizing ones’ Jewishness was therefore related to *unspirituality*, whereas the Jews thought that being Jewish was a sign of spirituality. Paul’s style was so radical, but then so are the demands of the grace which has saved us.

Has found- in the context of Rom. 3:27,28, what has he found to boast / glory about? The answer is- nothing, according to his works.

4:2 *If Abraham were justified by works*- as the Jews said he was. Jubilees 23:10: “Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well pleasing in righteousness”. Indeed some of the Jewish writings claimed Abraham never sinned.

Whereof to glory- alluding to Sirach 44:19, which says about Abraham in the context of his good works: “None has been found like him in glory”. This allusion to and deconstruction of other writings is something which Paul does quite often- and probably even more frequently, if we had access to more first century texts from which to perceive his allusions. Significantly, Sirach is in the Apocrypha, but Paul evidently disagrees with the book and shows it teaches wrongly about Abraham. This would possibly confirm the Protestant tradition of rejecting the Apocryphal books as inspired, although the recorded words of men in the canonical books are also of course quoted and deconstructed. But the quotation from Sirach is from the actual words of Ben Sira, which are claimed to be directly inspired.

But not before God- Before the judgment throne of God, of which Paul has been speaking in chapter 3, especially 3:19. He demonstrated there that all humanity, Abraham included, stand shamed and speechless before God. The idea that Abraham was sinless is therefore disputed strongly by Paul. The Greek phrase “before God” occurs several times in Romans. Because we are justified by faith, we have peace “before God” [AV “with God”, Rom. 5:1]. The practical section of Romans brings out what we ought to do, therefore, with that position- Paul prayed for Israel “before God” (AV “to God”, Rom. 10:1), and he urges the believers to likewise pray “before God” (AV “to God”, Rom. 15:30). If we are justified, declared right before God by grace, then as we stand there in His presence with His gracious acceptance, we ought to from that place beg His mercy for others. This is the practical outcome of the courtroom parable. We stand there accepted, with the judge lovingly smiling at us in gracious acceptance, with nothing now laid to our charge, declared right with God; and what should we then do? We who have peace before God should whilst before God, beg Him for mercy upon others. Job is really a working model for us in all this. He said the *wrong* things about God, as Elihu points out on God’s behalf; and yet before God’s awesome throne he was declared right, as if he had spoken what was right; and then he prays for his friends.

4:3 *What says..?*- the Bible as a living word continues to speak with us, in part of an ongoing dialogue between God and man.

Counted- the Greek word occurs very often in this section. Significantly, Rom. 3:28 says that we are to conclude [s.w. “count”] that we are justified by faith rather than works. We are to view ourselves, impute to ourselves, as God does. His view of us is to be our view of ourselves. The Septuagint uses this word with regard to sacrifices [symbolic of Christ’s death on the cross] being “reckoned” to a person (Lev. 7:18; Num. 18:27,30); and of Shimei asking David not to “reckon” his guilt to him, to judge him not according to the obvious facts of the case (2 Sam. 19:20). The Old Testament is at pains to stress that Yahweh will *not* justify the guilty (Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). This is where the unique significance of Jesus comes in. Because of *Him*, His death and our faith in it, our being in Him, God can justify the wicked in that they have died with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), they are no longer, they are only “in Christ”, for them “to live is Christ”. They are counted as in Him, and in this way sinners end up justified.

4:3-5 Abraham's weakness at the time of the Genesis 15 promises is perhaps behind how Paul interprets the star-gazing incident in Rom. 4:3-5. He is answering the Jewish idea that Abraham never sinned (see on Rom. 4:2). He quotes the incident, and God's counting of righteousness to Abraham, as proof that a man with no "works", nothing to glory before God with, can believe in God to "justify the ungodly", and thereby be counted righteous. Understanding Abraham's mood as revealed in Gen. 15:1-4 certainly helps us see the relevance of all this to Abraham. And it helps us see Abraham more realistically as the father of us all... and not some Sunday School hero, well beyond our realistic emulation. No longer need we think "Abraham? Oh, yeah, Abraham... faith... wow. But me... nah. I'm not Abraham...". He's for real, truly our example, a realistic hero whom we can cheer and pledge to follow. For Abraham is an example to us of God's grace to man, and a man in all his weakness and struggle with God accepting it and believing it, even when he is "*ungodly*", rather than a picture of a white-faced placid saint with unswerving faith:

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, hath found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not toward God. For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4:1-5).

It is in the very struggle for faith that we have that we show ourselves to have the family characteristic of Abraham. That moment when the "ungodly", doubting, bitter Abraham believed God's promise is to be as it were our icon, the picture we rise up to: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:6,7).

The struggle within Abraham at the time is brought out by Paul in Rom. 4:18-24, which seems to be a kind of psychological commentary upon the state of Abraham's mind as he stood there looking at the stars in the presence of God / an Angel ("before him [God] whom he believed", Rom. 4:17): "Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be. And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was reckoned unto him; but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead".

4:3,5 It may be that Abraham realised his own spiritual weakness at this time, if we follow Paul's argument in Rom. 4:3,5: "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory... (but) Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness... to him (alluding to Abraham) that worketh not, but believeth (as did Abraham) on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (like Abraham's) is counted for righteousness". Surely this suggests that Abraham felt *ungodly* at the time, unworthy of this great promise, recognizing he only had moments of faith, and yet he believed that although he was ungodly, God would justify him and give him the promise, and therefore he was counted as righteous and worthy of the promise. There is certainly the implication of some kind of forgiveness being granted Abraham at the time of his belief in Gen. 15:6; righteousness was imputed to him, which is tantamount to saying that his ungodliness was covered. In this context, Paul goes straight on to say that the same principles operated in the forgiveness of David for his sin with Bathsheba. It would actually appear that Paul is writing here, as he often does, with his eye on deconstructing popular Jewish views at the time. Their view of Abraham was that he was perfect, "Godly" in the extreme- and Paul's point is that actually he was not, he was "*ungodly*", but counted righteous not by his acts but by his faith. See on Phil. 3:6.

4:4 *He that works*- the same word for “works” is used in Mt. 25:16, where we are to trade or ‘work’ with our talents and will be judged for the quality of that working. The point surely is that we will be saved by grace, not works; and yet our works in response to that grace will be judged, and will determine the nature of the eternity, the salvation, which we enjoy- reigning over 10 or five or two cities etc. By a sublime paradox, the “work” we are to do is to believe in Jesus (Jn. 6:28-30). So here in Rom. 4:4 we have to again read in an ellipsis: “He that [trusts in] works [for his justification]”.

Of debt- The only other time the word occurs in the New Testament is in the request for our debts [i.e. sins] to be forgiven (Mt. 6:12). We are in debt to God, to suggest He is in debt to us is bizarre- as bizarre as thinking that we can be justified by our works rather than His grace.

4:5 *But believes*- the content of Abraham’s faith was in the promise just given him that he would have a great descendant, the Lord Jesus, who would become many. The content of our faith in Christ which results in justification is the same. Note that Abraham wasn’t presented with a complex theology of Christ which he had to say “yes” to. He was presented with very simple facts concerning Jesus- that He would be the future descendant of Abraham, and through connection with Him, blessing would be received and eternal inheritance of the earth. This is the same basic content of the faith in Christ which we are asked to have.

The ungodly- Abraham, whom the Jews argued was sinless and Godly because of his works (see on 4:2). The word is used about gross sinners (e.g. Rom. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:18). Again, Paul is using extreme language to demonstrate how serious is sin; a man like Abraham whom we would consider a Godly man was in fact ungodly- because he was a sinner.

Counted for righteousness- Paul comments that he persecuted the Christian church “zealously” (Phil. 3:6). He was alluding to the way that Phinehas is described as ‘zealous’ for the way in which he murdered an apostate Jew together with a Gentile who was leading him to sin (Num. 25). Note that the Jews in Palestine had no power to give anyone the death sentence, as witnessed not only by the record of the trial of Jesus but Josephus too (*Antiquities* 20.202; *BJ* 2.117; 6.302). Paul was a criminal murderer; and he had justified it by saying that he was the 1st Century Phinehas. Ps. 106:30 had commented upon the murder performed by Phinehas, that his zeal “was accounted to him for righteousness”. This sets the background for the converted Paul’s huge emphasis upon the fact that *faith* in Jesus is what is “reckoned for righteousness”, and it is in *this* way that God “justifies the unGodly” (Rom. 4:3-5; 5:6; Gal. 3:6). Paul is inviting us to see ourselves as him- passionately obsessed with going about our justification the *wrong* way, and having to come to the *huge* realization that righteousness is *imputed* to us by our faith in the work of Jesus.

4:6 *Blessedness of the man*- the Greek idea is of ‘beatification’, making a man into a saint. This exalted language, the kind of thing the Rabbis did only for stellar examples of spirituality like Abraham and David, is actually the process which happens to every man who believes in Christ.

I’ve often asked myself *how* exactly the Mosaic Law led people to Christ. Was it not that they were convicted by it of guilt, and cried out for a Saviour? “The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that... grace might reign... unto eternal life by Jesus” (Rom. 5:20,21). This was the purpose of the Law. And thus Paul quotes David’s rejoicing in the righteousness imputed to him when he had sinned and had no works left to do- and changes the pronoun from “he” to “they” (Rom. 4:6-8). David’s personal experience became typical of that of each of us. It was *through* the experience of that wretched and hopeless position that David and all believers come to know the true ‘blessedness’ of imputed righteousness and sin forgiven by grace. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven” (Ps. 32:1), David wrote, after experiencing God’s mercy in the matter of Bathsheba. But Paul sees this verse as David describing “the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Rom. 4:6). Each of us are in need of a like justification; therefore we find ourselves in David’s

position. The Spirit changes Ps. 32:1 ("Blessed is *he* whose transgression is forgiven") to "Blessed are *they*" (Rom. 4:7) to make the same point.

Without works- in that there was no defined sacrifice for David to offer to atone for the murder of Uriah and adultery. We stand speechless and defenceless before the judgment seat of God in the same way. Again we see Paul urging us to accept the depth of our sinfulness- the position of a man guilty of adultery and murder is that of each of us.

4:7 *Blessed*- this is perhaps the thread of connection between the examples of Abraham and David. Abraham believed God's promise of blessing (which the New Testament interprets as forgiveness and salvation, e.g. Acts 3:25,26); he received the blessing for no works he had done, but simply because he believed. David likewise received a similar blessing- just because he believed.

4:8 *blessed is the man*- connects with "blessed are *they*" (4:7). David becomes representative of us all.

Will not- a double negative in the Greek, He absolutely will not count us as sinners!

4:9 *This blessedness*- is paralleled with "righteousness" in the second half of the verse. Paul's reasoning is that Abraham was uncircumcised when he received this blessing of righteousness, therefore circumcision is irrelevant. But the implication is that Abraham received the blessing, the righteous standing, immediately upon his belief, right there and then. Because the crux of the argument is that he received these things whilst uncircumcised. We therefore should be able to rejoice here and now that we right now are counted righteous before God's judgment throne.

4:10 *How...?* – not 'When?'. How, in what manner was righteousness reckoned- obviously not thanks to circumcision.

4:11 Circumcision was a sign given as a testament or seal to the faith Abraham had before he was circumcised, the faith which justified and saved him. Circumcision itself, therefore, was nothing to do with his justification. Paul appears to be laboring his points somewhat, but he was up against a colossally strong Jewish mindset that considered circumcision itself to be what saves and defines a person as God's. The "seal" which we now have is in our foreheads, Rev. 9:4, a mental attitude, a seal stamped within our hearts by God's Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30); as such it is invisible, an internal condition rather than an external mark in the flesh. But what exactly is it? Surely if we believe the good news which Paul has been explaining, that we stand ashamed and condemned before God's judgment seat but are then declared righteous, justified and saved, standing there in the very presence of God clean and justified- this will make an indelible psychological mark upon the person who believes this. 'Once saved always saved' is too primitive a teaching- we can fall from grace. But all the same, if we have really and truly experienced this great salvation, we have the mark of it, the seal of it in our hearts, and it will become evident in our thinking and speaking and behavior in this world. Whatever we do subsequently with this grace, our experience of standing justified before God will leave as I put it, an indelible psychological mark upon us. This is what I suggest is the sealing of which the New Testament speaks. And it has to be inevitably observed that many who bear the name of Christ would appear by the way they reason and act to simply not have that indelible psychological mark upon them. Which is the value of Romans, working through the mechanics of salvation in this dense, intense manner, to bring us to the point where we too are convicted, converted and can stand rejoicing "before God", declared right.

Another angle on this is that the circumcision which we receive is to be connected with baptism (Col. 2:11-15). The cutting off of the flesh is therefore achieved by Christ operating directly on our hearts, rather than by the midwife's knife. In this case, baptism likewise would be a "seal" upon our faith in God's righteousness being counted to us in Christ; and it is this faith which is the essence of our salvation. However, Romans 6 seems to place baptism as more than a mere piece of physical symbolism of the same value as circumcision; it is the means by which a believer believes into Christ and thus becomes "in Christ", thereby having His righteousness counted to them. 1 Clement,

the Shepherd of Hermes and other early Christian writings likewise speak of baptism as the “seal” upon Christian faith.

That righteousness might be imputed to them- because Abraham is their spiritual father. Here we see the power of example. Abraham inspires our faith, and so the amazing grace of righteousness being counted to us happens, in one sense, because of him- because he opened the paradigm, of being declared right before God just because he believed. The crucial family likeness in the Abraham family is therefore faith, not marks in the flesh placed on the male members of the tribe. This of course was blasphemy for the Jews to hear... In this sense therefore, Abraham was father of “all” the believers in Rome, both Jew and Gentile. Connection to him should therefore create unity between ethnic groups rather than exclusivity.

Walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham- see on 4:1. Walking in the steps of Abraham suggests that his journey of faith from Ur to Haran to Canaan becomes typical of the walk of every single believer towards salvation in the Kingdom, a journey only motivated by our faith that we will be there, that we are declared right before God in Christ. Abraham walked by faith- but the content of that faith, Paul is arguing, was faith in justification by God. Likewise we will not get very far in our walk to the Kingdom if we fail to believe that we are already right now justified and right with God; we aren’t walking to judgment day in the vague hope that we will inherit the Kingdom, walking to the Kingdom to see if we shall enter into it. We walk [Gk. ‘march’] in faith, faith that we are already declared right before God, that ours is the Kingdom, and we are walking there to obtain it, just as Abraham took his steps toward Canaan not to just have a look at it and see if he would obtain it, but rather believing that it already was his. The Greek word “steps” is in fact a form of the word ‘arrival’; we are walking to the Kingdom and yet we have in a sense arrived there.

Lk. 19:9 = Rom. 4:11,12. If you have real faith, you'll be like Zacchaeus. You'll have his determination, his unashamedness to come out in the open for Christ your Lord.

4:13 *Promise-* the Greek really means an announcement. It’s not a vague possibility, the ‘promises’ to Abraham were an announcement that he would inherit the Kingdom. The promise Paul refers to was given to Abraham because of, *dia*, on account of, his being declared right with God by faith in Gen. 15:6. Perhaps Paul specifically has in mind the promise of Gen. 22:17,18. Having been declared right with God, Abraham was then promised that he personally would be heir of the world- the implications of being right with God, counted righteous, were thereby fleshed out and given some more tangible, material, concrete form. He would therefore live for ever, because he was right with God; and the arena of that eternity would be “the world”.

Heir of the world- Abraham was only explicitly promised the land of Canaan, not the entire planet. Perhaps Paul is interpreting the promises that his seed would comprise “many nations” and that he would bring blessing on “all the peoples of the earth” (Gen. 12:2,3 etc.). In this sense, they would become his, and he would thereby inherit them. Thus Is. 55:3-5 likewise implies that Abraham’s promised inheritance was therefore not only the land of Canaan but by implication, the whole planet.

God promised Abraham a very specific inheritance in Canaan. And yet this promise seems to be interpreted in later Scripture as referring to the *world-wide* Kingdom which will be established at the second coming (e.g. Rom. 4:13 speaks of how Abraham was promised that he would inherit the world; Ps. 72 and other familiar prophecies speak of a world-wide Messianic Kingdom, based on the promises to Abraham). One possible explanation is found in Psalm 2, where the Father seems to encourage the Son to ask of Him “the *heathen* [i.e., not just the Jews] for thine inheritance, and the *utmost parts of the earth* [not just the land of promise] for thy possession” (Ps. 2:8). Could it be that due to the Lord’s spiritual ambition, the inheritance was extended from the Jewish people to *all* nations, and from literal Canaan to all the earth? This is not to say, of course, that *fundamentally* the promises to Abraham have been changed. No. The promise of eternal inheritance of Canaan still

stands as the basis of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Gal. 3:8), but that promise has been considerably extended, thanks to the Lord's spiritual ambition.

Abraham believed God in Gen. 15, but the works of Gen. 22 [offering Isaac] made that faith "perfect". Through his correct response to the early promises given him, Abraham was imputed "the righteousness of faith". But *on account of* that faith inspired by the earlier promises, he was given "the promises that he should be heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). That promise in turn inspired yet more faith. In this same context, Paul had spoken of how the Gospel preached to Abraham in the promises leads men "from faith to faith", up the upward spiral (Rom. 1:17).

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4:14 The huge importance attached to faith in Gen. 15:6 would be pointless if obedience to the Law was what guaranteed the promise of inheritance the world- as Jewish theology taught about Abraham. The promise of the Kingdom would become irrelevant because Paul has demonstrated in Romans 1-3 that all men, Abraham included, are sinners, law breakers, and condemned before the judgment seat of God. Nobody would therefore inherit the promised Kingdom, and so the promise of it would have been pointless- see on 4:15.

4:15 *wrath*- the wrath of Divine condemnation. Because nobody keeps God's law fully, therefore the law brings those under it to condemnation. Another way has to be found if we wish to be declared right and not condemned. To say that the law creates [AV "works"] Divine wrath upon men is another example of Paul using purposefully radical and controversial language to demonstrate the seriousness of sin and the utter folly of hiding behind legal righteousness. Law creates the possibility of "transgression", a conscious crossing over the line. Sin is one thing; but transgression is what brings liability to receiving the wrath of God, because if we know His law and cross over it, then we are the more culpable. This difference between sin and transgression is at the root of a great Biblical theme- that knowledge brings responsibility. And this was particularly relevant and concerning, or it ought to have been, to a Jewish audience so keen to attain rightness with God through obedience to law.

4:16 *To the end the promise might be sure*- God's promises are sure from His end, in that He will not break them. But the promised inheritance of the Kingdom would never be a very sure promise if it depended upon human acts of obedience to come true. But because salvation is by our faith in God's grace, declaring us right quite apart from our works- therefore we are sure of entering that Kingdom, and in this sense it is grace which makes the promise sure. The certainty of our future hope and present salvation is therefore precisely in the fact that it doesn't depend upon our works. All the time we think it does, the promise of salvation will not appear to us to be at all "sure".

To all the seed- the fact salvation is by pure grace to sinners means that any person of whatever ethnic background may believe in it and accept it. The result of that is that there should be no spiritual difference between ethnic groups such as Jew and Gentile in Rome. And today, our common experience of utter grace, each of us accessing it by faith, should be the basis for a powerful unity.

Faith of Abraham- There is an intended ambiguity in the phrase "the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16); this 'ambiguous genitive' can mean those who share "the (doctrinal) faith", which Abraham also believed; or those who have the kind of belief which Abraham had. Like Abraham, we are justified by *the* faith in Christ; not faith in Christ, but more specifically *the* faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16). The use of the definite article surely suggests that it is our possession of the same doctrinal truths (the Faith) which Abraham had, which is what leads to faith in Christ and thereby our

justification. The *life* Paul lived was by *the* Faith of Christ; not simply by faith, as a verb, which is how grammatically it should be expressed if this is what was meant; but by *the* Faith (Gal. 2:20).

Father of us all- see on Rom. 4:1.

4:17 *before him [God] whom he believed*- continues the language of our standing “before God” in 3:19,20 and being condemned there for our sins, and yet also being declared righteous there by His grace and our faith in that grace. The first part of v. 17 is in brackets, correctly in my opinion. Abraham was declared the “father of us all” (4:16) before God, as he stood as it were in God’s judgment presence and was justified, declared right- God then considered him as the father of us all, naming things [AV “calling”] which didn’t exist as if they did. Abraham the ungodly was counted as Godly; we who were sinners, disobedient to the law, were counted as obedient; and thus God as it were saw Abraham before His presence not merely as Abraham, but as representative of so many others who would likewise believe in God’s grace and be thereby justified.

Calls those things which be not as though they were- is exactly what Paul has been arguing all through his letter so far. God calls the unrighteous righteous, counting righteousness to those who believe, who are themselves not righteous. “Calls” strictly means ‘to name’, and the reference would initially be to the way God called Abram as Abraham, as if he already was the father of the people of many nations whom God foresaw would believe in His promised grace just as Abraham had done. God saw us then as if we existed, in the same way as He sees us as righteous even though we are not. The idea of calling things which don’t exist into existence also has suggestions of creation (Is. 41:4; 48:13). The new, spiritual creation is indeed a creation *ex nihilo*, an act of grace. Incomprehensible to the modern mind, the natural creation involved the creation of matter from out of God, and not out of any visible, concrete matter which already existed. The physical creation therefore looked forward to the grace of the new creation- creating people spiritually out of nothing, counting righteousness to them which they didn’t have, treating them as persons whom they were not.

Because God is not limited by time, He speaks of things which do not now exist as if they do, because He knows that ultimately they will exist (Rom. 4:17). This explains why the Bible speaks as if Abraham is still alive although he is now dead; as if the believers are now saved in God’s kingdom, although “he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Mt. 10:22); as if Israel were obedient to God’s word (Ps. 132:4 cp. Ex. 19:5-6), when they will only be so in the future; as if Christ existed before His birth, although he evidently only existed physically after his birth of Mary.

Our comprising the Kingdom to some degree is understandable seeing that God speaks of “those things which be not as though they were” (Rom. 4:17). Thus Abraham and those believers who have died are described as ‘living unto God’ in prospect, because He can foresee their resurrection (Lk. 20:38). It is to this that Rom. 6:11 refers: “Reckon yourselves (i.e. in prospect)... alive unto God through (having been resurrected with) Jesus” in baptism. In the same way as in prospect we should reckon ourselves resurrected to eternal life, unable to give service to sin any longer, so in the same way we are now in the Kingdom. Careful attention to the tenses in 1 Cor. 15:20 indicates the same logic; by His resurrection Christ has “become the firstfruits of them that slept”- not those ‘who are sleeping’, but “that slept”, seeing that because of their Lord’s resurrection they also are alive in prospect. Similarly if Christ had not risen “they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1 Cor.15:18), implying that now they are not perished. The practical meaning of all this is that we should live now in the same joy and righteousness as if we were in the Kingdom. “The day (of the Kingdom) is at hand: let us therefore... walk honestly, as in the day” (Rom.13:12,13), i.e. as if we are now living in the Kingdom which is soon to come.

4:18 *Who against hope believed in hope* – see on Rom. 4:19. The first “hope” may be human hope- and Abraham as a sinner was in a hopeless situation. Yet he believed and thereby shared in God’s hopefulness for us, seeing himself as God saw him- as declared right. “Against” could equally be

translated “beyond”. Beyond human hope, Abraham had hope. This is the essence of the Gospel- having no hope in our own strength, standing condemned and speechless before God, but believing in His hopefulness for us. His faith in this instance was that he would indeed become a father of many nations. He didn’t just believe that he was declared right with God, but that really and truly there would be people world-wide who would likewise believe and become his seed. In this sense he believed in God’s hope. We likewise need to share in the hopefulness of God for people rather than being negative, cynical and defeatist about people just because so many chose not to respond.

Father of many nations- Because of Sarah’s faith, “therefore sprang there... so many as the stars of the sky in multitude” (Heb. 11:11,12). Those promises to Abraham had their fulfilment, but conditional on Abraham and Sarah’s faith. Gen. 18:18-20 says that the fulfilment of the promises was conditional on Abraham teaching his children / seed the ways of God. Those promises / prophecies were “sure” in the sense that God’s side of it was. Rom. 4:18 likewise comments that Abraham became “the father of many nations” precisely because he *believed* in this hope. Yet the promise / prophecy that he would be a father of many nations could sound as if it would have happened anyway, whatever. But it was actually conditional upon Abraham’s faith. And he is our great example exactly because he had the possibility and option of *not* believing in the hope he had been offered.

4:19 *Not weak in faith-* s.w. “impotent”, Jn. 5:7; the word is usually used with the sense of sickness or weak health. Abraham was physically impotent, perhaps even seriously ill and weak at the time the promise was given- but not impotent or weak in faith. The idea of the Greek is that Abraham didn’t weaken in faith as he observed / considered his body. We showed in our introductory comments that the theological first half of Romans has many connections with the practical second half. Thus we meet this very same phrase “weak in faith” in Rom. 14:1,2- where we are told to accept those who are “weak in faith”. This connection would seem to be a tacit admission that not all in the ecclesia are going to rise up to the faith of Abraham, even though he is to be the father of us all, in that we share that same family characteristic of faith. Thus on one hand Paul sets Abraham before us as a vital, crucial pattern- not an option, a nice idea, but a role model whose faith must be followed, in whose faithful steps we are to walk. And yet he accepts that not all in Christ will rise up to his level of faith- and we are to accept them. The same word for “weak” is used in Rom. 5:6- whilst we were weak [AV “without strength”], Christ died for us. We therefore are to accept the weak, even as Christ died for us in our weakness. We share something of His cross in accepting those who are spiritually weaker than ourselves. Yet so many refuse to carry His cross in this matter, because their own pride stops them accepting those weaker in the faith than themselves.

Considered not- He didn't fix his mind upon (Gk.) the fact his body was dead (i.e. impotent) and unable to produce seed (Rom. 4:19). He wasn't obsessed with his state, yet he lived a life of faith that ultimately God's Kingdom would come, he rejoiced at the contemplation of Christ his Lord; and he filled his life with practical service. He wasn't obsessed with the fact that in his marital position he personally couldn't have children when it seemed this was what God wanted him to do; and this was very pleasing to God.

Neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb- so often we allow the apparent weakness of others to become a barrier to our faith. ‘She’ll never change... she just isn’t capable of that’. But Abraham not only believed that *he* could do it, but that the apparent obstacle of another’s weakness was also surmountable by the word of promise.

An hundred years old- Gen. 17:1 says he was 99, so he was in his 100th year.

4:19,20 There are some implied gaps within the record in Gen. 15:5,6: God brings Abraham outside, and asks him to number the stars [gap]; then He tells Abraham "So shall thy seed be" [gap]; and then, maybe 10 seconds or 10 hours afterwards, "Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness". Those 10 seconds or 10 hours or whatever the period was, are summarized

by Paul as how Abraham "in hope believed against hope" (4:18). His no-hope struggled against his hope / faith, but in the end his faith in God's word of promise won out. "According to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be" implies to me that he kept reflecting on those words: "So shall thy seed be" (three words in Hebrew, *ko zehrah hawya*). And we too can too easily say that we believe the Bible is God's word, without realizing that to just believe three inspired words can be enough to radically change our lives and lead us to eternity. I'm not sure that Abraham's ultimate belief of those three words *ko zehrah hawya* just took a few seconds. According to Paul, he "considered... his body"- he reflected on the fact he was impotent (see Gk. and RV). *Katanoeo*, "consider", means to "observe fully" (Rom. 4:19). He took full account of his impotent state, knowing it as only a man can know it about himself. And he likewise considered fully the deadness of his elderly wife's womb, recalling how her menstruation had stopped years ago... but all that deeply personal self-knowledge didn't weaken his faith; he didn't "waver", but in fact- the very opposite occurred. He "waxed strong through faith... being fully assured that what [God] had promised, He was able also to perform". As he considered his own physical weakness, and that of his wife, his faith "waxed" stronger (RV), he went through a process of becoming "fully assured", his faith was progressively built up ("waxed strong" is in the passive voice)... leading up to the moment of total faith that so thrilled the heart of God. And so it can happen with us- the very obstacles to faith, impotence in Abraham's case, are what actually leads to faith getting into that upward spiral that leads towards total certainty. Abraham's physical impotence did not make him "weak" [s.w. translated "impotent" in Jn. 5:3,7] in faith- it all worked out the opposite. For his physical impotence made him not-impotent in faith; the very height of the challenge led him to conclude that God would be true to His word, and he would indeed have a child. For when we are "weak" [s.w. "impotent"], then we are strong (2 Cor. 12:10). Thus the internal struggle of Abraham's mind led his faith to develop in those seconds or minutes or hours as he reflected upon the words "So shall your seed be". He "staggered not at the promise" (Rom. 4:20), he didn't separate himself away from (Gk.) those three Hebrew words translated "So shall your seed be", he didn't let his mind balk at them... and therefore and thereby he was made strong in faith ("waxed strong in faith" Rom. 4:20 RV). This process of his faith strengthening is picked up in the next verse: Abraham was "fully persuaded that what [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). There was a process of internal persuasion going on- leading to the moment of faith, which so thrilled God and was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. And of course Paul drives the point home- that we are to have the faith of Abraham. As he believed that life could come out of his dead body ("dead" in Rom. 4:19, with a passive participle, implies 'slain'), so we are to believe in the resurrection of the slain body of the Lord Jesus, and the real power of His new life to transform our dead lives (Rom. 4:23,24). Gal. 3:5,14 puts it another way in saying that if we share the faith of Abraham at that time, we will receive "the promise of the spirit through faith", the enlivening of our sterile lives. And this takes quite some faith for us to take seriously on board; for as Abraham carefully considered the impotence of his physical body, so we can get a grim picture of the deadness of our fleshly lives. These ideas help us understand more clearly why the Lord chose to be baptized. He understood baptism as a symbol of his death (Lk. 12:50). Rom. 6:3-5 likewise makes the connection between baptism and crucifixion. The Lord knew that He would be crucified, and yet He lived out the essence of it in His own baptism.

4:20 *Staggered not*- Gk. *diakrino*, to judge. Abraham didn't judge God by doubting, analyzing, forensically investigating, the promise made- finding all the possible reasons why it might not be true for him. This continues the idea of Rom. 3:4- that man effectively puts God in the dock and prosecutes Him for false witness and unreal promises, the accusers being the doubts of God's grace deep within the human mind. Abraham didn't do this. The word occurs only one other time in Romans, in the practical section, in Rom. 14:23: "He that doubts [s.w. 'stagger'] is damned if he eat". If we are truly Abraham's children and don't doubt God's promises, we will have a strong

conscience, not worrying that eating this or that or failing to keep some ritual will result in our losing God's grace.

Was strong- Gk. 'was / became strengthened' - by whom? By God? In this case we would see God's grace yet more apparent, in that Abraham was justified by his faith in God's grace, but God Himself partially empowers that faith. This would be an example of how faith is part of an upward spiritual spiral, the dynamic in which is God Himself- a theme with which Romans begins, when Paul talks about going "from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17). Exactly the same term is used about Paul after his conversion- he "increased the more in strength" and confounded Jewish opposition to the Gospel (Acts 9:22). As so often, Paul provides himself as a parade example of what he's preaching. Significantly, Paul elsewhere comments that it is Christ who strengthens him within his mind (Phil. 4:13 and context; other examples of the same word applied to Christ's strengthening of Paul are in 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:17; and Heb. 11:37 says that the faithful of old were "made strong" in their faith, by God). We are thrown up yet again against God's grace. We can be saved by grace if we believe in that grace, but the Lord is willing to even strengthen us in that necessary faith. See on 4:21 "fully persuaded", where again God is the persuader of human faith. Abraham therefore gave the glory to God, because it was God who had strengthened his faith and the whole thing comes down to God's grace in every way, for which we can only glorify Him. Paul uses the same phrase for 'giving glory to God' as in Lk. 17:18, where it is a Gentile rather than the Jews who give glory to God for what He has done for them- and surely this is another of Paul's many allusions to the Gospel records.

Mt. 21:21 = Rom. 4:20. Paul saw Abraham as being like the man in the parable who had the faith to throw mountains into the sea.

4:21 *fully persuaded-* by whom? Surely by God. This continues the theme of 'was strengthened' in 4:20 [see note there], that although God's saving grace is accessible to us by faith, He also plays a part in developing that faith. This of course lays the basis for Paul's later comment in Romans upon predestination as being an indicator of God's pure grace. For He doesn't just start talking about predestination without a context- he cites it as an example, or another window onto, God's grace.

We have earlier commented that the doctrinal section of Romans [chapters 1-8] has many connections with the latter, practical part of Romans; and we've demonstrated that several verses in Romans 4 contain phrases which recur in Romans 14. "Fully persuaded" occurs elsewhere in Romans only in Rom. 14:5, where Paul urges that each of us, like Abraham, should be "fully persuaded in [our] own mind" about the matter of Sabbath keeping. The implication isn't so much that each of us should just be certain that we are fully persuaded of our position- that would be to state an axiom needlessly- but surely the point of the allusion to Abraham's full persuasion in Rom. 4:21 is that if we have been fully persuaded of God's salvation being by pure grace and not works, then we will not be concerned about keeping days or indeed any other ritual in order to gain His acceptance. That same principle can be applied in our church lives, in forming our approach to matters of external ritual [e.g. head coverings for sisters, or dress codes at church meetings] which in our generation may be a live issue, as Sabbath keeping was for the Rome ecclesia of the first century.

Able to perform- it may seem obvious that anyone who believes in the God of the Bible will believe that God Almighty is truly almighty, and is capable of doing what He has promised. And yet when it comes to believing that He is able to save me despite my sins and regardless of my works- we all baulk. Abraham believed, that God was able to do what He had said. To save him, without works. The only other time the Greek phrase translated "able to perform" occurs is in Lk. 1:49, where young Mary exalts that the God who is able has performed great things for her. Perhaps Paul is setting her up as our example. That barefoot and pregnant, illiterate young woman (a teenager, probably), who took God at His word. Paul maybe has the same sense in mind when he comments that the God who cannot lie has promised us eternal life (Tit. 1:2). John in characteristic bluntness

puts it so clearly: “This is the promise that He has promised us: eternal life” (1 Jn. 2:25). To doubt that we shall receive it is effectively calling Him a liar. We are between a rock and a hard place. We must either face up to the wonder of our salvation, or do the unthinkable- call God a liar, one incapable of doing what He has said. Sarah likewise “judged Him faithful who had promised” (Heb. 11:11). There again we meet the idea of putting God in the dock. We judge Him- as either faithful, or unfaithful; able or unable; almighty or impotent, a god of nice ideas and fair words which have no cash value in the weakness and desperation of our human, earthly lives. The Greek translated “promise” can be used in the context of a legal assertion about oneself (although it isn’t used within the NT in this way). God is in the dock, making the promise, the assertion about Himself, His very own self, that He will give us eternal life. And we judge Him- as speaking the Truth, the most ultimate truth of the cosmos, of history- or as lying under oath to us. Faced with a choice like that, we have no real choice but with Abraham and Sarah “judge Him faithful who has promised” (Heb. 11:11).

4:22 *Imputed*- this word occurs so many times in Romans 4. Abraham’s faith that God would give him the promised blessing and salvation was counted to him as righteousness, with no reference to Abraham’s works or sins. The word recurs in the practical section of Romans just once- in Rom. 14:14: “To him that counts anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean”- although there is nothing “unclean in itself”. God counts us as clean, not unclean. The person who is always paranoid about this that or the other being unclean, the need to separate from this brother or that sister for their uncleanness, hasn’t been filled with the positive spirit of our Father, who rejoices to count unclean persons as clean. This isn’t in any way to blur the boundary between clean and unclean, sin and righteousness. Rather is it the logical connection between Rom. 4:21, speaking of God calling sinners as righteous; and Rom. 14:14, which warns that men have a tendency to count / impute things as unclean rather than clean. Cleanness or uncleanness is a matter of perception, seems to be Paul’s message. For “there is nothing unclean in itself”. Likewise sin and righteousness are matters of God’s perception; for sometimes a man can do something which is counted a sin, other times the same act can be counted as righteousness. Yet God is eager to count us as clean; and we should have that same positive, seeking, saving spirit.

4:23 *Not written for his sake alone*- Where was it written? In some unrecorded Scripture? In God’s heavenly record book? Or is the allusion to the finality of the legal case now concluded, that ‘it was written’ in the sense of legally concluded, under the hammer, so to speak? The suggestion is that right now in this life, if we really believe God’s offered salvation, or perhaps, *for so long* as we believe it- we are written down as declared right before His judgment. In this case, Paul is interpreting the comment in Gen. 15:6 “And it was imputed unto him for righteousness” as a writing in Heaven, the court secretary writing down the outcome of the case. The Jews taught that justification would only be at the future day of judgment (see D. Moo *Romans* 1-8, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1991) p. 293). Paul is teaching that in fact we can be justified, declared right with God, here and now; and we ought to be able to know and feel that.

That it was imputed- this appears to be a pointless repetition of the same phrase in the preceding 4:22. Paul keeps on and on repeating it to try to impress upon us the sheer wonder of it all- that we are counted righteous when we are not.

4:24 *But for us also*- in that Abraham was being consciously set up as our example; and the record of Abraham’s justification by faith is purposefully designed, Paul seems to be inferring, to inspire us to a similar faith.

Believe on Him that raised up Jesus- our faith is that God will justify us by His grace. But as Paul will now go on to show (see on 5:1), that position of being declared right with God will be articulated in our being given eternal life. This means in practice that we will be resurrected as Jesus was, and given eternal life. So our belief in God is a belief in the God of resurrection, who

resurrected Jesus our representative, in whom, through faith and baptism into His death and resurrection, we shall also be resurrected to eternal life.

4:25 Handed over because of our trespasses is an allusion to the LXX of Is. 53:12: “He was handed over because of their sins”. The Gospel accounts of the crucifixion give special emphasis to the moment of the Lord being handed over to those who would crucify Him. Paul is going on to show the mechanics, as it were, of how God has chosen to operate. His scheme of justifying us isn’t merely a case of Him saying ‘So you are declared right by Me’. He can do as He wishes, but He prefers to work through some kind of mechanism. We are declared right by God although we are sinners; which raises the obvious question: So what becomes of our sins? And so Paul explains that by talking about the crucial role of the death of Christ. Because He was of our nature, He is our representative. Although He never sinned, He died, yet He rose again to eternal life. Through connection with Him, we therefore can be counted as in Him, and thereby be given that eternal life through resurrection, regardless of our sins. In this sense, Jesus had to die and resurrect because of our sins.

Raised for our justification is also an allusion to the LXX of Isaiah 53, this time to Is. 53:11, which speaks of “the righteous servant” (Jesus) “justifying the righteous”. The repetition of the word “righteous” suggests that on account of the Lord’s death, and resurrection, His righteousness becomes ours, through this process of justification. But how and why, exactly, does Christ’s death and resurrection enable our justification? Paul has explained that faith in God brings justification before Him. Now Paul is explaining how and why this process operates. Jesus died and rose again to eternal life as our representative. If we believe into Him (which chapter 6 will define as involving our identification with His death and resurrection by baptism), then we too will live for ever as He does, as we will participate in His resurrection to eternal life. Our final justification, being declared in the right, will be at the day of judgment. We will be resurrected, judged, and declared righteous- and given eternal life, never again to sin and die. This is the end result of the status of ‘justified’ which we have now, as we stand in the dock facing God’s judgment.

5:1 There’s a noticeable change of style beginning at Rom. 5:1. Paul starts to talk about “we”, as if he assumes that he has won the argument in chapters 1-4 and taken his readership with him- they along with him are now, as it were, believers in Christ. Instead of the focus on “justification” which there is in chapters 1-4, the end result of God’s work for us is generally replaced with the word “life”, i.e. eternal life, occurring 24 times in chapters 5-8. Chapters 5-8 of Romans form a definite section. The words “love”, “justify”, “glory”, “peace”, “hope”, “tribulation”, “save” and “endurance” all occur in Rom. 5:1-11 and also several times in Rom. 8:18-39. These passages form bookends [an ‘inclusio’ is the technical term] to the material sandwiched between them. Paul is going on from us standing before Divine judgment declared right, justified by our faith in God’s promise of grace. That salvation will be and is articulated in terms of life, eternal life, life lived both now and in its fullness after we again stand before the final judgment seat of Christ.

We have peace- It’s hard to avoid the conclusion that God has written His word in such a way as to leave some things intentionally ambiguous. He could just have given us a set of brief bullet points, written in an unambiguous manner. But instead He gave us the Bible. Given that most of His people over history have been illiterate, they simply couldn’t have been able to understand His word in an academic, dissective, analytical sense. Take Rom. 5:1- it could read "Let us have peace" (subjunctive) or "We have peace" (indicative). The difference is merely the length of a vowel, and this would only have been apparent in *reading* it, as the difference wouldn’t have been aurally discernible when the letter was publically read. Was the "land" meant to be understood as the whole earth, or just the land of Israel...?

Peace here refers to our being right with God, rather than a calmness in life generally. Such a thing isn’t promised to Christians but rather the very opposite. “Peace with God” cannot be experienced if we are continually doubting whether or not we shall ultimately be saved. We should be able to say

that if the Lord were to return right now, by grace, we believe that we shall surely be saved; for we are right here and now justified before God's judgment seat. Therefore we experience right now "peace with God".

Through our Lord Jesus Christ- previously Paul has pointed out that God has set us right with Him simply if we can believe that He would do this. But increasingly, Paul points out that *how and why* this is- He does this on account of the work of the Lord Jesus.

5:2 access into this grace wherein we stand- may be continuing the judgment image of chapters 3 and 4, in which we are left standing in the dock before the judgment of God, and by grace are declared right when in fact we are sinners. And we stand there before God's judgment, very much in grace. The language of 'access into' suggests that "this grace" is a situation, a 'place', a status, in which we are now permanently located. "Access into... wherein we stand" is a phrase used in classical Greek about entering a royal presence (Moo, *op cit.* p. 300 gives examples). So the idea is very much of our standing in the august judgment presence of God acceptable by status. This point needs to be more than intellectually noted; it must be our real and felt experience that we are not one moment in an acceptable status with God, and then next we slip out of it- through inattention, insensitivity, or downright selfish rebellion on our part. We are in a relationship, married as it were to Him, bearing His Name, and thereby in a permanent status. Perhaps we can be so foolish as to leave that status, but we certainly don't drift in and out of it insofar as we sin or avoid sinning in the course of daily life. The very nature of the "grace" status which we are in means that we are declared right, OK with God, in spite of and even in the face of our sins.

Rejoice in hope- standing before God justified means that in the judgment day to come at the Lord's return to earth, we will be accepted and given eternal life in God's Kingdom. We are to rejoice (Gk. 'boast') in that hope quite naturally- for Paul doesn't exhort us to rejoice in the hope, he simply states that given our position of grace, we, naturally, rejoice in hope. If we cannot say "Yes" to the question "Will you be accepted before the judgment seat of Christ?", then I fail to see that we can rejoice in hope. To rejoice in hope means that we have accepted God's judgment of us now- and His judgment is that we are acceptable to Him, that even now, "it's all OK". If we are to boast in this hope- and the Greek translated "rejoice" definitely means that- this would imply that we can't keep quiet about such good news. We simply have to share it with others.

the glory of God- our hope to participate in this glory, which is associated in Mt. 6:13 with the future Kingdom of God on earth, connects with what Paul has earlier reasoned in Rom. 3:23- that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We who have been declared right can now rejoice in the prospect of participating in that glory, that glorious eternal future, which we fell short of by our sins. We commented under 3:23 that Paul is referring to writings such as the Apocalypse of Moses, which claimed that Adam had fallen short of God's glory in Eden, but the hope of the Messianic age would be Adam's restoration to the glory intended in Eden (Apoc. Moses 39.2-3). Adam is everyman- a theme now to be developed specifically here in Romans 5.

5:3 Tribulations- s.w. Rom. 2:9, where we read that "tribulation" will come upon the rejected, faithless sinner at the day of judgment. Paul no doubt had in mind "the tribulation" which the Olivet prophecy and other NT Scriptures predicted would come upon the faithful in the first century. But the connection with Rom. 2:9 suggests that he saw that in a sense, we are condemned for our sins now, and as he explains in Romans 6, we die to sin, in baptism we take fully the condemnation for sin, and we rise again as new people, like the Lord Jesus, who are not under condemnation. Indeed the same word for "tribulation" occurs in Rom. 8:35, where Paul exalts that tribulation, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril and the sword cannot separate us from Christ's loving acceptance; and most if not all of those terms are applied elsewhere in Scripture to the rejected at the day of judgment. The condemnation for sin- our sins- will not separate us from Christ's love, and we shall be saved all the same. If this idea of "tribulation" as part of the condemnation process for sinners is indeed somewhere in Paul's mind (for this is how the word is used in 2 Thess. 1:6;

Rev. 2:22), he would be saying that as a result of experiencing in our lives the condemnation for sin, we come through enduring the process [“patience”, *hupomone*] to ‘pass the test’ (Rom. 5:4, AV “experience” is a terribly poor translation), and through that we come to a sure hope in acceptance at the last day and a feeling unashamed (Rom. 5:5), despite knowing we are on one hand condemned sinners.

“Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace... let us rejoice... let us also rejoice in our tribulations” (Rom. 5:1-3 RV). If we really feel justified due to righteousness being imputed to us, then this will give us a joyful perspective on all suffering. For the reality that we are counted righteous will mean that all tribulation “under the sun” is not so ultimately meaningful; and thus we will find all joy and peace through believing.

5:4 *Patience... experience... hope* – see on Rom. 5:3. “Experience” translates a Greek word elsewhere translated ‘to put to the proof’, and meaning ‘to pass the test’. We are going through the future judgment process right now- by passing through “tribulation”, living out the consequences for our sin, but in faith in God’s acceptance of us- we pass the test. The future day of judgment isn’t our ultimate test or putting to the proof; our faithful acceptance of salvation by grace today, right now, is our crucial testing or proving.

5:5 *Makes not ashamed*- a significant theme in Paul and Peter (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6).. The believer in Christ will not be ashamed at the last day judgment, with which “shame” is so often associated for the rejected (Dan. 12:2; Lk. 14:9; Jude 13; Rev. 16:15). If we have confident hope that we will not be rejected but will be saved at the last day, that we will not be ashamed then- therefore nothing in this life should make us feel ashamed, not even our own sins, for the shame of them is taken away by God’s declaring us right.

Because the love of God- Gk. *hoti* isn’t necessarily causative but it can be demonstrative. Paul may not therefore mean that we are unashamed *because* the love of God is in our hearts; he may mean that we are unashamed, as the final end result of God’s justification process, we stand before Him uncondemned, not in shame as are the rejected sinners; and *therefore* the love of God becomes shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This latter option is how I interpret *hoti* here, because Paul has been building up all throughout the letter to the reason why we are unashamed at judgment- it is because we are declared legally right before God’s judgment by God the judge of all, due to our faith in His grace which operates through Jesus. Nothing has so far been said about the Holy Spirit in our hearts being the basis for this unashamed position. Our standing before God justified, declared right, forgiven, accepted at judgment, rejoicing in sure hope of eternity in the glory of God’s Kingdom- this leads to the love of God filling our hearts. His love for us elicits our love for Him, and it fills our hearts.

Is shed abroad in our hearts- Tit. 3:6 uses the same word to speak of how God’s grace has been “shed abroad” abundantly upon us. The word is of course frequently used about the shedding of Christ’s blood; because of God’s colossal gift to us, of His Son, bringing about our justification if we believe in Him... then in due turn, the awareness of God’s love is likewise shed into our hearts. Whether we have really believed and accepted the good news is answerable by whether or not we feel and know God’s love to have been shed abroad, to have gushed out, into our hearts. Paul gives the hint several times in Romans 1-8 that this situation is not drifted into; the idea of gushing out or shedding suggests a one time moment when this happened. ‘Justification’, the being declared legally right, is always spoken of grammatically as if this is a one off defined event which happened to us at a moment in the past. This moment is defined by Paul in Romans 6 as baptism, when we become “in Christ”. Note that he is writing to Roman Christians who had already been baptized and believed in Christ- rather than seeking to convert unbelievers. They may well not have felt any watershed moment at their conversion or baptism. But Paul’s whole point is that even though they may not have felt it emotionally, this is actually how it is in reality, and we can now appreciate it and feel the wonder of the status into which we entered, even if it was unappreciated by us at the time. It is this

feature more perhaps than anything else which makes this letter so relevant to we today who read it, who like the Romans have already believed, been baptized- and yet likely fail to appreciate the huge implications of the position we have now entered.

By the Holy Spirit which is given unto us- the whole argument so far in Romans has said nothing about the Holy Spirit. Note the comments under “Because...” above. This isn’t teaching that the Holy Spirit zapped our hearts and therefore all these wonderful things are true. We are unashamed, at the end of the process outlined in Rom. 5:3-5, because we stand at judgment day even now uncondemned, not ashamed as the condemned are, because of our faith in God’s grace. This is how we come to be unashamed- not because the Holy Spirit zapped us. It is God’s grace, justification, which has been given unto us. We could read in an ellipsis here, as often required in reading Romans, and understand this phrase as referring to how the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts ‘by what the Holy Spirit has given unto us’. This would associate ‘the Holy Spirit’ with the power of God by which He has orchestrated and executed this entire wondrous plan of His.

Serious meditation upon the Lord's work ought to have this effect upon us. Can we really see his agony, his bloody sweat, without a thought for our response to it? It's impossible to passively behold it all. There is something practically compelling about it, almost in a mystical way. *Because* “Christ died for the ungodly”, because in the cross “the love of God” was commended to us, *therefore* “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5,6,8). As the smitten rock gave out water, so the smitten Saviour gave out the water of the Spirit. This link between the shedding of the Lord’s blood and the shedding of love in our hearts is surely because an understanding and relation to His sacrifice brings forth in the believer a response of love and spirituality. As the love of God was shown in the cross, so it will be reflected in the heart of he who truly knows and believes it.

5:6- see on Rom. 4:19.

Paul in Rom. 5:6-8 lays out a three point logical case for the supremacy of God’s love. Each of those three verses ends with the Greek word “die”, to stylistically emphasize the step logic.

Without strength- the Greek word is pronounced as-then-ace; “the ungodly” translates a Greek word pronounced as-eb-ace. Bearing in mind the generally illiterate nature of Paul’s primary readership, such literary devices which assisted memorization of the text are common in the NT. Christ died for us before we had anything at all to commend us. He didn’t await our faith or repentance and then die for us, but He died for us in order to inspire those very things. Paul describes all of us as having been saved although we were “without strength”, using the same word used about the disciples asleep in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:41 = Rom. 5:6). He saw the evident similarity between them and us, tragically indifferent in practice to the mental agony of our Lord, failing to share His intensity of striving- although we are so willing in spirit to do this. And yet, Paul implies, be better than them. Don't be weak [“without strength”] and sleepy as they were when Christ wanted them awake (Mt. 26:40,41 = 1 Thess. 5:6,7). Strive for the imitation of Christ's attitude in the garden (Mt. 26:41 = Eph. 6:18). And yet in Romans 7, a depressed but realistic Paul laments that he fails in this; his description of the losing battle he experienced within him between flesh and spirit is couched in the language of Christ's rebuke to the disciples in Gethsemane (the spirit was willing, but the flesh weak).

In due time- the Greek could imply ‘at just the right time’. Perhaps God’s wrath was set to destroy the earth by the time of Christ, but He came and successfully did His work at the right time. But perhaps the idea is more that Christ died for us “at that very time” when we were weak and ungodly. He died for us in the hope of what we could potentially become through exercising faith; and our sacrifices for others, not least in the work of preaching and nurturing, are made in the same spirit. They are made whilst the objects of our attention appear immature, non-existent or unbelieving.

Christ died for- All that is true of the Lord Jesus becomes in some sense, at some time, true of each of us who are in Him. It's true that nowhere in the Bible is the Lord Jesus actually called our "representative", but the idea is clearly there. I suggest it's especially clear in all the Bible passages which speak of Him acting *huper* us- what Dorothee Sölle called "the preposition of representation". Arndt and Gingrich in their Greek-English Lexicon define *huper* in the genitive as meaning "'for', 'in behalf of', 'for the sake of' someone. When used in the sense of representation, *huper* is associated with verbs like 'request, pray, care, work, feel, suffer, die, support'". So in the same way as the Lord representatively prays, died, cares, suffers, works "for" us, we are to do likewise, if He indeed is our representative and we His. Our prayers for another, our caring for them, is no longer a rushed salving of our conscience through some good deed. Instead 2 Cor. 5:15 becomes our motivation: "He died for (*huper*) all [of us], that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for (*huper*) them". We are, in our turn, to go forth and be "ambassadors for (*huper*) Christ... we pray you in Christ's stead (*huper* Christ), be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Grasping Him as our representative means that we will be His representatives in this world, and not leave that to others or think that our relationship in Him is so internal we needn't breathe nor show a word of it to others. As He suffered "the just for (*huper*) the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18), our living, caring, praying for others is no longer done "for" those whom we consider good enough, worthy enough, sharing our religious convictions and theology. For whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died *huper* us (Rom. 5:6). And this representative death is to find an issue in our praying *huper* others (Acts 12:5; Rom. 10:1; 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11), just as He makes intercession *huper* us (Rom. 8:26,34). We are to spend and be spent *huper* others, after the pattern of the Lord in His final nakedness of death on the cross (2 Cor. 12:15). These must all be far more than fine ideas for us. These are the principles which we are to live by in hour by hour life. And they demand a huge amount, even the cross itself. For unto us is given "in the behalf of Christ [*huper* Christ], not only to [quietly, painlessly, theoretically] believe on Him, but also to suffer for (*huper*) his sake" (Phil. 1:29). In all this, then, we see that the Lord's being our representative was not only at the time of His death; the fact He continues to be our representative makes Him our ongoing challenge.

Dorothee Sölle, *Christ The Representative* (London: S.C.M., 1967) p. 69.

W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon Of The New Testament* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1957).

The ungodly- connecting with how we read in Rom. 4:5 that by faith, the ungodly are declared right with God. And the context there suggests Abraham was along with us all in that category of "ungodly". Elsewhere, "the ungodly" are those who specifically will be condemned at the day of judgment (1 Pet. 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:7; Jude 15). We stand in the dock before God's judgment and are condemned. We aren't just the passive, the rather lazy to respond to God- we are, every one of us, "the ungodly", the condemned. But Christ died for *us*, so that we might be declared right, become de-condemned, have the verdict changed right around.

5:7 This verse feels like it's quoting some saying or verse from some other writing. The sense may be that for a righteous man [the Greek phrase is used in this part of Romans to refer to Jesus as the perfectly righteous one] it's hard to die *huper* him ["scarcely"- Gk. 'with difficulty'], to save him- for he isn't in need of saving; but for a good man, humanly "good" rather than morally righteous, some would "dare" (Gk. 'be bold') to die. True as this observation may be, the whole point is that Christ died for us when we were "sinners"- neither morally righteous, nor humanly 'good guys' who might inspire their buddy to die for them.

5:8 *God commends His love*- the Greek translated "commend" means to set down beside, in contrast to, over against. And it's in the continuous tense. God keeps on doing this. But what is His love so continually laid down against? Surely against our sins and failures. But it keeps on being commended through the fact that Christ died for us, whilst we were still sinners. Christ died once

only, and so the continual commendation of this fact is in that continually, we perceive the wonder of it all. Our unrighteousness commends God's righteousness (Rom. 3:8).

While we were yet sinners- shows the greatest example in the cosmos of taking the initiative, of seeking to save others when there is no appreciation from them *at the time* of what you are doing. This is an endless inspiration in child rearing, preaching and pastoral work.

Tragically, the simple words "Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8) have been grossly misunderstood as meaning that Christ died instead of us. There are a number of connections between Romans 5 and 1 Cor. 15 (e.g. v. 12 = 1 Cor. 15:21; v. 17 = 1 Cor. 15:22). "Christ died for *us*" (Rom. 5:8) is matched by "Christ died for our *sins*" (1 Cor. 15:3). His death was in order to make a way whereby we can gain forgiveness of our sins; it was in this sense that "Christ died for us". The word "for" does not necessarily mean 'instead of'; Christ died "for (because of) our sins", not 'instead of' them. Because of this, Christ can "make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25) - not 'instead of' us. Neither does "for" mean 'instead of' in Heb. 10:12 and Gal. 1:4. If Christ died 'instead of us' there would be no need to carry His cross, as He bids us. And there would be no sense in being baptized into His death and resurrection, willingly identifying ourselves with Him as our victorious representative.

5:9 *Now justified by His blood*- if He died for us whilst we were unborn and before we had repented of our sins; if right now we are counted right before God's judgment seat; then we can confidently expect to be saved from "the wrath" (Gk.), the condemnation at the last day. Note how Rom. 5:1 spoke of justification by our faith; here, by "His blood". His blood shed for us only becomes powerful and of any value *if we believe*. It's a tragedy that His sacrifice for us goes wasted unless we [and others] believe. "Much more then" seems to be rejoicing in playing some kind of logical game of extension, which continues in 5:10.

In the future, at the Lord's return, we will be saved from wrath (i.e. condemnation) through Christ (Rom. 5:9). Whilst this has already been achieved in a sense, it will be materially articulated in that day- in that we will feel and know ourselves to be worthy of God's wrath, but then be saved from it. We are all to some extent in the position of Zedekiah and the men of Judah, who was told that if they accepted God's condemnation of them as just, and served the King of Babylon, then they would ultimately be saved; but if they refused to accept that condemnation, then they would be eternally destroyed (Jer. 21:9; 27:12). And the Babylonian invasion was, as we have shown elsewhere, a type of the final judgment.

We are justified by many things, all of which are in some way parallel with each other: the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9), grace and the redemption which there is in His blood (Rom. 3:24), our faith in Christ (Rom. 5:1; Gal. 2:16), the name of the Lord Jesus, the spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11), by our confession of sin (Ps. 51:4; Lk. 18:14). All these things revolve around the death of the Lord Jesus, the shedding of His blood. This becomes parallel with the name of Jesus, "Christ"- because the cross presents us with the very essence of the person of the Lord Jesus. But it is also parallel with the spirit or mind / essence of God. Because in that naked, bleeding, derided body and person, in that shed blood, there was the essence of all that God was to us, is to us, and ever shall be for us. It was the cross above all which revealed to us the essence of God Almighty. And it is the cross, the blood of Jesus, which elicits in us the confession of sin which is vital for our justification.

The idea of a Saviour dying for us (5:8) and God's wrath being turned away by His blood is all very much the language of "noble death" found in the stories of the Maccabees, which Paul had been brought up on. The idea was that the Jewish martyrs in their struggle against the occupying power had shed their blood "to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty" against Israel (2 Macc. 7:37 – 38); and thereby reconciled God with His people. But Paul is deconstructing these ideas, fiercely popular as they were amongst first century Jews. Paul's point is that the wrath of God is against all human sin, and that the Lord Jesus through His willing death, rather than the Jewish heroes through their death in battle, had brought about reconciliation and the turning away of God's wrath. Note in

passing how the Maccabees spoke of their martyrs having reconciled God, whereas Paul's emphasis is upon how God has reconciled *us*- the change was not of God but of His people.

5:10 *Reconciled*- in the argument so far, Paul has talked about justification, declaring us right in a legal sense. Now he talks about us being reconciled- as if the impartial judge becomes personally reconciled to us as we stand in the dock. G.E. Ladd has made the informed comment that the surrounding first century religions didn't speak of reconciliation, because they didn't offer nor even conceive of the personal relationship between God and man which Christianity does [G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993 ed.) pp. 450-456]. The need for such personal reconciliation has been implied by Paul earlier, in talking of God's "wrath" against sin (Rom. 1:19-32; 2:5). So the legal declaring of us as right is going to have a more personal aspect between us and our judge; if we are now justified, His wrath is no more, and we become reconciled on a personal level. Note that Strong defines the Greek for "reconciled" as meaning 'to change mutually'. This raises the whole question as to whether God in some sense has changed as a result of His relationship with us, just as a person changes when they marry or have a child. Seeing that God "is Spirit" and isn't therefore static, it would seem to me that there is an element of growth associated with His present nature. Hence we read in the continuous tense of the Father growing to know the Son and vice versa (Mt. 11:27). This 'growth' or change within God Almighty as a result of the supreme God of the cosmos being reconciled to a few specks of dust and water on this tiny planet... is not only awesome of itself, but a testimony to the colossal consequences of the reconciling work of His Son. "Being reconciled" is clearly a state- for 2 Cor. 5:18 likewise rejoices that we have been reconciled to God in Christ, yet 2 Cor. 5:20 goes on to appeal to the Corinthians to therefore "be reconciled to God". This idea of living out in practice who we are by status is perhaps the essence of Paul's practical appeal throughout Romans.

Saved by His life- i.e. His resurrection, in that our personal salvation depends upon resurrection from the dead and being given eternal life. This is the significance of our baptism into His death and resurrection. His resurrection, His life, must become ours today.

We must beware lest our theories of the atonement obscure the connection between salvation and *life*- both His life and ours. Having been reconciled to God by the death of Jesus, we are "saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). This is not only a reference to His resurrection. When He died, He outbreathed His breath of life towards His people who stood beneath the cross. His death, and the manner of it, inspires us to live the life which He lived. And this is the eternal kind of life, the life we will eternally live in the Kingdom with Him. His death was not solely the merit that supplies forgiveness. The cross was His life the most fully displayed and triumphant, forever breaking the power of sin over our street-level human existence by what it inspires in us. Our lives, the ordinary minutes and hours of our days, become transformed by His death. For we cannot passively behold Him there, and not respond. We cannot merely mentally assent to correct doctrine about the atonement. It brings forth a life lived; which is exactly why correct understanding of it is so important. We are inspired to engage in His form of life, with all the disciplines of prayer, solitude, simple and sacrificial living, intense study and meditation in the Father's word which characterized our Lord's existence. For His cross was the summation of the life He lived. We quite rightly teach new converts the need for attending meetings, giving of time and money to the Lord's cause, doing good to others, Bible reading. But over and above all these things, response to the cross demands a life seriously modelled upon His life.

5:11 *Not only so*- it's not all jam tomorrow, a hope of resurrection from the dead in the future. We joy right now, because through Christ "we have now received the atonement", s.w. "reconciliation", the reconciling spoken of in v. 10. The courtroom 'declaring right' or innocent goes much further- we become personally set right with the Judge Himself. The whole world has in a sense been reconciled to God, but we are those who have "received" that reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19).

5:12 *Therefore* – this word carries much meaning. It is picked up again in Rom. 5:18, the intervening verses being in parenthesis. It almost seems that Adam sinned in order that God's grace might be the more powerfully revealed.

In the New Testament we find Paul writing, as a Jew, to both Jews and Gentiles who had converted to Christ, and yet were phased by the huge amount of apostate Jewish literature and ideas which was then floating around. For example, the book of Romans is full of allusions to the "Wisdom of Solomon", alluding and quoting from it, and showing what was right and what was wrong in it. Wisdom 2:24 claimed: "Through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it". And Paul alludes to this, and corrects it, by saying in Rom. 5:12: ""By one man [Adam- not 'the devil'] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". This is one of many such examples. Jude does the same thing, quoting and alluding to the apostate Book of Enoch, correcting the wrong ideas, and at times quoting the ideas back against those who used them.

In the same way as Daniel, Isaiah, Ezra, Israel at the time of Achan (Josh. 7:1,11) etc. were reckoned as guilty but were not personally responsible for the sins of others, so the Lord Jesus was reckoned as a sinner on the cross; He was made sin for us, who knew no sin personally (2 Cor. 5:21). He carried our sins by His association with us, prefigured by the way in which Israel's sins were transferred to the animal; but He personally was not a sinner because of His association with us. The degree of our guilt by association is hard to measure, but in some sense we sinned "in Adam" (Rom. 5:12 AVmg.) In the context of Rom. 5, Paul is pointing an antithesis between imputed *sin* by association with Adam, and imputed *righteousness* by association with Christ. In response to the atonement we have experienced, should we not like our Lord be reaching out to touch the lepers, associating ourselves with the weak in order to bring them to salvation- rather than running away from them for fear of 'guilt by association'?

The difficulty we have in understanding our sinning somehow "in Adam" may be the result of our failure to appreciate the extent of corporate solidarity in Hebrew thinking. This has been documented at great depth in H.W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980). This corporate solidarity (even if "corporate *personality*" is a bridge too far) doesn't mean that we personally sinned with Adam or are directly culpable for his sin. Adam is everyman- the Hebrew "adam" means just that, man. The concern expressed by many as to why babies and the mentally unaccountable still die is a valid one, but I don't think it's solved by postulating that they sinned "in Adam". Paul is writing to Christians in Rome, and he is explaining why *they* die. The question of infants isn't in his purview here. Likewise when he talks about "death" in Romans, he seems to often have in view the second death, the permanent death to be meted out at the judgment seat to those condemned for their sins, rather than 'death' in the general sense. Such death, condemnation at the last day, passes upon us all, but all in Adam in this sense are also those who are now in Christ. It is this apparent paradox which can lead to the almost schizophrenic feelings for Christians which Paul explains in Romans 7. The apparent parallel drawn between those "in Adam" and those "in Christ" would suggest that those "in Adam" whom Paul has in view are not every human being, but those now "in Christ" who have also been, and still are in a sense, "in Christ".

Paul emphasized that it was by one male, Adam, that sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12)- in designed contrast to the contemporary Jewish idea that Eve was to be demonized as the femme fatale, the woman who brought sin into the world. Thus Ecclesiasticus 25:4: "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die". Paul is alluding to this and insisting quite the opposite- that Adam, the male, was actually the one initially responsible. Paul can hardly be accused of being against women! Another example of Paul's conscious rebellion against the contemporary position of women is to be found in Rom. 5:12: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin". This is an intended rebuttal of Ecclesiasticus 25:24: "From a woman sin had its beginning, and

because of her we all die”. This allusion is one of many reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired. The idea that women were second class because Eve, not Adam, was the source of sin was widespread. Tertullian (*On Female Dress*, 1.1) wrote: “You [woman] are the first deserter of the Divine law... on account of your desert, that is, death, the Son of God had to die”. And Paul is consciously countering that kind of thinking.

Adam: The First Sinner

The classical view of the fall supposes that as Eve's teeth sunk into the fruit, the first sin was committed, and soon afterwards Adam followed suite, resulting in the curse falling upon humanity. What I want to discuss is whether the eating of the fruit was in fact the first sin. If it was, then Eve sinned first. Straight away, the Bible-minded believer comes up with a problem: the New Testament unmistakably highlights Adam as the first sinner; by *his* transgression sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). So sin was not in the world before *his* transgression. The ground was cursed for the sake of *Adam's* sin (Gen. 3:17). This all suggests that Eve wasn't the first sinner. The fact Eve was deceived into sinning doesn't mean she didn't sin (1 Tim. 2:14). She was punished for her sin; and in any case, ignorance doesn't mean that sin doesn't count as sin (consider the need for offerings of ignorance under the Law). So, Eve sinned; but Adam was the first sinner, before *his* sin, sin had not entered the world. We must also remember that Eve was deceived by the snake, and on account of this was "(implicated / involved) in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). "The transgression". Which transgression? Surely Adam's (Rom. 5:14); by listening to the snake she became implicated in Adam's sin. The implication is that "the transgression" was already there for her to become implicated in it by listening to the serpent. This is the very opposite to the idea of *Adam* being implicated in *Eve's* sin.

So I want to suggest that in fact the eating of the fruit was not the first sin; it was the final physical consequence of a series of sins, spiritual weakness and sinful attitudes on Adam's part. They were mainly sins of omission rather than commission, and for this reason we tend to not notice them; just as we tend to treat our own sins of omission far less seriously than our sins of commission. What happened in Eden was that the garden was planted, Adam was placed in it, and commanded not to eat of the tree of knowledge. The animals are then brought before him for naming; then he is put into a deep sleep, and Eve is created. *Then* the very first command Adam and Eve jointly received was to have children, and go out into the whole earth (i.e. out of the Garden of Eden) and subdue it to themselves (Gen. 1:28). The implication is that this command was given as soon as Eve was created. There he was, lying down, with his wife beside him, "a help meet"; literally, 'an opposite one'. And they were commanded to produce seed, and then go out of the garden and subdue the earth. It would have been obvious to him from his observation of the animals that his wife was physiologically and emotionally designed for him to produce seed by. She was designed to be his 'opposite one', and there she was, lying next to him. Gen. 2:24 implies that he should have cleaved to her and become one flesh by reason of the very way in which she was created out of him. And yet he evidently did not have intercourse with her, seeing that they failed to produce children until after the fall. If he had consummated his marriage with her, presumably she would have produced children (this deals a death blow to the fantasies of Adam and Eve having an idyllic sexual relationship in Eden before the fall). Paul saw Eve at the time of her temptation as a virgin (2 Cor. 11:2,3). Instead, Adam put off obedience to the command to multiply. There seems an allusion to this in 1 Cor. 7:5, where Paul says that married couples should come together in intercourse "lest Satan (cp. the serpent) tempt you for your incontinency". Depending how closely one reads Scripture, there may be here the suggestion that Paul saw Adam's mistake in Eden as not 'coming together' with his wife.

But Adam said something to Eve (as they lay there?). He alone had been commanded not to eat the tree of knowledge. Yet when Eve speaks to the serpent, it is evident that Adam had told her about it, but not very deeply. She speaks of "the tree that is in the midst of the garden" rather than "the tree of

knowledge". She had been told by Adam that they must not even touch it, even though this is not what God had told Adam (Gen. 2:16,17 cp. 3:2,3). So we are left with the idea that Adam turned to Eve and as it were wagged his finger at her and said 'Now you see that tree over there in the middle, *don't you even touch it* or else there'll be trouble, O.K.'. She didn't *understand*, he didn't *explain* that it was forbidden because it was the tree of knowledge, and so she was deceived into eating it- unlike Adam, who understood what he was doing (1 Tim. 2:14) (1). Adam's emphasis was on not *committing* the sin of eating the fruit; he said nothing to her about the need to multiply and subdue the earth.

The next we know, Adam and Eve have separated, she is talking to the snake, apparently indifferent to the command to *subdue* the animals, to be their superiors, rather than listen to them as if they actually had superior knowledge. When the snake questioned: "Yea, *hath* God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree..." (Gen. 3:1), Eve was in a weak position because Adam hadn't fully told her what God had said. Hence she was deceived, but Adam wasn't.

So, *why* didn't Adam tell her more clearly what God had said? I would suggest that he was disillusioned with the wife God gave him; he didn't have intercourse with her as he had been asked, he separated from her so that she was alone with the snake. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree..." (Gen. 3:12) seems to reflect more than a hint of resentment against Eve and God's provision of her. Not only was Adam disillusioned with Eve, but he failed to really take God's word seriously. Romans 5 describes Adam's failure in a number of parallel ways: "transgression... sin... offence... *disobedience* (Rom. 5:19)". "Disobedience" translates a Greek word which is uncommon. Strong defines it as meaning 'inattention', coming from a root meaning 'to mishear'. It is the same word translated "neglect to hear" in Mt. 18:17. Adam's sin, his transgression, his offence was therefore not eating the fruit in itself; it was disobedience, neglecting to hear. That this neglecting to hear God's word seriously was at the root of his sin is perhaps reflected in God's judgment on him: "Because thou hast hearkened unto *the voice of thy wife...*" rather than *God's* voice (Gen. 3:17).

Adam's sin was therefore a neglecting to seriously hear God's word, a dissatisfaction with and effective rejection of his God-given wife, a selfish unwillingness to leave the garden of Eden and go out and subdue the earth (cp. our natural instincts), and a neglect of his duty to multiply children in God's image (cp. preaching and pastoral work). All these things were sins of omission; he may well have reasoned that he would get round to them later. All these wrong attitudes and sins of omission, apparently unnoticed and uncondemned, led to the final folly of eating the fruit: the first sin of commission. And how many of our more public sins are prefaced by a similar process? Truly Adam's sin was the epitome of all our sins. Romans 5 points an antithesis between Adam and Christ. Adam's one act of disobedience which cursed us is set off against Christ's one act of righteousness which blessed us. Yet Christ's one act was not just His death; we are saved by His life too (Rom. 5:10). Christ lived a life of many acts of righteousness and refusal to omit any part of His duty, and crowned it with one public act of righteousness in His death. The implication is that Adam committed a series of disobediences which culminated in one public act of commission: he ate the fruit.

There are three lines of argument which confirm this picture of what happened in Eden which we have presented. Firstly, Adam and Eve were ashamed at their nakedness. Perhaps this was because they realized what they should have used their sexuality for. Eating the tree of knowledge gave them knowledge of good (i.e. they realized the good they should have done in having children) and also evil (the capacities of their sexual desire?). Adam first called his wife "woman", but after the fall he called her "Eve" because he recognized she was the mother of living ones (Gen. 3:20). By doing so he seems to be recognizing his failure of not reproducing through her as God had originally asked him. The way they immediately produce a child after the fall is surely an expression of their repentance.

Secondly, it seems that God punishes sin in a way which is appropriate to the sin. Consider how David so often asks God to take the wicked in their own snare- and how often this happens. The punishment of Adam and Eve was appropriate to the sins they committed. What Adam wasn't bothered to do, i.e. have intercourse with his woman, became the very thing which now every fallen man will sell his soul for. They ate the tree of *knowledge*, they *knew* they were naked, and then Adam *knew* Eve (Gen. 4:1); this chain of connection certainly suggests that sexual desire, whilst not wrong in itself, was part of the result of eating the tree. There is an artless poetic justice and appropriacy in this which seems simply Divine. What they couldn't be bothered to do became the very thing which has probably generated more sin and desire to do than anything else. Adam was to rule over Eve as a result of the fall- the very thing he wasn't bothered to do. Eve's punishment was that her desire was for her husband- perhaps suggesting that she too had no desire for Adam sexually, and therefore was willing to delay obedience to the command to multiply. They were both driven out of the garden- perhaps reflecting how they should have left the garden in obedience to God's command to go out and subdue the natural creation to themselves. Because Adam wasn't bothered to do this, even when it was within his power, therefore nature was given a special power against man which he would never be able to overcome, and which would eventually defeat him (Gen. 3:17-19). This all shows the logic of obedience; we will be made to pay the price of obedience even if we disobey- therefore it is logical to obey.

Thirdly, there seems evidence that the eating of the fruit happened very soon after their creation. Eve hadn't seen the tree before the serpent pointed it out to her (Gen. 3:6); and consider that they could eat of all the trees, but not of the tree of knowledge. But what about the tree of life? This wasn't forbidden, and yet had they eaten of it, they would have lived for ever. We are told that this tree brings forth fruit every month (Rev. 22:2); so presumably it had not fruited, implying the fall was within the first month after creation.

The practical outcome of what happened in Eden is that we are to see in Adam's sin an epitome of our essential weaknesses. And how accurate it is. His failure was principally due to sins of omission, of delaying to do God's will because it didn't take his fancy. Time and again Biblical history demonstrates that sins of silence and omission are just as fatal as sins of public, physical commission (e.g. Gen. 20:16; 38:10). To omit to hate evil is the same as to commit it (Ps. 36:4). Because David omitted to enforce the Law's requirements concerning the transport of the tabernacle, a man died. His commission of good didn't outweigh his omission here (1 Chron. 15:13). The Jews were condemned by the Lord for building the sepulchres of the prophets without erecting a placard stating that their fathers had killed them. We have a debt to preach to the world; we are their debtors, and yet this isn't how we often see it (Rom. 1:14). Israel sinned not only by worshipping idols but by thereby omitting to worship God as He required (1 Sam. 8:8). Adam stayed in the garden rather than go out to subdue the earth. Our equivalent is our spiritual selfishness, our refusal to look outside of ourselves into the world of others. Because things like disinterest in preaching or inattention to subduing our animal instincts are sins of *omission* rather than commission, we too tend to overlook them. We effectively neglect to hear God's word, although like Adam we may make an appearance of half-heartedly teaching it to others. And even when we do this, like Adam we tend to focus on *avoidal of committing sin* rather than examining ourselves for the likelihood of *omission*, not least in our lack of spiritual *responsibility* for others. Because of his spiritual laziness, Adam's sin led Eve into deception and thereby sin, and brought suffering on untold billions. His sin is the epitome of ours. So let us really realize: none of us sins or is righteous unto ourselves. There are colossal ramifications of our every sin and our every act of righteousness on others.

Notes

(1) There are similarities in more conservative Christian groups; e.g. the father or husband who lays the law down about the need for wearing hats without *explaining* to his wife or daughter *why*.

Romans and the *Wisdom of Solomon*

Seeing Romans 1-8 is Paul's inspired exposition of the nature of sin and the Gospel, it's surely surprising that he makes no mention of the words Satan or Devil, let alone 'fallen Angel'. He lays the blame for sin quite clearly upon us and our weakness in the face of internal temptation. And Paul speaks of the Genesis account of the fall of Adam and Eve as if he accepted it just as it is written – he makes no attempt to say that the serpent was a Lucifer or fallen Angel. In fact, closer analysis shows that Paul is consciously rebutting the contemporary Jewish ideas about these things as found in *The Wisdom of Solomon* and other writings. We must remember that in the first century, there was no canonized list of books comprising the "Old Testament" as we now know it. There was therefore a great need to deconstruct the uninspired Jewish writings which were then circulating – hence the many allusions to them in the inspired New Testament writings, in order to help the Jewish believers understand that these writings were uninspired and to be rejected.

The flood of apostate Jewish literature in the first century and just before it all have much to say about Adam's sin (e.g. the *Apocalypse of Baruch* and *Apocalypse of Abraham*), and I submit that Paul writes of Adam's sin in order to deconstruct these wrong interpretations. Wisdom 2:24 claimed: "Through the Devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it". This is actually the first reference to the idea that a being called 'the Devil' envied Adam and Eve and therefore this brought about their temptation and fall. Paul rebuts this by saying that "By one man [Adam – not 'the Devil'] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). This is evidently an allusion by Paul to this wrong idea – and he corrects it. The allusion becomes all the more legitimate when we appreciate that actually Paul is alluding to the *Wisdom of Solomon* throughout his letter to the Romans. This book glorified the Jewish people, making them out to be righteous, blaming sin on the Devil and the Gentiles. By way of allusion to it, Paul shows how the Jews are de-emphasizing sin, not facing up to the fact that all of humanity are under the curse of sin and death, and all therefore need salvation in Christ. This same basic emphasis upon personal responsibility, not blaming others for our sins, not seeing ourselves as pure and everyone else as the problem, is just as relevant today – surrounded as we are by false theologies that make us out to be basically pure, shifting all blame onto a 'Devil' of their own fabrication. It should be noted that this way of alluding to contemporary writings and correcting them is common throughout Scripture – I've elsewhere given examples of where Jude and Peter do this in relation to the Book of Enoch, and how Genesis 1-3 does this with the views of creation and origins which were common at the time the book of Genesis was compiled.

Wisdom of Solomon 13-14 criticizes the Gentiles for idolatry and sexual immorality. And Paul criticizes the Gentiles for just the same things in Rom. 1:19-27 – in language which clearly alludes to the Wisdom of Solomon. It's as if Paul is reviewing the Wisdom of Solomon and placing a tick by what is right (e.g., that Gentiles are indeed guilty of idolatry and immorality), and a cross by what is wrong in the book. E.P. Sanders has observed: "Romans 1:18-32 is very close to the Wisdom of Solomon, a Jewish book written in Egypt. Paul's reference to 'images representing... birds, animals or reptiles' (Rom. 1:23) points to... Egypt. Birds, animals and reptiles were idolized in Egypt, but not commonly in the rest of the Graeco-Roman world" ⁽¹⁾. The point of the reference to these things would therefore simply be because Paul is alluding to, almost quoting, the Wisdom of Solomon.

Paul's Other Allusions to the Wisdom of Solomon

Having spoken of how "the destroyer" destroyed the Egyptian firstborn, Wisdom 18 goes on to speak of how this same "destroyer" tried to kill Israel in the wilderness, but the evil "destroyer" was stopped by Moses: "For then the blameless man made haste, and stood forth to defend them; and

bringing the shield of his proper ministry, even prayer, and the propitiation of incense, set himself against the wrath, and so brought the calamity to an end, declaring that he was thy servant. So he overcame the destroyer, not with strength of body, nor force of arms, but with a word subdued him that punished, alleging the oaths and covenants made with the fathers (Wisdom 18:21,22). Paul in 1 Cor. 10 alludes to this – showing that “the destroyer” was sent by God to punish Israel’s sins. The author of Wisdom speaks as if “the destroyer” is some evil being victimizing Israel – and Paul appears to correct that, showing that it was the same “Destroyer” Angel who protected Israel in Egypt who later slew the wicked amongst them. Wisdom 19 makes out that all sins of Israel in the wilderness were committed by Gentiles travelling with them – but Paul’s account of Israel’s history in 1 Cor. 10 makes it clear that *Israel* sinned and were punished.

It should be noted in passing that 1 Cor. 10:1–4 also alludes to the Jewish legend that the rock which gave water in Num. 21:16–18 somehow followed along behind the people of Israel in the wilderness to provide them with water. Paul is not at all shy to allude to or quote Jewish legends, regardless of their factual truth, in order to make a point [as well as to deconstruct them]. God Himself is not so primitive as to seek to ‘cover Himself’ as it were by only alluding to true factual history in His word; He so wishes dialogue with people that He appears quite happy for His word to refer to their mistaken ideas, in order to enter into dialogue and engagement with them in terms which they are comfortable with. Another example of allusion to Jewish legend is in Rev. 2:17, where the Lord Jesus speaks of giving His people “of the hidden manna” – referring to the myth that Jeremiah had hidden a golden jar of manna in the Holy of Holies at the destruction of the temple in 586 BC, which then ascended to Heaven and is to return with Messiah. Jesus doesn’t correct that myth – He as it were runs with it and uses it as a symbol to describe the reward He will bring. He adds no footnote to the effect ‘Now do understand, this is myth, that jar never really ascended to Heaven nor will it come floating back through the skies one day’. Perhaps this is why the New Testament often quotes the Septuagint text, even where it incorrectly renders the Hebrew original – because God is not so paranoid as to feel bound to only deal in the language of strictly literal truths. If first century people were familiar with the Septuagint, even if it is a poor translation of the Hebrew original in places – well OK, God was willing to run with that *in order to engage with people in their language*. And this approach is very helpful in seeking to understand some of the Biblical references to incorrect ideas about Satan and demons.

It seems to me that Paul’s allusion to wrong Jewish ideas in order to deconstruct them is actually a hallmark of his inspired writing. Ecclesiasticus is another such Jewish writing which he targets in Romans; Rom. 4:1–8 labours the point that Abraham was declared righteous by faith and not by the Law, which was given after Abraham’s time; the covenant promises to Abraham were an expression of grace, and the ‘work’ of circumcision was done *after* receiving them. All this appears to be in purposeful allusion to the words of Eccles. 44:21: “Abraham kept the law of the Most High, and was taken into covenant with Him”.

Note

(1) E.P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1996) p. 113.

Allusions From Paul’s Letter to The Romans to The Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Solomon	Romans	Comment
Wisdom 4:5 The imperfect branches shall be broken off, their fruit unprofitable, not ripe to eat, yea, meet for nothing [concerning the Gentiles and those in Israel who sinned].	Romans w11:17–20	Israel as an entire nation were the broken off branches; Gentile believers through faith in Christ could become ingrafted branches.
Wisdom 1:13 For God made not death:	Romans	Death is “the judgment of God” –

neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living.	1:32; Romans 5,7	death does come from God. It doesn't come from "the Devil". It was God in Genesis who 'made' death. Death comes from our sin, that's Paul's repeated message – death isn't something made by the 'Devil' just for the wicked.
Wisdom 1:14 For he created all things, that they might have their being: and the generations of the world were healthful; and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon the earth: [in the context of the earth / land of Israel]	Romans 1,5,7	Paul makes many allusions to these words. He shows that all humanity, including Israel, the dwellers upon the earth / land of Israel, are subject to sin and death. Paul argues against the position that God made man good but the Devil messed things up – rather does he place the blame upon individual human sin.
Wisdom 8:20 I was a witty child, and had a good spirit. Yea rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled.	Romans 3,7	As a result of Adam's sin, our bodies aren't "undefiled" – we will die, we are born with death sentences in us. "There is none good" (Rom. 3:12); "in my flesh dwells no good thing" (Rom. 7:18)
Wisdom 10:15 She delivered the righteous people and blameless seed from the nation that oppressed them.	Romans 9–11	Israel were <i>not</i> blameless; "there is none righteous, not one" (Rom. 3:10).
Wisdom 12:10 But executing thy judgments upon them by little and little, thou gavest them place of repentance	Romans 2:4	"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4). Paul's argument is that it is God's grace in not immediately punishing us as we deserve which should lead us to repentance.
Wisdom 12 raves against the Canaanite nations in the land, saying how wicked they were and stressing Israel's righteousness – e.g. Wisdom 12:11 For it was a cursed seed from the beginning; neither didst thou for fear of any man give them pardon for those things wherein they sinned.	Romans 1,2,9–11	Paul uses the very same language about the wickedness of Israel
Wisdom 12:12 For who shall say, What hast thou done? or who shall withstand thy judgment? or who shall accuse thee for the nations that perish, whom thou made? or who shall come to stand against thee, to be revenged for the unrighteous	Romans 8:30–39; 9:19	<i>Wisdom</i> marvels at how God judged the wicked Canaanites. But Paul reapplies this language to marvel at God's mercy in saving the faithful remnant of Israel by grace. Paul's answer to "Who shall accuse thee

men?		[Israel]?" is that only those in Christ have now no accuser (Rom. 8:34).
Wisdom 12:13 uses the phrase "condemned at the day of the righteous judgment of God" about the condemnation of the Canaanite tribes.	Romans 2:5	Paul stresses that <i>Israel</i> will be condemned at the "day of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5)
Wisdom 12:22 Therefore, whereas thou dost chasten us, thou scourgest our enemies a thousand times more, to the intent that, when we judge, we should carefully think of thy goodness, and when we ourselves are judged, we should look for mercy.	Romans 2:1–4; 11:28; 14:4	Paul says that Israel are the "enemies" (Rom. 11:28); and that judging is outlawed for those who are themselves sinners. Paul's case is that we receive mercy at the judgment because we have shown mercy rather than judgment to others.
Wisdom 13:1 Surely vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen know him that is.	Romans 1,10	<i>Wisdom's</i> implication is that the Gentiles are vain by nature, but Israel aren't, because they aren't ignorant of God, and see Him reflected in the "good things" of His creation. Paul contradicts this. He says that <i>all</i> humanity is "vain... by nature"; Israel are "ignorant of God" (Rom. 10:3); and it is believers in Christ who perceive God from the things which He has made. Indeed, it is Israel who are now "without excuse" because they refuse to see "the goodness of God" [cp. "good things"] in the things which He has created (Rom. 1:20–30).
Wisdom 12:26 But they that would not be reformed by that correction, wherein he dallied with them, shall feel a judgment worthy of God. Wisdom 12:27 For, look, for what things they grudged, when they were punished, that is, for them whom they thought to be gods; now being punished in them, when they saw it, they acknowledged him to be the true God, whom before they denied to know: and therefore came extreme damnation upon them.	Romans 1	It is <i>Israel</i> and all who continue in sin who are worthy of judgment (Rom. 1:32). It was <i>Israel</i> who changed the true God into what they claimed to be gods (Rom. 1:20–26).
Wisdom 13:5–8: For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen. But yet for this they are the less to be blamed: for they peradventure err, seeking God, and desirous to find him. For being	Romans 1,2	It is Gentile Christians who 'found' God (Rom. 10:20). It was they who were led by the beauty of God's creation to be obedient to Him in truth (Rom. 2:14,15). It was Israel who failed to 'clearly see' the truth

<p>conversant in his works they search him diligently, and believe their sight: because the things are beautiful that are seen. Howbeit neither are they to be pardoned.</p>		<p>of God from the things which He created (Rom. 1:20).</p>
<p>Wisdom 14:8 But that which is made with hands is cursed, as well it, as he that made it: he, because he made it; and it, because, being corruptible, it was called god.</p>	<p>Romans 1:23</p>	<p>It was Israel who changed the glory of the true God into images made by their hands and called them gods (Rom. 1:23)</p>
<p>Wisdom 14:9 For the ungodly and his ungodliness are both alike hateful unto God.</p>	<p>Romans 4:5; 5:6</p>	<p>Paul argues that Christ died for the ungodly before they knew Him (Rom. 5:6); God justifies the ungodly not by their works but by their faith (Rom. 4:5)</p>
<p>Wisdom 14:31 For it is not the power of them by whom they swear: but it is the just vengeance of sinners, that punisheth always the offence of the ungodly.</p>	<p>Romans 5</p>	<p>Paul argues that the offence of man is met by God's grace in Christ, and not dealt with by God through taking out vengeance against sinners. It was the "offence" of Adam which was used by God's grace to forge a path to human salvation (Rom. 5:15–20). As "the offence" abounded, so therefore did God's grace (Rom. 5:20).</p>
<p>Wisdom 15:2 For if we [Israel] sin, we are thine, knowing thy power: but we will not sin, knowing that we are counted thine.</p>	<p>Romans 3</p>	<p>Paul argues that we <i>all</i> sin – it's not a case of 'we don't sin, because we are God's people' (Rom. 3:23). And knowledge isn't the basis for immortality, rather this is the gift of God by grace (Rom. 6:23). Paul leaves us in no doubt that there's no question of "<i>if</i> we sin"; for we are all desperate sinners, Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 3:23). And our sin really does separate us from God and from His Son; we are "none of His" if we sin (Rom. 8:9 – cp. "we are thine"). We are not automatically "His... even if we sin". Paul speaks of how both Jew and Gentile are equally under sin; whereas <i>Wisdom</i> claims that there's a difference: "While therefore thou dost chasten us, thou scourgest our enemies [i.e. the Gentiles] ten thousand times more" (12:22).</p>
<p>Wisdom 15:3 For to know thee is perfect righteousness: yea, to know thy power is the root of immortality.</p>		
<p>Wisdom 15:7 For the potter, tempering soft earth, fashioneth every vessel with much labour for our service: yea, of the same clay he maketh both the vessels that</p>	<p>Romans 9:21–30</p>	<p><i>Wisdom</i> mocks the potter for making idols – Paul shows that God is the potter and Israel the clay, and they will be discarded like an idol. For</p>

serve for clean uses, and likewise also all such as serve to the contrary: but what is the use of either sort, the potter himself is the judge.

they became like that which they worshipped. Paul uses the same language as *Wisdom* here – he speaks of how the Divine potter uses “the same clay to make different types of vessels.

Wisdom 15 often laments that the Gentiles worship the created more than the creator

Romans 1 and 2

Romans 1 and 2 make the point, using this same language, that Israel as well as the Gentiles are guilty of worshipping the created more than creator

Wisdom 18:8 For wherewith thou didst punish our adversaries, by the same thou didst glorify us, whom thou hadst called.

cp. Romans 8:30

The “us” who have been “called” and are to be “glorified” are those in Christ – not those merely born Jews.

Wisdom 18:13 For whereas they would not believe anything by reason of the enchantments; upon the destruction of the firstborn, they acknowledged this people to be the sons of God.

cp. Romans 8:14

The true “sons of God” are those in Christ, the Son of God; for not those who merely call themselves “Israel” are the children of God, as *Wisdom* wrongly argues (Rom. 9:6)

As for the ungodly, wrath came upon them without mercy unto the end: for he knew before what they would do... For the destiny, whereof they were worthy, drew them unto this end, and made them forget the things that had already happened, that they might fulfil the punishment which was wanting to their torments” (Wisdom 19:1,4)

What *Wisdom* says about the Gentile world and Egypt, Paul applies to Israel in their sinfulness. And he stresses many times that the result of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), not “torments” in the way the Jews understood them. “Wrath... without mercy” is a phrase Paul uses about the coming condemnation of those Jews who refused to accept Christ (Rom. 1:18; 2:5,8). Paul uses the idea of foreknowledge which occurs here in *Wisdom*, but uses it in Romans 9 and 11 to show that foreknowledge is part of the grace of God’s predestination of His true people to salvation. It is the Jews who reject Christ who are “worthy” of death (Rom. 1:32) – not the Gentile world. No wonder the Jews so hated Paul!

5:13 *Until the law sin was in the world... death reigned from Adam to Moses* (v. 14)- this could be Paul’s way of countering the objection that his teaching that it was the Law of Moses which brought condemnation (Rom. 4:15) wrongly implied that there could have been no death before the Law.

Not imputed- i.e. we do not have to appear at the day of judgment and answer for our sin if we didn’t know God’s Law, and we broke it in ignorance?

5:14 *Nevertheless death reigned*- Paul is demonstrating that the whole world is under sin, even those who don’t know God’s law. They die because they themselves sin, albeit in ignorance, and

because of their relation to Adam. He's building up the picture of every single human being as having a desperate need for forgiveness and finding the answer in Jesus- who therefore is the Saviour designed and intended for all people, not just Jews.

Him that was to come- a phrase the Jewish writings used about Moses, but which Paul tellingly reapplies to the Lord Jesus (For documentation see Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966) pp. 80,81). Paul's letter is densely packed with allusions to Jewish writings- and this explains some of the apparently awkward grammatical constructions and some of the otherwise strange phrases, often using words and concepts which don't occur in the rest of Paul's writings. Instead of spilling ink trying to exactly understand some of the phrases in Romans- and this letter has produced more tautuous, unhelpful, highly abstracted commentary than any other- it may be wiser to assume that those difficult passages are in fact allusions to extant Jewish writings or thinking contemporary with Paul, which at present we are unaware of.

5:15 *The offence... the free gift*- begins an extended comparison and contrast between the results of Adam's sin and disobedience, and the grace [s.w. "free gift"] given as a result of Christ's obedience. This is all in demonstration of the comment in 5:14 that Adam- or more specifically, "Adam's transgression"- was a type of the Lord Jesus. The type works not only by similarity but by inverse contrasts. By doing so, we see how God rejoices in showing grace, almost playing intellectual games to demonstrate how much greater and more abundant is His grace than the power of sin. And this is done in order to persuade us, the doubting readership, of the simple reality- that His grace is for real, and we really will be and are saved and secure in Christ.

Through... one, many be dead- the point of similarity here is that just one person can affect many. We may doubt that the obedience of one man, the Lord Jesus, 2000 years ago, can really have much to do with you and me today. That it all happened, I don't think we seriously doubt any more than we doubt standard historical facts. But a man hanging on a stake of wood on a Friday afternoon, on a day in April, just outside a Middle Eastern city... can He really do anything for all of us here today? We may never articulate it, say it in so many words. But that is at least our unspoken, un verbalized, unformulated, under the bedcovers nagging doubt, the bane of our deepest spiritual psychology, the fear of our soul, the cloud that comes betwixt as we look up at the steely silence of the skies, or gaze at the ceiling rose as we lay upon our bed. Paul tackles that doubt (and Romans 1-8 is really a tackling of human doubts about God's grace) by quoting the example of Adam. Through 'just' one, death and suffering affected many. If Adam is proof enough of 'the power of one'- then how much more is Jesus?

Has abounded- the Greek means to superabound, to be lavished, to be poured out in over abundance. The "gift" which so abounds is surely a reference to the language of Mt. 25:29, where at the final judgment, he that has shall be given to yet more, "in abundance" [s.w.]. Yet our receipt of that grace in this life is a foretaste of that superabundance we are yet to receive. Superabundant generosity characterizes God. We note that when the Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes, there superabounded 12 full baskets and then seven full baskets (Mt. 14:20; 15:37). Why the apparent over creation of food? For what purpose was there such waste? Why is the same strange word for superabundance used both times? And why is it used in *three of the four Gospels* when this incident is recorded (Lk. 9:17; Jn. 6:12,13; Mt. 14:20; 15:37)? Surely to give us the impression of the lavishing of God's gift, His grace, when He provides for His children. We have experienced the same from Him, and should be like this towards others. Paul often uses the word in 2 Corinthians in appealing for generosity to poorer brethren; he speaks of how God's grace has superabounded, and how we also ought to superabound in kindness and generosity to others (2 Cor. 9:8). We will eternally know the truth and reality of all this, because we will not only be given eternal life, but life "more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). We must ask ourselves to what extent we show that same quality of super abundant grace to others.

5:16 *the judgment*- the result of the legal case, the final verdict. This is contrasted with “the gift”, as if the judge hands down the verdict but then proffers us the gift of being declared right. The verdict can mean at times the actual execution of the punishment (as in Rom. 2:2,3; 3:8; 1 Cor. 11:29,34). In this sense, we were actually condemned- not threatened with it and let off.

unto justification- dikaioma, s.w. “righteousness”. The free gift of salvation apart from our works actually inspires righteousness- performed in gratitude for salvation, rather than in order to attain salvation. Or we could still read the word as referring to a decree which counts us as right, reversing that of condemnation.

The contrast is between the one man who brought the verdict of condemnation upon many, by one sin [for Adam is everyman]- and the one man, Jesus, who brought the verdict of being declared right for many people who had committed many sins. The paradox is that ‘just’ one sin lead to the condemnation of mankind, but our many sins lead to us being declared right- by grace. The reasoning here indirectly suggests that Christ was also “a man” as Adam- and certainly not a god.

5:17 *Death reigned... shall reign in life*- again highlights the superabundance of the grace received. By Adam’s sin, we became reigned over by death; by Christ, we sinners, we who are like Adam, not only become free from death and shall live eternally, but we shall “reign”, as rulers in God’s future Kingdom (Lk. 19:19; Rev. 5:10). Note the contrast so far in these verses is between Adam and Christ, and between Adam’s sin and... Christ. We expect the connection to be between Adam’s sin and Christ’s righteousness and obedience. This is the connection made later, but for now, we simply read of Christ as the counterpart to both Adam and Adam’s sin. It wasn’t so much one act of obedience which countered Adam’s one sin; rather was it a life lived, a character developed, a person, rather than a single act of obedience, as perhaps implied by the legalism of Judaism, whereby one sin could be cancelled out by an act of obedience. The reality however is that Adam’s one sin was no mere casual infringement which had no significant consequence- ‘just’ one sin leads to all the death and suffering which Adam’s sin brought. Our sins are to be understood in the same way. Adam must have held his head in his hands as he stood somewhere eastward in Eden, and sobbed to the effect “My God, what have I done...”, and from tear filmed eyes looked out upon a creation starting to buckle and wrinkle. If we accept Paul’s point that Adam is everyman [5:12], that whilst we suffer because of what he did, this is because we would have done the same if in his shoes... then we will feel the same for our falls, our slips, our rebellions, our sins.

Abundance of grace- For the Macedonians “the abundance of their joy... abounded unto the riches of their liberality” (2 Cor. 8:2). Their joy for what the Lord had done for them, for the “abundance” [s.w.] of His grace and giving to them (Rom. 5:17), led to their giving to the poor.

In Romans 5, Paul makes a seamless connection between the reign of God's grace now, and our future reigning in the literal Kingdom of God to be established materially upon earth at the Lord's return: Grace reigns *unto* eternal life, i.e. the result of the reign of grace now is eternal life in the future (Rom. 5:21)... and thus "the ones receiving the abundance of the grace and of the free gift of the righteousness in life *will* reign through the one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). Elsewhere, Paul clearly understands the idea of future reigning as a reference to our ruling in the future Kingdom of God. This is a very real and wonderful hope which we have, and is indeed part of the Gospel. "Israel" means something like 'God rules' (Gen. 32:22-28); His people are those over whom He rules. We therefore are under His Kingdom now, if we accept Christ as King over our lives.

Rom. 5:17,21 draws a parallel between Adam's sin and ours. His tragedy, his desperation, as he looked at his body, at his wife, with new vision; as his wide eyes wandered in tragedy around the garden: all who fall are in that position, eagerly reaching out to the clothing of the slain lamb.

5:18 This verse could be ended with an exclamation mark and be read as a summary, exclaimed in joy and wonder, of the preceding argument.

Justification of life- could be a legal term concerning how a person condemned to death has received “life” through being declared right.

Perhaps we feel that our preaching somehow lacks a sense of power and compulsion of others. Try explicitly telling them about the cross. The apostles recounted the fact of the cross and on this basis appealed for people to be baptized into that death and resurrection. There is an impelling power, an imperative, in the wonder and shame of it all. Joseph saw the Lord’s dead body and was compelled to offer for that body to be laid where *his* dead body should have laid. In essence, he lived out the message of baptism. He wanted to identify his body with that of the Lord. He realized that the man Christ Jesus was truly his representative. And so he wanted to identify with Him. And properly presented, this will be the power of response to the preaching of the cross today. “Through one act of righteousness [the cross] the free gift came unto all men to justification of life” (Rom. 5:18)- yet “all men” only receive that justification if they hear this good news and believe it. This is why we must take the Gospel “unto all men” (surely an allusion to the great commission)- so that, in that sense, the wondrous cross of Christ will have been the more ‘worthwhile’. Through our preaching, yet more of those “all men” who were potentially enabled to live for ever will indeed do so. This is why the Acts record so frequently connects the preaching of the cross with men’s belief. Negatively, men do not believe if they reject the “report” of the crucifixion (Jn. 12:38,39).

5:19 *Made sinners*- Gk. ‘to appoint, ordain’. It’s not that we as innocent people [which we are not anyway] were turned into sinners because someone else sinned, far away and long ago. Rather were “all men”- and Paul uses this term to emphasize how Jew and Gentile are in the same position- put into the category of Adam, of sinners, of guilty, of flesh. But the good news is that there can be a category change- if we can be “made sinners” we can likewise be made righteous.

One man’s obedience- a reference to the crucifixion, or to a life of obedience? Significantly, Paul writes in Romans of baptism as being “obedience” (Rom. 1:5; 6:16,17; 15:18; 16:26, also Acts 6:7). It’s as if by obeying the command to die with Him by baptism into His death, we are associating with His actual obedience to death in the cross. The Lord spoke of having been given a specific “command” by the Father to die on the cross (Jn. 10:18), which would encourage us to interpret His “obedience” here as His obedience to death on the cross.

Adam’s sin of commission (i.e. eating the fruit) may well have been a result of his sins of omitting to go forth out of the centre of the garden and multiply. By one man’s inattention (Rom. 5:19 Gk.) sin came into the world.

5:20 *entered*- s.w. only Gal. 2:4, where the Judaizers ‘sneaked in’ to the church. Why exactly Paul uses such a word isn’t altogether clear to me, nor to any of the many expositors I’ve read.

That the offence may abound- in the context, “the offence” [singular] refers to the specific sin of Adam- “the offence of the one man” (5:18). The Law was intended on one hand to bring life (Rom. 7:10); it was “holy, just and good”. But the effect of it in practice was to accentuate sin, and this result of human failure was also somehow under the overall hand of God. He on the one hand cannot be held guilty of leading men into sin by creating the concept of Divine law; for that Law which He gave was ordained to bring life. Yet He worked with and through human weakness, so that in the bigger picture, the result was that the Law convicted men of their sin *so that* God’s grace could superabound, abound yet more than sin abounded. God uses sin, and doesn’t just turn away from human failure in disgust; and in this we see a huge lesson for ourselves, we who are confronted on all sides by serious human failure.

Paul knew the ‘abounding’ aspect of the Father, when he wrote of how God does exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). How many times have we found that we prayed for one thing, and God gave us something so very much better? I see a kind of similarity with the way that God brought in the Law “that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly” (Rom. 5:20). God set up a situation in order that in due time, He

could lavish His grace the more. One almost wonders whether this is one of the reasons why God allowed the whole concept of sin to exist at all. After all, the God of boundless possibilities surely had ways to achieve His ends without having to allow a concept like sin in the first place. Seeing there is no personal Satan, the intellectual origin of the concept of sin surely lies with God. And perhaps He chose this simply as a way of being better able to express His amazing grace and love to sinners. Having lambasted Israel for their sins and described in detail their coming judgment, God then makes a strange comment, apparently out of context with what He has just been saying: “And therefore will Yahweh wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for Yahweh is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him” (Is. 30:18). God appears to be saying that He delays His actions, that He brings judgment, that He sets Himself *so* far above us- just so that He can get to show yet more mercy to us. Perhaps Joseph was manifesting God in the way he worked out that slow and detailed scheme of dealing with his sinful brethren... it has always seemed to me that he drew out the process just so that he could lead up to a climax of pouring out his maximum grace to them. Whilst the way seems long, “blessed are all they that wait for him”. God is even spoken of as concluding (Gk. ‘shutting up the eyes’) of Israel in the sin of unbelief, “that he might have mercy” upon both them and the Gentiles (Rom. 11:32).

5:21 *Sin has reigned unto death-* or, Gk., *in death*. We have changed masters and also changed our Kings. Our status has changed, but we must still try to live out that status change in practice- hence “let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it” (Rom. 6:12). Grace reigns as King right now, in that Christ reigns- and thereby we are right now in the sphere of His Kingdom.

So might grace reign through righteousness- in that God’s grace operates through the ‘mechanism’ of God and Christ’s righteousness being counted to us, so that we are counted as righteous, justified. And this comes to its ultimate term in physical, literal terms in our being given eternal life at the final judgment.

Grace, and the forgiveness it brings, reigns as a King (Rom. 5:21), in the sense that the real belief that by grace we are and will be saved, will bring forth a changed life (Tit. 2:11,12). The wonder of grace will mean that our lives become focused upon Jesus, the one who enabled that grace. Grace will be the leading and guiding principle in our lives, comprised as they are of a long string of thoughts and actions. And as with every truly focused life, literally *all* other things become therefore and thereby of secondary value. The pathway of persistent, focused prayer, the power of the hope of glory in the Kingdom, regular repentance... day by day our desires are redirected towards the things of God.

You cannot have abstract diabolism; the evil desires that are in a man’s heart cannot exist separately from a man; therefore ‘the Devil’ is personified. Sin is often personified as a ruler (e.g. Rom. 5:21; 6:6,17; 7:13–14). It is understandable, therefore, that the ‘Devil’ is also personified, seeing that ‘the Devil’ also refers to sin. In the same way, Paul speaks of us having two beings, as it were, within our flesh (Rom. 7:15–21): the man of the flesh, ‘the Devil’, fights with the man of the spirit. Yet it is evident that there are not two literal, personal beings fighting within us.

Paul makes a seamless connection between the reign of God’s grace now, and our future reigning in the literal Kingdom of God to be established materially upon earth at the Lord’s return: Grace reigns *unto* eternal life, i.e. the result of the reign of grace now is eternal life in the future (Rom. 5:21)... and thus “the ones receiving the abundance of the grace and of the free gift of the righteousness in [this] life *will* reign through the one, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17). The idea is that if grace reigns in our lives, then we will reign in the future Kingdom.

The Implications Of Baptism

One of the reasons for baptism is perhaps so that we realize that we can’t just drift into relationship with God; there must be a concrete point at which we decide for Him and His Son. The whole thing

is so counter-instinctive, as Naaman discovered- to get wet, with all the awkwardness of it being so public, to be exposed and vulnerable to the view of others, to be dipped under water by another person... it's not exactly painless and effortless. Commonly enough, the New Testament speaks of baptism as a calling upon the Name of the Lord. This must be understood against its Hebrew background- *qara' beshem Yahweh*, which originally referred to approaching God in sacrifice (Gen. 12:7,8; Ps. 116:4,17). God placed His Name upon places in order to make them suitable places for sacrifice to be offered to Him (Dt. 12:4-7,21; Jer. 7:12). Baptism was thus seen as a sacrificial commitment to Yahweh in solemn covenant.

Further, in the first century, such baptisms were required of Gentiles who wished to become proselyte Jews and thus enter "Israel". For orthodox Jews to submit to baptism demanded a lot- for it implied they were not by birth part of the true Israel as they had once proudly thought. The Jews thought of Israel in the very terms which Paul applies to Jesus: "We Thy people whom Thou hast honoured and hast called the Firstborn and Only-Begotten, Near and Beloved One" (1). The New Testament uses these titles to describe the Lord Jesus Christ- and we must be baptized into Him in order to be in His Name and titles. The Lord Jesus was thus portrayed as Israel idealized and personified, all that Israel the suffering servant should have been; thus only by baptism into Christ of Jew and Gentile could they become part of the true seed of Abraham, the Israel of God (Gal. 3:27-29). The act of baptism into Christ is no less radical for us in our contexts today than it was for first century Jews. All we once mentally held dear, we have to give up.

Our Relationship With God

Being baptized into the Name has quite some implications. In Hebrew thought, you called your name upon that which was your personal property- hence a wife took on the name of her husband because he placed it upon her. By baptism into the Name of the Father and His Son, we become their personal property, their woman, upon whom they have unique claims and obligations. Baptism in this sense is a kind of marriage contract with none less than the God of the universe. We can't drift into relationship with God; God has designed the whole experience of baptism so that we once and for all make a choice, to be with Him and not this world, to be in Christ and covered in Him, rather than wandering in the rags of our own righteousness and occasional half-hearted stabs at real spirituality.

Motivation To Powerful Preaching

There is no doubt that the cross and baptism into that death was central to the preaching message of the early brethren. According to the Bible, baptism is essential to salvation; yet we can't draw hoops around God and limit His salvation ultimately. The completeness and reality of the redemption achieved is expressed in Hebrews with a sense of finality, and we ought to not let that slip from our presentation of the Gospel either. There in the cross, the justice and mercy of God are brought together in the ultimate way. There in the cross is the appeal. Some of the early missionaries reported how they could never get any response to their message until they explained the cross; and so, with our true doctrinal understanding of it, it is my belief that the cross is what has the power of conversion. A man cannot face it and not have a deep impression of the absoluteness of the issues involved in faith and unbelief, in choosing to accept or reject the work of the struggling, sweating, gasping Man who hung on the stake. It truly is a question of believe or perish. Baptism into that death and resurrection is essential for salvation. Of course we must not bully or intimidate people into faith, but on the other hand, a preaching of the cross cannot help but have something compulsive and urgent and passionate about it. For we appeal to men on God's behalf to accept the work of the cross as efficacious for them. In this sense baptism is essential to salvation *from our perspective*. It can be that much of our preaching somehow fails in urgency and entreaty. We seem to be in places too expository, or too attractive with the peripherals, seeking to please men... or be offering good advice, very good advice indeed, background Bible knowledge, how to read the Bible effectively... all of which may be all well and good, but we should be preaching good news, not

good advice. The message of the cross is of a grace and real salvation which is almost too good to believe. It isn't Bible background or archaeology or potshots at interpreting Bible prophecy. It is the Man who had our nature hanging there perfect, full of love, a light in this dark world... and as far as we perceive the wonder of it all, as far as this breaks in upon us, so far we will hold it forth to this world. If we think there could be other paths to salvation, then we wouldn't preach Christ as we do. The zeal of the early brethren to witness for Him was because, as they explained, there is no other name under Heaven whereby we may be saved. People do not drift into covenant relationship with God; they have to consciously chose, and God has instituted baptism as a means to that end; to force a man or woman to a conscious decision and crossing of boundaries. And this is why we preach towards baptism, with an eye on future conversion, knowing that baptism is essential to salvation.

Lk. 3:12 records how there "came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?". There is a parallel between desiring baptism and realizing that they must *do* something concretely in their lives. The baptism process brings us into the realm of God's gracious forgiveness and redemption, and into living contact with the real Christ. There is no way we can be passive to this and do nothing about it.

Notes

(1) *The Apocalypse Of Ezra* 6.55-58 (London: S.P.C.K., 1917 ed.) p. 47.

6:1 *Shall we continue in sin...?*- Paul says he had been slanderously accused of teaching this (Rom. 3:8). He's here not only answering that false charge, but more positively, analyzing what our response should be to the great grace in which we now stand. In doing so, he expounds in more detail how we come to that position of being "in Christ", what "the obedience of faith" means in practice. And he's quite clear that this faith in Christ is expressed in the act of baptism.

Paul didn't just decide to write about baptism in Romans 6; the classic exposition of baptism which we find there is within a context. And it's not an appeal for people to be baptized- it's written to baptized believers, appealing for them to live out in practice the "in Christ" status which they had been given as a result of their baptisms. If we really feel the result of our baptism, we will not "continue in sin". Martin Luther used to overcome temptation by taking a chalk and writing *baptizatus sum*- 'I am baptized'. And therefore we simply cannot continue in servitude to sin. As Karl Barth put it in his needle-sharp analysis of baptism's implications: "Baptism recalls me to the service of witness, since it recalls me to daily repentance" [Karl Barth, *Dogmatics In Outline* (London: S.C.M., 1972 ed.) p. 151.]. It should be noted that allusions to baptism in Paul's letters are in passages where Paul is trying to correct misunderstandings about unity and way of life (Rom. 6; 8:12-17; Gal. 3:27-4:6; 1 Cor. 1-4, 12). The early brethren had a tendency to forget the implications of baptism. And so it is with us all today. Entering the body of Christ by baptism means that our sins are in a sense against our own brethren, our spiritual body, as well as against the Lord personally. Like the prodigal, we realize we sin against Heaven and men.

6:2 *live therein*- the idea is of living in the sphere of sin, identifying ourselves with being "in Adam" rather than the sphere of "in Christ". Romans 6 is talking about being in one of two spheres- in the flesh, and in the Spirit; in Adam, or in Christ; continuing in condemnation, or rejoicing in our justified status in Christ. It is actually impossible for us to 'live in sin' for a moment, because we are no longer "in" that sphere or position.

Baptism is a change of masters- but we are still bondslaves, not of sin, but of God. The implications of this figure may not be immediately apparent to the modern mind. We are totally committed to the Master- this is who we are, bondslaves. In Gen. 44:9, being dead is paralleled with being a slave; and there appears a parallel between being a bonds slave and dying in Gen. 44:9,17. Indeed, Romans 6 draws the same parallel- death to sin is part of being a slave of Christ. The very fact we are baptized means we should not continue in sin, seeing we are dead to it (Rom. 6:2). This is one of the most basic implications of a first principle which we live in ignorance of most of our days.

6:3 *Know you not...?* – a common appeal of Paul’s in his letters (Rom. 7:1; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:13). His earnest desire was that his readership would appreciate the real import of what they knew in theory.

Galatians was one of Paul’s earlier letters. In it, he speaks of his own baptism: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live” (Gal. 2:19-21). Years later he writes to the Romans about *their* baptisms, in exactly the same language: “All of us who have been baptized... our old self was crucified with him... the life he lives he lives to God” (Rom. 6:1-10). He clearly seeks to forge an identity between his readers and himself; their baptisms were [and are] as radical as his in their import. Note how in many of his letters, especially Galatians and Corinthians, he switches so easily between “you” and “we”, as if to drive home the fact that there was to be no perception of distance between him the writer and us the readers.

6:4 *by baptism*- Gk. *dia* baptism. It is through baptism, on account of it, that we are “in Christ” and associated with the saving death of the Lord Jesus. This is how, mechanically, as it were, we become “in Christ”. The use of *dia* here demonstrates the colossal importance of baptism.

“Therefore we *are* buried with him by baptism into death... knowing this, that our old man *is* crucified with him” (Rom 6:4,6). Every time someone is baptized, the Lord as it were goes through His death for them again. And yet baptism is an ongoing process, of dying daily. We are in Christ, connected every moment with the life and living out of His cross. We *are* dying with Him, our old man *is* crucified with Him because His death is an ongoing one. “It is Christ that died... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Rom 8:34-36). According to Isaiah 53, He on the cross was the sheep for the slaughter; but all in Him are *all day long* counted as sharing His death, as we live out the same self-control, the same spirit of love and self-giving for others, regardless of their response...

Raised... by the glory of the Father- doesn’t mean that some bright light as it were hauled the body of Jesus out of the grave. The glory of God is essentially His character and attributes; when Moses asked to see God’s glory, He heard the essential character of God proclaimed. Christ was raised from the dead *dia*, for the sake of, this glory. He perfectly revealed it in a life and personality which was totally like God’s, omitting no aspect of righteousness and not committing any sin. He gave His life for us, to become our full representative; and therefore it was appropriate that He be raised again, for the wages of sin is death, but He had done no sin. His same perfection is counted to us, if we believe in Him and into Him through “the obedience of faith” in baptism. And it is on this basis that we too shall rise again. Paul mentions this aspect of the Lord’s resurrection to explain to us something more about *how and why* immersion into His death and resurrection can lead to *our* resurrection. We must consider that His resurrection is in fact going to be ours exactly because His righteousness is counted to us, and therefore *dia* that, for the sake of it, we took shall be raised to life eternal.

The theory of Him only ‘acting out’ reaches its nadir when we come- as each Christian must- to personally contemplate the meaning of the dead body of Jesus. That lifeless corpse, in contrast with the immortal God who cannot die, was surely the ultimate testament to Christ’s total humanity. God did not die for three days. The Lord Jesus did. His subsequent resurrection doesn’t in any way detract from the fact that He was really dead for three days. Indeed, His resurrection would also have been a cheap sham if He had actually not been really dead, with all that death means. We too, in our natural fear of death (cp. Heb. 2:15), come to that dead body and wish to identify ourselves with it, so that we might share in His resurrection. Baptism is a baptism into His death (Rom. 6:3-5). It’s more than some act of vague identification with the dead and resurrected Jesus. We are “buried with him”, literally ‘co-buried’ (Gk. *syn-thaptein*) with Him, inserted into His death, sharing the same grave. If His death was not really death, then baptism loses its meaning, and we are left still searching for another Saviour with whom we can identify in order to rise out of the grave. Jesus

Himself was baptized in order to emphasize our identity with Him: “Now when *all* the people were baptized, and Jesus *also* had been baptized...” (Lk. 3:21).

Our experience of grace means “that we should serve in *newness* of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6). We don’t *have* to serve God in the sense that He grants us salvation by pure grace, not by works. The blessing of the Lord has nothing added to it by human toil (Prov. 10:22 RVmg.). But just because we don’t *have* to do it, we do. This is the power of grace; it doesn’t force us to monotonous service, but should be a wellspring of fresh motivation, to do perhaps the same things with an ever fresh spirit. The pure *wonder* of it all needs to be felt- that *for nothing but pure faith* the Lord will grant us eternal redemption for the sake of the Lord’s death and resurrection. Which is why Rom. 6:4 says that because of this, and our appropriation of it in baptism, we therefore live in *newness* of life, a quality of life that is ever new. Through His death, a new and living way is opened (Heb. 10:20). We share the ever fresh life which the Lord lived from His resurrection. It does us good to try to imagine that scene- the Son of God, coming out of the grave at daybreak. He would have seen the lights of Jerusalem shimmering away in the distance, a few kms. away, as everyone woke up and went back to work, the first day after the long holiday. Getting the children ready, caring for the animals... it was back to the same old scene. But as they did so, the Son of God was rising to newness of life, standing alone in the fresh morning air, with a life that was ever new, with a joy and dynamism that was to know no end... His feelings are beyond us, but all the same, distorted by our nature, by our spiritual dysfunction, into *our* lives *His* life breaks through.

6:5 *planted together*- the image appears to be of two seeds growing up together out of the ground. To parallel Christ with us in this way is arresting; that we, so far behind Him, our Master, King and hero- should actually be seeds and tender plants growing up next to Him. The suggestion could be that Christ is still growing, His life is a newness of life, an ever fresh experience, a growth, which goes on eternally; and we are growing together with Him. And that growth has started even now. The initial planting under the earth is symbolized by going under the water of baptism.

likeness of his death- the reference could be to baptism itself as the likeness of His death. But perhaps the idea more essentially is that our death to sin is a copy, a “likeness”, of Christ’s death to sin (6:10). It’s an elevating thought- that we are seeking to copy His death in our daily death to sin. Not only through our rejecting of temptation, but our recognition that we are in a state of being dead to sin and its demands, because we are counted right before God by our faith in His grace.

“Likeness” is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character. In this we as it were die with Christ (6:8)- not just in the dirt and heat of battling and resisting temptation to sin, but in that we have identified ourselves with Him there, we are in the sphere of Christ rather than Adam. What we do with our thoughts, our spare time, what our aims and ambitions are in life, where our heart is- is within the Christ sphere rather than the Adam sphere, the spirit rather than the flesh. We are in the “likeness” of Christ’s death by baptism, and He is in the “likeness of [our] sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3)- thereby showing the mutuality between Him and us, and how representation and response to it is two-way. He is like us, and we therefore seek to become like Him.

God forbid that for us, the cross should be a mere art form that we admire from afar. We are to be intimately connected with the spirit of the Lord as He hung there. In baptism, we are to be ‘incorporated with him in a death like his’ (Rom. 6:5). The Greek word *symphytoi* speaks of a symphony, in which we and the Lord in His time of dying are united together. Likewise Rom. 8:29 and Phil. 3:21 speak of being ‘fused into the mould of his death’. He, as He was there, is to be our mould. The strange ability of the cross to elicit powerful response in practice is one way in which

the blood of Christ sanctifies us. His sacrifice not only brings forgiveness for past sins, it is the inspiration to a sanctified future life.

6:6 *knowing this*- see on Rom. 6:3. As in 6:9, “knowing” these things means more than factual knowledge; Paul is driving home the practical implications.

old man- the contrast between the old man and the new man is similar to that which Paul draws in 1 Cor. 15:45 between the “first man”, Adam, and the “last” man, Christ. Therefore I suggest that the “old man” here is a reference to our status in Adam; by baptism we pass from that status to that of the “new man”, Christ. Eph. 4:22-24 exhorts baptized believers to put off the old man and put on the new man- i.e. to live out in practice the change in status which occurred in baptism. “The new man” comprises Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:15; Col. 3:10,11)- connecting with how Gal. 3:27-29 explains that baptism into Christ likewise gives us a status of “in Christ” which thereby obviates any difference between Jew and Gentile. If “the old man” refers to our status in Adam which has now ended, been crucified, then we need no longer be phased by the fact that no baptized believer manages to totally avoid sinning; none of us have put to death the old manner of life in totality. All our days we seek to respond to the change of status which has occurred, living appropriate to that change.

crucified with Christ- the very pinnacle of the Lord’s achievement, which we tend to gape at from an awed distance reflecting that ‘I would not, could not, possibly, have done that’, is counted to us insofar as we are in Christ. “Is crucified” is a translation which misses the point- the Greek speaks of this as a one time act which we did with Christ, rather than any ongoing identity with the crucifixion through our sufferings over the course of our life. That one time point of identity was surely baptism, when we were counted as in Christ, changed status from Adam to Christ, and His crucifixion was counted to us as if we had died there. This interpretation is in context with Paul’s argument in Romans; he’s not merely saying that our sufferings in fighting sin bring us identity with Christ’s crucifixion, or that thereby we know something of the spirit of the crucified Christ. For we are so, so far behind Him. And our pious efforts fall far short, and certainly would not entitle us to a resurrection. By our being counted as dead, even crucified, with Christ, because we are seen as “in” Him, we will be thereby also resurrected with Him in that we will share in His resurrection life just as we were identified with His death. Indeed, all that is true of Him becomes true of us. We died with Him (6:8), were crucified with Him (6:6), buried with Him (6:4), raised with Him (Col. 2:12; 3:1); are seated with Him in Heaven (Eph. 2:16), are simply “with” Christ in life today (Rom. 8:17,29), and so will eternally be “with the Lord” Jesus (1 Thess. 4:17).

Body of sin... destroyed- at the day of judgment? Paul speaks of how the life / living of Jesus is now manifested in our “mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:11). So we still have “mortal flesh” now. It will only literally be no more at the Lord’s return. This could require the next clause to be translated “that from then onwards [i.e. after the day of judgment] we shall no longer serve sin”. However, this phrase could be returning back to this life- with the idea being that because at the day of judgment our body of sin will be destroyed, and this was guaranteed by our baptism into Christ, we therefore shouldn’t serve sin, in having sin as our master. We are no longer in that sphere, under that domination- but instead under the domination of Christ and within His sphere. Note the difference between the “old man” being crucified and the “body of sin” being therefore, henceforth, destroyed. The old way of life [which is how Paul uses “the old man” in Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9] is dead, we have changed status, living as “the new man”, Christ. This will come to its physical manifestation in the destruction of our physical body and the gift of the new body at the day of judgment.

6:7 *He that is dead is freed from sin*- is virtually quoting Rabbinic writings. However in the Talmud there is the statement that “when a man is dead he is freed from keeping the law” (*B. Shabbat*, 151 B). Paul provocatively replaces “law” with “sin”. Not that God’s law is sinful in itself, but he has been emphasizing that the Law is associated with sin because it as it were magnifies sin and leads to the conscious crossing over of a Divine line which results in sin being imputed to man. However,

“freed” here translates the usual word for “justified” or acquitted. A slave can no longer serve a master after the death of the slave. And this is how God counts us.

6:8 *If we be dead*- Gk. ‘if we died’, in baptism into Christ’s death. Paul is writing to baptized believers; his thought is therefore ‘Since we died with Him’.

We believe that we shall also live with Him- yet the fact someone has been baptized doesn’t necessarily mean that they do at this point believe that they will live with Christ. Paul surely means that if we really accept the reality of what happened at baptism, this must influence our faith now- that we shall therefore live with Him eternally in the future, and we therefore shall live with Him and in Him, within the sphere of His life, right now. The logic here is powerful, intense, and cutting. It can’t be squirmed out of. If we really were baptized into His death- then we [almost] have to believe that we will also live with Him, because He didn’t stay dead but rose to life. The power of baptism, therefore, is that it reminds us subsequently in our lives of the simple fact that therefore, as Christ died and lives, so I too “shall”, I really will, “live with Him”.

6:9 *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead...*- “we believe that we shall live with Him” (6:8) because we know that Christ was raised from the dead. To believe that He rose from the dead is therefore no painless intellectual matter. If He rose, and if I really died with Him, then I shall for sure live with Him. Because He is me and I am Him; He in me and I in Him. This is what Paul is saying, amidst our own doubts and fears about our moral failures trying to shout him down.

No more dominion- if death and sin have no more dominion over Christ, they have no dominion over us, and therefore we are to live as if sin has no dominion over us (6:14).

6:10 *Died unto sin once*- this apparently obvious fact is added to develop the argument that because He totally isn’t under the power of sin and death any more, we who are in Him are likewise free from it, totally and utterly- by status. And seeing His death isn’t ongoing, our freedom from sin should likewise be ongoing.

Lives unto God- the fact that even now, the Son of God lives “unto God”, to His glory, for His sake, unto Him... is a sure proof that He isn’t “God” in any Trinitarian sense. But just as His life is constantly and in every dimension “for God”, so we also should be living unto God now (6:11)- not a hobby, a part time religion, but a devotion to His sphere in every aspect of our existence.

The life that He lived and now lives, and the death that He died, become ours (Rom. 6:10 RV). We identified with that life, that death, at baptism. But it’s an ongoing thing. We live in *newness* of life. The life in Christ is not a stagnant pond, but rather living water, spring water, bubbling fresh from the spring. The Lord Jesus died and rose as our representative. Therefore we live out His life, His death, His rising again to new life; and so as we sing, “into *my* life *your* power breaks through, living Lord”. And this is what we give out to others- for “he that believeth in me, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of springing water” for others (Jn. 4:10; 7:38). We can experience the newness of life of Christ right now. His life is now made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:11), insofar as we seek to live our lives governed by the golden rule: ‘What would Jesus do...?’. The life that He had and now lives is the essence of the Kingdom life.

Throughout the NT, there is a clear link between the preaching of the cross, and men and women being converted. There is a power of conversion in the image and message of Christ crucified as our representative. Man cannot remain passive before this. Baptism is an appropriation of His death and resurrection to ourselves. This is why the response to the preaching of the cross in the 1st century was baptism. And the response doesn’t stop there; it continues, in the living of the life of the risen Jesus in our lives after baptism: “For the death that he died, he died unto sin... the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to dead unto sin but alive unto God [because you are] in Christ [by baptism into Him]” (Rom. 6:10,11 RV). The death Christ died for us, the life He lives, are all imperatives to us now.

6:11- see on Rom. 2:26; 6:10.

Reckon you also yourselves – uses the common Greek word for “impute”. As God imputes Christ’s righteousness to us, we are to count ourselves, perceive ourselves, feel ourselves, as really like that. Hence the emphasis- “you also yourselves”, we, us, are to see ourselves as God sees us, rather than merely accepting that He wishes to see us as He chooses to see us. His opinion of us in the ultimate reality for us- and we are to share that view.

Paul’s emphasis is not so much that baptized believers will be resurrected when Christ returns, true as this is and important within his overall argument; but rather that having been raised with Christ, the new resurrection life of Jesus breaks through into our lives right now. Elsewhere Paul likewise talks of our participating in glory right now (2 Cor. 3:16), whereas the ultimate glory is yet to come and the transformation of our bodies (Phil. 3:21).

6:12 *Let not sin reign* - We are to live out in practice the status we have in Christ. “Sin shall not reign over you” (6:14); but we must therefore make an effort to not let sin reign. Likewise in Rom. 8:9,12: “You are not in the flesh... do not live according to the flesh”.

Mortal body- having said that “the body of sin” is to be destroyed (6:6) and that we are to live in the sphere of Christ rather than Adam, we have changed masters and should live and feel like that, Paul reminds us that our body is still mortal- reminding us that we are still awaiting the change of body which is to come at the final judgment when Christ returns.

Lusts thereof- there are within the human body the natural passions / desires to sin, “the passion of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). They aren’t sinful in themselves- for the Lord Jesus was sinless and yet had our same “mortal body”. But the fact they are the source of sin and are within our bodies explains why there is such a strong connection between sin and our bodies, leading to expressions such as “the body of sin” (6:6) and “sinful flesh” (8:3). But this isn’t to say that the body is itself sinful or that it’s somehow a sin to be human.

6:13 *Instruments*- s.w. armour, weapon (Jn. 18:3; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:4). We are called to fight, to serve in the army- of either sin or Christ. No passivity or wavering between the positions is therefore possible. We have changed sides. See on 6:23.

Yield yourselves- Gk. ‘present yourselves’. The aorist tense could suggest a one time presenting of ourselves- at baptism? And if we didn’t appreciate at the time of our baptism that this is what we were doing, we can do it now. Maybe that explains the otherwise difficult to translate tense usage here.

6:14- see on Rom. 6:12.

Shall not have dominion- yet we still sin. But Paul is again talking about our changed status- sin is not now our Lord, our master; instead, Jesus is. *Kurieuo* (“have dominion”) is clearly intended to contrast with *Kurios*, the usual Greek word translated “Lord” with reference to the Lord Jesus. See on Rom. 6:9. The Lord Jesus rose again *so that* He might be our Lord, s.w. “dominion”, over us His people (Rom. 14:9). “Shall not” can be translated as “Sin will not have dominion” (ESV)- so that it’s not a demand that we stop allowing sin to dominate, but rather an exaltation that the “sin” sphere of things will not in the end have dominion in our lives, because we are in Christ.

For you are not under the Law- would’ve been more radical to Jewish readers and listeners than we may appreciate; for Judaism’s big issue has always been that the Law is required in order to curb or restrain sin, and that societies without the Law are more sinful than those influenced by it. But here Paul is saying that if we forget about the Jewish Law and live as believers justified by pure grace, this will have more practical power in delivering a man from sin’s dominion than any attempt at obedience to a legal code. “Under” was appropriate to slaves ‘under’ a master. We are ‘under’ grace as our master rather than law. The strength of sin is the law (1 Cor. 15:56); if the law isn’t our master, then sin likewise isn’t our master, and therefore sin will not ultimately dominate us.

6:15 See notes on “under...” at 6:14. If we are under grace rather than law, then we will not be counted by God as sinning. We declared right, justified. Paul may mean there that we are not *counted as* continual sinners [even though we believers do keep on sinning, sadly], because we are under grace as a master rather than law. Or he may mean that those truly under grace don’t keep on sinning, because the wonder of their position inspires them not to. This contrasts sharply with the Judaistic view that it is the Law which curbs sin. Paul is arguing the very opposite: that leaving the sphere of Law and coming under grace will actually curb sin.

6:16 *Yield... to obey*- see on 6:13. The obedience would seem to be a one time obedience- in baptism- an obedience to a form of doctrine delivered to them (6:17). “The obedience of faith” which Paul spoke of in Rom. 1:5 he now interprets as baptism. Note the parallel between faith and obedience in Rom. 10:16.

Paul expected other believers to share his familiarity with the words of Christ. There's an example in Rom. 6:16: " Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are... whether of sin... or of obedience?". This is alluding to Mt. 6:24 concerning not serving two masters. Paul is surely saying: 'Come on, this is Matthew 6, you can't serve two masters! That principle ought to be firmly lodged in your heart!'. In terms of Paul's argument about which status or sphere we are in, his point is simple: you can only be in one sphere or the other, either under law or grace, sin or obedience. It's therefore impossible to continue sinning. in God's view [and it's His view of the matter which is the only thing worth anything]- because we are either justified in Christ, or not justified and condemned sinners. The tree brings forth either good or bad fruit (Mt. 7:18)- in that we are “in” either the good tree or the bad one. Paul deploys this argument to answer the objection that we may as well continue sinning- he's saying not merely that we ought not to do that, but rather that ultimately we *cannot* do that, because we are either under sin or under obedience. Notice that he personifies “obedience” as a slave owner, to whom we now belong. The two slave masters in view here are called “sin” and “obedience”. We are clearly to identify “obedience” with the Lord Jesus. And Paul has just written about the singular and spectacular “obedience” of Jesus in dying for us on the cross (see on Rom. 5:19). This act made Jesus to be Lord and Master for us. We are obedient to His obedience, as it were. Which is the whole idea of baptism- we are buried together with Him, we die with Him, His death becomes ours, and thus His obedience unto death is ours.

Obedience unto righteousness- the end result of our serving “obedience”, i.e. the Lord Jesus, is righteousness. But Paul's argument has been that all our righteousness is as filthy rags, and righteousness has to be imputed to us. The end result of being under “obedience”, in Christ, is that righteousness is imputed to us, we are declared righteous, justified, as we stand before the final judgment. Lack of attention to Paul's argument and the meaning attached to the terms being used in Romans can lead the casual reader of this verse to think that by acts of obedience we become righteous- and that is the very opposite of what Paul has been teaching all along.

6:17 *That form of teaching to which you were handed over*- must be interpreted in the context of Paul's insistent theme that we have changed masters, changed status. “Handed over” could be an allusion to handing over a slave from one master to another- the form of teaching would therefore refer to the form or mould to which we are exposed under our new master, the Lord Jesus. In this case it would refer to post baptismal rather than pre baptismal teaching. Alternatively he may be referring to the fact that the teaching or doctrine of Christ had been delivered or handed over to them from Christ Himself (s.w. 1 Cor. 11:2,13; 15:3). However, it should be noted that Paul says that the baptized believer is handed over to the doctrine / teaching of Christ- and not the teaching to the believer. Perhaps the contrast is with Rom. 2:20, where we read of the “form of knowledge and of truth in the law [of Moses]”. We have been handed over to the form or mould of teaching which is in Christ rather than Moses.

Paul's writing that he thanks God for their change of status was maybe to encourage his readers to understand the degree to which in very deed they had changed status- because they seemed to doubt it, as we too tend to.

We are frequently spoken of as being slaves of God. At baptism, we changed masters (Rom. 6). Yet the implications of being a bond-slave are tremendous. We are not our own. We have been bought with a price. And we cannot serve two masters. There's a powerful, powerful logic here. We are either slaves of ourselves, or slaves of God. Ultimate freedom to do 'what we want' is actually not possible. So we may as well take the path of slavery to the Father and Son. Unless we firmly accept this, life will become motion without meaning, activity without direction, events without reason.

The doctrines we believed at baptism were a 'mould of doctrine' (Rom. 6:17 Gk.)- they define the person we turn into. The calling of the Gospel is ongoing- it's not that we hear the call, respond to it, and the call in that sense ceases. See on 2 Tim. 3:5.

There is a set of doctrines which Eph. 4:4-6 calls "the one faith"; which Rom. 6:17 calls "that form of doctrine" to be believed before baptism; "the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13).

"Repent ye and believe the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15) might seem to be in the wrong order- for surely belief of the Gospel comes before repentance. And so it does. But the point is, life after conversion is a life of believing the basic Gospel which led us to conversion and repentance in the first place. Thus Rom. 6 teaches that we were once servants of sin... and we expect the sentence to conclude: 'But now you are servants of righteousness'. But it doesn't. We were once servants of sin but now we have obeyed the form of doctrine delivered to us... and are *therefore* servants of righteousness. The service of righteousness is a result of accepting "that form of doctrine", perhaps referring to an early catechism or statement of faith taught to baptismal candidates, summarizing the power of the Gospel.

"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (Jn. 8:34), but those in Christ are counted as not being the servants of sin, but of Christ (Rom. 6:17). The connection with Jn. 8:34 makes this tantamount to saying that they are reckoned as not committing sin.

6:17,18- An allusion to 1 Sam. 17:8,9?

6:18 *Made free from sin*- would imply a manumission, a payment of a price by some gracious person to free a person from slavery. Note that the image isn't of one slave master buying a slave from another master. It's of genuine freedom being bought for the slave, by grace. But "being then made free", because of this, the freed slave decides to become a slave of the gracious Saviour who paid for their release. Being a slave of Christ is therefore described in 6:19 as a freewill yielding of our bodies, every part of them, to His service. 1 Enoch 5:7,8 and other Jewish writings spoke of 'freedom from sin' coming in the Messianic Kingdom and the destruction of Satan; but Paul applies that phrase to the experience of the Christian believer *now* - see on 1 Cor. 10:11. [J. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) pp. 248-259. The same phrase occurs with the same meaning in the Testament of Levi 14.1.]

You became- the change of status is so great that there can be no real question about who in practice we should serve. By status we are the servants of righteousness- but that is not to say that we don't at times in our humanity serve sin in practice. We have yet to become in practice who we are in status.

6:19 *The infirmity of your flesh*- in Paul's case, being all things to all men meant that at times He sacrificed highest principle in order to get through to men; he didn't just baldly state doctrinal truth and leave his hearers with the problem of whether to accept it. He really sought to persuade men. He magnified his ministry of preaching to the Gentiles, he emphasized the possibility of Gentile salvation, "If by any means I may provoke to emulation ['incite to rivalry'] them which are my flesh [the Jews], and might save some of them" (Rom. 11:13,14). This hardly seems a very appropriate

method, under the spotlight of highest principle. But it was a method Paul used. Likewise he badgers the Corinthians into giving money for the poor saints in Jerusalem on the basis that he has boasted to others of how much they would give (2 Cor. 9:2), and these boasts had provoked others to be generous; so now, they had better live up to their promise and give the cash. If somebody promised to give money to charity and then didn't do so, we wouldn't pressurize them to give. And we wouldn't really encourage one ecclesia to give money on the basis of telling them that another ecclesia had promised to be very generous, so they ought to be too. Yet these apparently human methods were used by Paul. He spoke "in human terms" to the Romans, "because of the infirmity of your flesh" (Rom. 6:19 NIV); he so wanted to make his point understood. And when he told husbands to love their wives, he uses another rather human reason: that because your wife is "one flesh" with you, by loving her you are loving yourself. 'And', he reasons, 'you wouldn't hate yourself, would you, so – love your wife!'. The cynic could reasonably say that this is pure selfishness (Eph. 5:29); and Paul seems to recognize that the higher level of understanding is that a husband should love his wife purely because he is manifesting the love of Christ to an often indifferent and unappreciative ecclesia (5:32,33). And yet Paul plainly uses the lower level argument too. It is possible to discern an element of human appeal in some Biblical statements. Thus the Spirit encourages husbands to love their wives as themselves, because effectively they are loving themselves if they do this (Eph. 5:29). Yet we are also warned that a characteristic of the last days will be a selfish loving of *ourselves*. Paul speaks of how he puts things "in human terms" (Rom. 6:19 NIV); e.g. he suggests that fear of the judgment alone ought to at least make us sit up and take our spiritual life seriously (2 Cor. 5:11), even though the tenor of Scripture elsewhere is that this shouldn't be our motivator.

We should note that Paul is almost apologizing for his metaphors, as if he had put something too crudely. His metaphors are 'humanly' quite acceptable- from the courtroom, slavery etc. Given the height and wonder of the grace we are considering, any metaphor, any similitude, any language- is inadequate and even borders on the inappropriate. And note that Paul is writing all these things, both the metaphors and the apology for them, under Divine inspiration.

The changeover from the downward spiral to the upward spiral ought to have begun at baptism; but as with some of the Roman believers in the first century, a believer can slip back into the downward spiral: "Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" (Rom. 6:19 NIV). The life of sexual impurity is an "ever increasing" downwards path; the endless quest for new relationships and sexual novelty doesn't need to be described. It is significant that having "left the natural use of the woman" (Rom. 1:27), male homosexuals are described by Paul as descending on an "ever increasing" path of perversion; they rarely remain where they are, in moral terms.

Rom. 6:19 speaks of how the ever increasing downward spiral of obedience to sin is turned round at baptism, so that we begin an upward spiral of obedience to righteousness. God does good unto those that are good, but leads those who turn aside even further astray (Ps. 125:4,5). Those who are "[born] of God" are able to hear and understand God's words (Jn. 8:47)- and baptism is surely how we are born of God (Jn. 3:3-5). This seems to open up the possibility of yet higher growth once we are baptized- it's all an upward spiral, like any functional relationship.

Rom. 6:19-23 makes the contrast between how serving sin leads to ever increasing sin, whilst serving Christ results in ever increasing righteousness. We are all too aware of the upward (downward!) spiral of sin- we well know the feeling of losing our spiritual grip for an hour, day or week, and sensing how sin is ever increasing its hold over us. But by our union with Christ in baptism it is quite possible, indeed intended, that we should get into an upward spiral of obedience, in which one spiritual victory leads to another.

6:20 *Free from righteousness*- Gk. 'not a slave of'. Again Paul is labouring the point that one cannot serve two masters. And he does so in a way which makes us think: 'That's stating the obvious! Why

are you repeatedly stating the obvious?'. He does this because it's not obvious to us that we really are servants of "righteousness" rather than "sin". We wonder whether we are really counted as righteous or not. Note here that the names of the two slave masters are "sin" and "righteousness"- in Rom. 6:16 they were "sin" and "obedience". We are slaves of Christ, He is our righteousness, and it is counted to us; so "righteousness" is an appropriate title for Him, "the Lord our righteousness".

6:21 *What fruit...*? There was no fruit in slavery; it was existence, rather than a life lived.

Now ashamed- shame is associated with condemnation at the final judgment. We recognize we are condemned sinners, and feel the shame for that. The verse could be punctuated: "What fruit did you have then? That of which you are now ashamed". This is the great paradox in the Christian experience- feeling condemned for sin, and yet believing in our new status, that we are declared right before the judgment seat of God.

6:22 *Become servants*- see on 6:18. We were made free from slavery, rather than being bought by a slave master from our previous owner. But we chose to become His slaves out of gratitude for His grace. The same Greek is found in 1 Cor. 9:19: "I have *made myself a slave* to all, that I might gain the more". The idea is that made ourselves servants / slaves, having been made free from our old master. The two slave masters are now called "sin" and "God".

You have your fruit- but Paul's whole intention of writing to the Roman church and ministering to them was so that they would bear fruit (Rom. 1:13 cp. 15:28). If we truly understand that we are no longer in "sin" but the servants of God, in His sphere of things and His acceptance, then we will bear fruit in practice, it simply has to be like that, it's inevitable. The idea of bearing fruit is connected in the context to baptism into Christ. Jn. 12:24 records the Lord likening His death to a seed falling into the ground, going as it were into a grave under the soil, but rising again and bearing fruit. Again- all that is true of the Lord Jesus is true of us who are in Him. Paul has been saying that we were planted together with Him (6:5), buried with Him, rose with Him- and as He is the plant that bears fruit, so are we. We therefore aren't being exhorted to bear fruit, so much as being told that we have our fruit- for we are in Him. And naturally, this means we will try to live in practice as we are by status. But by status, we do now have our fruit- His fruit- and the end of all this will at the final judgment be "everlasting life".

6:23 *Wages*- used specifically of pay given to soldiers (Lk. 3:14; 1 Cor. 9:7; and every usage in the LXX is in this connection- 1 Esdra 4:56; 1 Macc. 3:28; 14:32). This would continue the military analogy which was used in Rom. 6:13- of presenting our limbs as armour, weapons [Gk.], to King Sin. See also the military term in Rom. 7:8.

The *wages* of sin and the *gift* of God are here contrasted. "God" and "sin" are the names of the two slave masters in 6:22. We noted under 6:22 *you have your fruit* that the everlasting life will be the end result of our service, given at the day of judgment at Christ's return. It may be that we are intended to visualize the wages of sin being paid at the same time. In any case, all believers, all servants of God, will die in any case. This isn't the wages of sin. Surely the "death" that is in view here in 6:23 is the second death at the day of judgment.

Asaph laments how the wicked seem to be so prosperous, and then remembers that one day God will awake. More than this, he comes to see that "they... *shall* perish: thou *hast* destroyed them... how are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they *are* utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. 73:27,19). The wages of sin *is* death (Rom. 6:23)- not 'it will be death at the judgment', it *is* right now the response God makes to sin. Because God is without time, the judgment has effectively happened to them. We are come to "God the judge of all"- even now (Heb. 12:23).

In Jesus Christ- remember that the context of this whole section in Romans is that of becoming in Christ by baptism *into* Him. This is what associates us with the gift of eternal life.

Our natural man, the devil, is a personification of sin. He cannot be reformed; he can only be destroyed by death. "The wages of the sin: death" (Rom. 6:23 Diaglott) seems to suggest that Rom. 6:23 is not saying that we die for each specific sin we commit (you can only die for one sin anyway, because we only have one life); rather is it saying that the end of the natural man, "sin", the devil within us, is death. Therefore we must associate ourselves with the man Christ Jesus, both in baptism and in our way of life, so that the personification of Christ within us will be clothed with a glorious bodily form at his return.

7:1 *Are you ignorant*- continues the appeal to the baptized believers in Rome to not be ignorant of the implications of the things which they have believed and signed up for by baptism into Christ. See on Rom. 6:3.

To them that know the Law- could suggest that this section is addressed to those within the ecclesia in Rome who knew the Law, i.e. who were Jews. There were Gentiles in the church (Rom. 1:5-7,13-15) for whom that phrase wouldn't be appropriate. Chapter 7 could therefore be considered as an appeal to the Jewish subgroup within the Roman church. The language of '*becoming* dead to the law' in 7:4 would only be appropriate to those who had once lived under it, i.e. Jews.

As long as he lives- an allusion to common Rabbinical teaching that the only Jew exempted from keeping the Law is a dead Jew. Paul has been arguing in chapter 6 that we really did die in baptism. Therefore, we are dead- and the Jews themselves taught that a dead man didn't need to keep the Law.

Romans 6 (about sin)	Romans 7 (about the Law)
"Sin shall not have (anymore) dominion over you: for you are not under the Law" (:14)	"The Law has dominion over a man... as long as he lives" (:1)
"Dead indeed unto sin" (:11)	"She is loosed from the Law" (:2)
"Being then made free from sin" (:18)	"She is free from that Law" (:3)
"As those that are alive from the dead... you have your fruit unto holiness" (:13,22), having left sin.	"You should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (:4), having left the Law.
"Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (as a result of sin having dominion over you)" (:13,14)	"When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members... but now we are delivered from the law" (:5,6)
"Therefore... we also should walk in newness of life" (:4)	"We should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" of the Law (:6)

7:2 *If the husband be dead*- it's tempting to interpret this as a reference to the death of Christ ending the Law. But that interpretation runs into problems in 7:3, for there the woman- the body of believers- is married to "another man". See note on 7:4. Or it could be that Paul is seeking to make the simple point that the death of one person can free another person from a law / legal obligation; which is what happened in the death of Christ.

7:3 *Be married*- not the usual Greek word for marriage. *Ginomai* has a wide range of meaning; the idea may be of her sharing with, being with, another husband at the same time as she is married to her first husband. Rather than making any specific point about marriage (see on 7:4), Paul may be showing that it's not possible for a woman to have two husbands at the same time- "man" as in "another man" is the same Greek word translated "husband". This is being said in the context of

seeking to persuade us how impossible it is for us to be in covenant relationship with the two spheres or positions [of law and grace, condemnation and justification] at one and the same time. This is both a comfort and a challenge to us.

She shall be called- the Greek is usually used about a Divine statement, i.e. she will be called by God.

7:4 *Wherefore...*- connects back to 7:1. The point being made in 7:2,3 is that death means a person is free from keeping the Law. Paul isn't here teaching about the nature of marriage nor the conditions under which he considered remarriage could occur; his theme is that death frees us from the Law. And more precisely, it was by the death of another that the woman had been freed from a law- that law no longer applied to her, not because she had died, but because another had died. This is the significance of the death of Christ in freeing us from the Law.

Dead to the law by the body of Christ- is to be interpreted in the light of Col. 2:14, which also in a baptism context speaks of the Law being nailed to the cross. But it was the body of Christ which was nailed to the cross. If we are baptized into His body by baptism, nailed and crucified with Him, then the Law is dead to us too.

Married to another- the metaphor is mixed and almost impossible to consistently interpret- demonstrating if nothing else that logical consistency wasn't of paramount importance to the Bible writers nor to the God who inspired their words.

Bring forth fruit unto God - We are now freed from the Law, and are free to marry Christ and bring forth fruit, children, unto God. The fruit of the Spirit is what will last beyond the span of our lifetimes, just as the desire for us to have significance beyond the grave is part of the motivating factor in the desire to have children. The Greek for 'bring forth fruit' occurs four of its eight times in the New Testament in the parable of the sower. The good seed of the Gospel is to bring forth fruit in us. Yet this doesn't mean that Bible reading somehow brings forth fruit; it is our active intercourse and union with the Lord Jesus as a person which brings forth the fruit.

There is a frequent association of sin (the Devil) and the Mosaic Law throughout Romans (this is not to say that the law is itself sinful – it led to sin only due to human weakness). A clear example of this is found in Romans 6 talking about us dying to sin and living to righteousness, whilst Romans 7 speaks in the same language about the Law; thus “he that is dead is free from sin... you (are) *dead indeed unto sin*” (Rom. 6:7,11) cp. “You also are become *dead to the Law*” (Rom. 7:4). Other relevant examples are tabulated above on Rom. 7:1.

In the parable of the sower, the seed is surely Jesus (Jn. 12:24)- our eternal destiny is decided upon our response to Him and His teaching. We are bidden believe in or into Jesus. Belief involves the heart; it doesn't mean to merely give mental assent to some propositions. It must in the end involve believing in a person, with all the feelings and emotions this involves. We are married unto the Lord Jesus, in order that we might bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4). All spiritual fruit is therefore an offspring, an outcome, of a living, daily relationship with the Lord Jesus. This is how crucial it is to know Him.

7:5 *When we were in the flesh*- in the sphere of the flesh. The NIV “sinful nature” is a poor translation; no change of nature occurred when we were baptized. Rather did we cross over from one status to another, from flesh to Spirit. We still possess the same “mortal flesh” as we did before conversion.

The emotions of sins- the Greek word translated “emotions” is usually rendered “sufferings”. Sinful passions are their own suffering. The word is only used again in Romans 8:18, speaking of how “the *sufferings* [s.w. “emotions”] of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed”. The sufferings of this life are, for us, the sufferings related to sin.

7:6 *We are delivered from the law*- “delivered” is the same Greek word translated “loosed” in 7:2: the woman is loosed from the law of her husband. The suggestion is that Paul’s audience had been married to the Law and now remarried to Christ because the Law had as it were died. This confirms our suggestion [see on 7:8] that Romans 7 is aimed at Jews who had once been associated with the Law but were now in Christ. The death of the Law is made parallel with the death of Christ, in that He nailed it to the cross, in the sense that He embodied the Law by perfectly obeying and fulfilling it. The intention of the Law was that if fully obeyed, it would lead to a perfect man- the Lord Jesus. In this sense it was “ordained to life”. In this sense “the Law” and the person of Christ can be legitimately presented in parallel as they are by Paul here.

Spirit... letter- are likewise contrasted in Rom. 2:29 and 2 Cor. 3:6.

It can be that we perceive even our service of God as the same old scene- the same round of daily Bible reading (although, why not try reading from another version or in another language?), the same cycle of church meetings and Bible schools. The same faces, the same issues. But our experience of grace means “that we should serve in *newness* of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6). We don’t *have* to serve God in the sense that He grants us salvation by pure grace, not by works. But just because we don’t *have* to do it, we do. This is the power of grace; it doesn’t force us to monotonous service, but should be a wellspring of fresh motivation, to do perhaps the same things with an ever fresh spirit. The pure *wonder* of it all needs to be felt- that *for nothing but pure faith* the Lord will grant us eternal redemption for the sake of the Lord’s death and resurrection. Which is why Rom. 6:4 says that because of this, and our appropriation of it in baptism, we therefore live in *newness* of life, a quality of life that is ever new. Through His death, a new and living way is opened (Heb. 10:20). We share the ever fresh life which the Lord lived from His resurrection. It does us good to try to imagine that scene- the Son of God, coming out of the grave at daybreak. He would have seen the lights of Jerusalem shimmering away in the distance, a few kms. away, as everyone woke up and went back to work, the first day after the long holiday. Getting the children ready, caring for the animals... it was back to the same old scene. But as they did so, the Son of God was rising to newness of life, standing alone in the fresh morning air, with a life that was ever new, with a joy and dynamism that was to know no end... His feelings are beyond us, but all the same, distorted by our nature, by our spiritual dysfunction, into *our* lives *His* life breaks through.

7:7 *covet*- Philo and other Jewish writings taught that covetousness was the origin of every sin. James 1:15 may allude to this idea by saying that covetousness [s.w.; AV “desire”] gives birth to sin.

Although sin exists amongst people who don’t know God’s law, we come to “know” sin by the Law. The Greek *ginosko* translated “know” has a wide range of meaning; the idea could be that Paul had not known sin in the sense of not being responsible to Divine judgment for it- until he knew the Law.

Clearly perception of sinfulness grew in Paul after his conversion. He considered himself blameless in keeping the law (Phil. 3:6); and yet chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:16). He realized that sin is to do with attitudes rather than committed or omitted actions. I'd paraphrase Paul's personal reminiscence in Rom. 7:7-10 like this: "As a youngster, I had no real idea of sin. I did what I wanted, thought whatever I liked. But then in my early teens, the concept of God's commandments hit me. The command not to covet really came home to me. I struggled through my teens and twenties with a mad desire for women forbidden to me (AV, conveniently archaic, has "all manner of concupiscence"). And slowly I found in an ongoing sense (Gk.), I grew to see, that the laws I had to keep were killing me, they would be my death in the end". Paul’s progressive realization of the nature of sin is reflected in Romans 7:18,21,23. He speaks there of how he came to *know* that nothing good was in him; he *found* a law of sinful tendency at work in him; he came to *see* another law apart from God’s law at work in his life. This process of knowing, finding and seeing his own

sinfulness continued throughout his life. His way of escape from this moral and intellectual dilemma was through accepting the grace of the Lord Jesus at his conversion. In one of his earliest letters, Paul stresses that he felt like the least of the apostles, he honestly felt they were all better than he was (1 Cor. 15:9). However, he reminisces that in his earlier self-assurance, he had once considered himself as not inferior to "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). Some years later, he wrote to the Ephesians that he felt "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). This was no Uriah Heep, fawning humility. He really felt that he was the worst, the weakest, of all the thousands of believers scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean at that time. As he faced his death, he wrote to Timothy that he was "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), the worst sinner in the world, and that Christ's grace to him should therefore serve as an inspiration to every other believer, *in that* none had sinned as grievously as he had done. It could well be that this is one of Paul's many allusions back to the Gospels- for surely he had in mid the way the publican smote upon his breast, asking God to be merciful "to me *the* sinner" (Lk. 18:13 RVmg.). "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" is rooted in the Lord's words that He came to call sinners and to seek and save the lost (Mt. 9:13; 18:11; 1 Tim. 1:15).

7:8 Taking occasion- a military term, referring a base camp. This continues the image of sin as a military leader (see on Rom. 6:23).

Wrought in me- in direct opposition to the common Jewish idea that the Law curbed sin. Indeed the Talmud in b. Qidd. 30b claimed that God said at Sinai: "I created the evil desire but I also created the Torah as its antidote; if you occupy yourselves with the Torah, you will not be delivered into its hand" [See E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979) Vol. 2 pp. 425-428.] Paul is arguing from experience- both Israel's over the years and his own- that the reverse is true. The very existence of commandment tends to lead to that commandment being broken, as every parent soon learns (or re-learns) in the parenting process.

All manner of concupiscence- in gripping autobiography, Paul relates the innocent days when (as a child) he lived without the knowledge of law and therefore sin. But then, the concept of commandments registered with him; and this "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (Rom. 7:8). "Concupiscence" is a conveniently archaic word for lust; and in the thinking and writing of Paul, the Greek *epithumia* is invariably used in a sexual context. See on 2 Cor. 12:7.

Without the Law, sin was dead- connects with the fact that through baptism into Christ, we are "dead indeed unto sin" (Rom. 6:11). Sin depends upon the law for strength; but the Law died with Jesus; He fulfilled it perfectly, He achieved the intention, for Him, the Law was indeed ordained to life (Rom. 7:10). If the law is really dead, then sin is powerless- for those who are in Christ, who fulfilled the Law. It's almost too good news; that the end of law means the end of the power of sin. This was all especially radical for Jewish ears. The 'death' of the Law is a strong concept- and it challenges not only Sabbath keepers, but all of us who think that surely obedience to Divine law must have some role to play in our salvation.

A case can be made, especially from Rom. 7:8-10, that the whole of Rom. 7:7-25 is Paul talking about Israel- we have shown in notes on Rom. 7:1 that Paul is speaking in this section specifically to Jews. In this case, Paul would have so identified himself with Israel that he speaks in the first person, as if he personally 'is' them. He so loved his people that he saw all Israel's history personified as it were in himself. Another approach to bear in mind is that it was quite possible in first century literature to use *ego*, the first person singular, as a literary or rhetorical device without any reference to the author's personal situation. Thus it could be argued that the "And if I..." phrases in 1 Cor. 13:1-3 are an example of this, rather than Paul talking about himself. Other possible examples from the NT and from throughout contemporary writings are given in R.H. Gundry, *The Old is Better: New Testament Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) pp. 229,230 and J. Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and Its Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) pp. 73-91.

The way in which Adam is to be seen as everyman is exemplified by how Paul speaks of his own spiritual life and failure in terms of Adam's encounter with sin in the form of the serpent. Note the allusions to Adam's fall in Rom. 7:8–11: "But sin [cp. The snake], seizing an opportunity in the commandment [singular – there was only one commandment in Eden], produced in me all kinds of covetousness [the essence of the temptation to eat the fruit]... I [as Adam] was once alive apart from the law [Adam was the only person to ever truly exist for a time without any law], but when the commandment [singular – to not eat the fruit] came, sin sprang to life and I died [as Adam], and the very commandment that [seemed to] promise[d] life [cp. The hope of eating of the tree of life] proved to be death to me. For sin [cp. the snake] seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me [s.w. 2 Cor. 11:3 about the serpent deceiving Eve] and through it killed me". Note how Rom. 7:7–13, with all the Adam allusions, speaks in the past tense; but in the autobiographical section which follows in Rom. 7:14–25, Paul uses the present tense – as if to suggest that both Paul and by extension all of us live out the essence of Adam's failure. He was everyman, and his salvation through the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus, can be everyman's salvation if he so chooses. But in our context we note the pointed – and it is pointed – omission by Paul of any reference to a Satan figure.

7:9,10 appear to be alluding to God giving the Law to Israel. See on 7:8. In this case, Paul is speaking of himself in solidarity with Israel; for it could never be really said that a Jewish child was once without the Law. Indeed, first century Judaism emphasized this point- that Jewish children are under the Law [see S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) Vol. 2 p. 771.]. Throughout Romans 1-8, Paul is provocatively seeking to answer potential Jewish objections and strengthen the case of Christ's Gospel against them. We have pointed out many examples of how he alludes to and deconstructs contemporary Jewish writings and opinions, sometimes at the cost of writing in a way which is apparently obtuse and difficult for Gentile readers to understand. And yet he now openly identifies himself with his beloved people. This, surely, is our pattern in seeking to persuade others- to identify with them, rather than merely lecture them. It almost seems that in the same way as Adam is set up as everyman, so Paul wishes himself personally to be seen as every Jew. The way he elsewhere describes himself as a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" with impeccable Jewishness would confirm this (Phil. 3:5). See on Rom. 7:11.

7:9 Alive without the Law- Paul presumably refers to his earliest childhood or babyhood, when he wasn't accountable to the Law.

When the commandment came- a reference to Paul's Bar-Mitzvah, or his attaining the age of responsibility to God.

Sin revived- the only other time the word is used in Romans is in Rom. 14:9, where we read of the Lord's resurrection as Him 'reviving'. Clearly the personified 'sin' here is being set up as the very antithesis to the Lord Jesus.

And I died- a reference to being in the dock before God, tried and condemned as a sinner. So certain is that sentence of ultimate death that it was as if Paul had died. This interpretation is, I suggest, in keeping with the previous metaphors in Romans with regard to death. So instead of tending to life and blessing, and curbing sin, the Law instead accentuated sin and led to the condemnation of death.

7:10 unto life- this presumably implies that perfect keeping of the law would have resulted in a person living the life of God, the kind of life which will be lived in the eternal life (which might also be implied in Lev. 18:5 cp. Rom. 10:5; Ps. 19:7-10; Ez. 20:11; Lk. 20:28). Death for such a person would therefore be necessary because of their relation with Adam, but would in another sense be unjust, in that they had not sinned. The perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus therefore required His resurrection. His eternal life wasn't given to Him by grace, but He was entitled to it by obedience.

He had no pre-existent eternal life; He was given eternal life because of His obedience. And His life is counted to us who are “in Him” by grace. See on Rom. 7:12.

Found- s.w. Rom. 7:18,21. Paul obviously examined his life and therefore can speak of what he had found / discovered about himself. This level of self-knowledge is surely our pattern... for the unexamined life isn't life but mere existence.

7:11 *deceived me... slew me*- alluding to Gen. 3:13: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate”. The allusion is to Adam and Eve in Eden. In chapter 5 (and see on Rom. 3:23), Paul has repeatedly taught that Adam is everyman. And now he includes himself in this, by applying the language of the failure in Eden to himself. Likewise his finding the commandment ordained to life becoming the means of death (7:10,13) may reference Gen. 2:16,17. Yet whilst Adam is indeed everyman to Paul, Adam was perceived as Israel in much Rabbinic writing; and Paul saw himself as the personification and epitomy of Israel (see on Rom. 7:9,10). The Greek translated “deceived” really means to seduce. How did sin seduce Paul through or by means of the Law of Moses? Surely in the sense that Paul fell for the temptation to justify himself by means of obedience to that Law. But because he didn't keep the Law perfectly, he was therefore condemned to death, and in a sense, received the sentence- and in that sense sin by means of the Law “slew” Paul. The only other time the word for ‘deceived / seduced’ occurs in Romans is in the practical section, which in this case again alludes to this doctrinal section: “[the Judaizers] by fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”, as the serpent deceived Eve (2 Cor. 11:3 s.w.). Just as Paul deceived himself, fell to the seductive idea that we can be justified by works of obedience to the Law, so the Judaizers were teaching the same. By so doing, they were sin personified- they were doing the work of “sin”- using the attraction of obedience to a legal code to seduce believers into a position where they were in fact going to be condemned to death- because under that sphere, there can be no justification, no declaring right, for those who have in even one sense infringed Divine law. It's all a complicated yet powerful way of saying that we simply must not and cannot be in the sphere of relying upon works; which means we have to just accept the gift of salvation by grace, much as all within us cries out against it.

7:12 Paul hastens here to emphasize that the Law itself isn't sinful or wrong in itself; it is indeed “holy, just and good” (a common Jewish description of their Law); but the knowledge of any legal code creates accountability for sin. Only in that is there the connection between the Law and sin. The Law was “ordained to life”, and I have suggested under 7:10 that this could mean that perfect obedience to the Law would have led to living the life of God, to moral perfection. The Law could not of itself give eternal life, in that it could not undo the mortality which was to pass upon all Adam's descendants. The Law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness toward others and devotion to God. Significantly, the Lord Jesus is described in the same words- the Holy and Just One (Acts 3:14), as if He was such on account of the way His obedience to the Law developed such a character.

7:13 *Was then that which is good made death...?*- there was no actual change in the Law, in that it didn't once offer life and then changed to offer death. The Law was of itself holy, just and good- but it was used [by God?] to make sin “appear” as sin, to accent and highlight sin for what it is; and through man's failure to keep the Law, sin was indeed shown to be an exceedingly great sinner (this is how the Greek behind “might become exceeding sinful” can be translated”). I find it significant that in Paul's sustained personification of sin in these passages, he never once uses the terms “devil” or “satan”. He clearly saw the problem as human sin, which he personifies because one cannot have abstract “sin”, in that according to the Bible, sin is committed by and within the minds of personal beings, and in no other realm or dimension. It's appropriate therefore that sin be personified.

We must doggedly hold on to the interconnections of thought within Paul's argument in Romans. Chapters 1-5 convict all of sin, demonstrating that works can in no way save us. Chapter 6 then outlines how we can be saved; through association with Christ through baptism and a life “in

Christ", which will result in God seeing us in the exalted way He does. Chapter 7 basically goes on to say 'But, of course, you'll still sin, even though chapter 6 has explained how God doesn't look at that side of you if you truly try to live "in Christ" '. Paul says many things about his life in Rom. 7 which seem to consciously connect with his description of life before baptism in Chapter 6 (e.g. 7:13 = 6:23; 7:14 = 6:17; 7:23 = 6:12,13; 7:24 = 6:6; 7:25 = 6:16,17). The reason for this is that after baptism, we have two people within us; the man of the flesh, who totally dominated our pre-baptismal life, is still within us; but (as Chapter 7 so graphically shows) he is now in mortal conflict with the man of the Spirit, with whom we identify our real selves. Chapter 8 then goes on to encourage us that despite this conflict, sin is dead in Christ, and if we are in Him, then this is really how God sees us. Therefore Rom. 8 stresses that our state of mind is so crucial; if we are led of the Spirit-man, then we are assured of salvation at that point in time. Rom. 9-11 then appeals specifically to Israel to accept the glorious truth of all this, and then Chapters 12-16 show the practical response we should all make. Recognizing the existence of the new and old men within him, Paul can speak in Rom. 7 as if he is two different people; "I myself serve the law of God", but "my flesh" serves sin. Likewise David asked God not to hide His face from him, David *personally*, (Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7), but to hide His face from David's *sins* (Ps. 51:9). And one wonders whether the way the records of the Lord's temptations are written implies some similar recognition by the Spirit of the two 'men' within the Lord.

7:14 *I am carnal* - but "in Christ" he was not carnal (1 Cor. 3:1 s.w.). Again he has in mind states, positions, spheres. "Carnal" is literally 'fleshly'. He points up the contrast between the flesh and Spirit. We cannot get into the 'Spirit' sphere by obeying the Law, even though the Law is "spiritual", given by and of the Holy Spirit. The way to get into the sphere or status of the Spirit isn't by obedience to a spiritual Law, because we keep failing to be obedient. We enter the sphere of the Spirit by baptism into Christ, "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). He is "the Spirit" in that He embodies the Spirit of God- and therefore this is His title in Rom. 8:26. And Romans 8 will argue further that it is by our acceptance of our new status by grace, believing that we really are "in Christ" and justified by God's grace, that the Spirit will work in our lives; so that we are indeed in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Sold under sin- as if he was a slave to the "sin" master. This is how the word is used in Mt. 18:25 and many times in its LXX usage. Yet in chapter 6 he has exalted that in Christ, we died to the power of sin (6:2) and are not under sin (6:18,22). So what does Paul mean? He may mean that he *had been* sold under sin; maybe using a literary rhetorical device which is relevant to the unredeemed Jews rather than himself personally; maybe he is at this point totally identified with Israel and is personifying Israel under the Law without Christ; or is it that he is admitting his personal failure to walk the talk he has outlined so eloquently in chapter 6; or is he recognizing that although we have changed status and masters with our real self, the inward man who delights in God's law (7:22), we are still human and that human side of us still sins? My own suggestion is that Paul is here quoting a phrase from Rabbinic writings, although it would seem that the source has been lost to us. This would be in keeping with his style throughout Romans 1-8. He would then be using the Jewish writings themselves to demonstrate the misery of the human position without Christ; and this would fit in with the way at times in Romans 7:7-25 he appears to be consciously personifying Israel.

7:15 *I allow not*- Gk. to know, recognize, perceive, approve. The word has a wide range of meaning, so interpretation cannot be too forcefully pressed here, but the idea may be that Paul is sharing his impression that the sinful things he does, he performs almost unawares, almost unconsciously, and he may be alluding to the image of slavery- mindless obedience, actions performed as automatisms. This is not to justify nor minimize human sin, but to rather make the point that it is performed within the context of being a slave to sin; and by status, we have changed masters. Note that Paul concludes this section by saying that in his mind he serves as a slave the law of God, whilst with his

flesh he is still the slave of sin (Rom. 7:25). Yet all the same, we are ultimately “in Christ”, with no condemnation possible, because we serve Him (Rom. 8:1).

What I would- “would” means ‘to will’, and occurs frequently in this section (Rom. 7:15,16,18,19,20,21). Paul is saying that what he wills to do, he simply lacks the will to do; he laments the weakness of his will in being obedient. The interlude about the election of Israel in Romans 9-11 practically exemplifies the theology of Romans 1-8; and this theme of Paul’s weak will is commented upon in Rom. 9:16: “So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy”. It’s not that salvation is only for he or she who somehow finds within themselves some steel will against sin. It is not of him that wills, but of God’s grace. Were it a question of steel will, it would be a matter of works; but due to our change of status, it isn’t a matter of steel, but rather of God’s grace and our acceptance of it. In fact, Rom. 9:18 goes further, and states that it’s not a question of *our* will but of God’s will. Some He has mercy upon, as He wills; others He hardens, as He wills. And we in Christ are for sure those whom He has ‘willed’ to have mercy upon. And as exemplified by the choice of unspiritual Jacob over nice guy, man of the world Esau- that Divine will in election simply doesn’t depend upon works. Otherwise it wouldn’t be grace; indeed, the whole concept of predestination and Divine calling regardless of works is raised by Paul to demonstrate the principle- that it’s not by works or lack of them that we are acceptable to God.

What I hate, that I do- this contrasts with the triumphant passages in Romans 6 which speak of our change of status from being under sin to being under Christ. That contrast is surely intentional. We could say that Paul is now in chapter 7 talking of our practical experience, of how things are on the ground. They’re bad; sin is strong and we are weak. But he emphasizes this in such a graphic manner in order to point up the wonder of the fact that all this notwithstanding, we are by *status* justified, declared right before God, have left the sphere of the flesh and are in that of the Spirit. The reality of present failure makes our changed status all the more wonderful. Perhaps another comfort from all this is that if we truly *hate* sin (cp. Rev. 2:6) rather than love every moment of it, then we are somehow on the right track and are in fact like Paul within the sphere of the Spirit in our hearts.

7:15-25 Paul’s autobiographical passage in Romans 7, where he describes his sinfulness and the results of it, is actually expressed in terms of Adam’s fall in Eden. So many phrases which he uses are lifted out of the LXX of Genesis 3. The evident examples are: “I would never have known what it is to covet, if the Law had not said, You must not covet [cp. Eve coveting the fruit]... when the command came... sin [cp. the serpent] beguiled me... to kill me... sin resulted in death for me by making use of this good thing... who will rescue me now from the body of death?”. Adam is presented to us as ‘every man’; and so Paul applies this to himself, and yet through the allusion to ‘every man’ in Adam, he sets himself up also as our example.

7:16 *I consent-* Gk. ‘to speak together with’. The very fact we struggle against sin, we have a will not to disobey the Law, is in fact speaking together with the Law, agreeing that it is good. Whilst in the primary context Paul is writing to Jewish Christians with the Mosaic Law in view, the principles are the same for any Divine law at any time. The comfort is that if we feel we ‘would not’ sin / break the Law but end up doing so, then actually, we are speaking in unison with the Law, we are not actually in disagreement with it.

7:17 *No more I that do it-* the same Greek as in Rom. 6:9, where “no more” means ‘not any longer’, as in Rom. 7:20. For those in Christ, like Paul, our sins are no longer done by us but are considered as committed by the old man, the Adam, the status, sphere and person we are no longer identified with. We are to understand our sins as somehow separate from the real me, the ‘me’ with whom we finally identify. ‘It’s no longer me, but sin who sins’ seems to be the idea... as if Paul is dissociating himself from himself; and that’s a position which surely all true believers can identify with.

sin that dwells within me- an allusion to the Jewish concept of the *yetser ha ra*, the inclination to evil. The Rabbis taught that this can be curbed by the Law. But Paul is saying that the Law actually empowers this inclination, and the victory is through God's gracious counting of us as right in Christ. See on 7:19 *the good that I would*- a reference to the supposed good inclination in man, the *yetser ha tob*. The very idea of sin dwelling within me suggests that "sin" and "me" are different categories, even if they are related.

7:18 *For I know*- the idea could be 'I have come to realize'. Do we analyze our own sinfulness as deeply as Paul did? See on Rom. 7:7.

To will is present- surely an allusion to the disciples in Gethsemane, with willing spirits but weak flesh (Mt. 26:41). They were in the wrong, their weakness in stark contrast to the watchful, sweating Lord Jesus as He struggled against sin. And Paul invites us to feel the same. The Greek for "present" occurs only here and in Rom. 7:21. It means literally 'to lie near' and could have in mind the language of Gen. 4:7, where sinful Cain was encouraged that a sin offering lay near him, outside the door, ready for him to confess his sin over and sacrifice.

But how to perform- Paul confessed to an inability to translate his will into action. Yet in 7:25 he will soon rejoice that he had found the answer in Christ, which we have consistently interpreted as a reference to our being "in Christ" by status in Him. The Greek for "perform" occurs later in Romans, where Paul glories of the many things "which Christ has wrought [s.e. 'perform'] by me" (Rom. 15:18). For that not to be a statement of pride nor trust in the works which Paul has so often exposed as valueless before God, we must understand Paul as totally committed to the idea of Christ working or performing through him. He has finally found "how to perform" the works he had so wished to- by believing totally in his "in Christ" status, feeling the extent to which he was now at one with Christ, and thereby sensing the extent to which Christ was working His works through him, the works he would love to have performed whilst under the Law, but found himself simply not strong willed enough to perform.

That which is good- in the context must surely refer to the Jewish Law which was the "good [thing]" (Rom. 7:12,13,16). There was no "good thing" within Paul's flesh, no natural tendency to fulfill that Law; and so he found no way to totally obey that Law as he had so desperately wanted to in his youth.

When Paul laments that he cannot find "how to perform that which is good", he is speaking about the Law of Moses. For the context of Romans 7 repeatedly defines the Mosaic Law as that which is "holy, just and good... the law is [the] good [thing]", the law of God in which Paul delighted (Rom. 7:12,16,22). The "no good thing" which dwelt within Paul was therefore a description of his inability to keep the Mosaic Law, rather than any reference to human nature- for the "good thing" has just been defined as the Mosaic Law (Rom. 7:18). But all this was to create the lead in to the realization that now in Christ, there is now no condemnation.

7:19 *the good that I would*- a reference to the supposed good inclination in man, the *yetser ha tob*, which the Rabbis said was strengthened by the Law (see on 7:17). Paul seems to be saying that this good inclination is a myth, or if it exists, it has little cash value in the battle against temptation. The way of escape is through God's grace in Christ. W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (New York: Harper & Row 1948) pp. 19-27 demonstrates beyond cavil that Paul in this section of Romans is constantly alluding to and critiquing the Rabbinic ideas of the *yetser ha tob* and the *yetser ha ra*. "The good" must connect with the same word being used in Rom. 7:12,13 to describe the Law of Moses as "good". Paul so wished to be perfectly obedient to the Law- but found it impossible.

The evil... I do- the same words are to be found in Paul's warning that Divine condemnation, "tribulation and anguish", awaits every man who 'does evil' (Rom. 2:9). Paul was so aware that his sin did in fact merit the term "evil", and condemnation before God's judgment. The more we

appreciate the extent and implications of our sin, the deeper will be our sense of relief and glory at the wonderful way we are 'declared right' by God.

7:20 *No more I that do it*- see on Rom. 7:17. He sees fit to repeat the teaching of v. 17, so important is this- that we are not to identify our real self with our sinful side.

7:21 *Find then a law*- "law" often in the context refers to the Law of Moses. Paul may mean 'I find then with respect to the Law'. He could conceivably be using "law" merely in the sense of "principle".

Evil is present- the same word has just been used in 7:18, where the desire to do good is likewise "present" or lying next to Paul. The impression is of the two desires, to do good and to do evil, are lying next to Paul; he must decide which one to take up, but he almost automatically seems to pick up the "evil".

7:22 *I delight in the Law*- hating the evil, delighting in God's law, yet finding oneself doing exactly what we don't wish to do... all this is exactly the experience of believers in Christ today. We really are in Paul's position, and have every reason to share in his later positivism- for it is based on the fact that we don't do the works we need to, yet we are saved by grace.

Paul had an amazing commitment to unity in the brotherhood. One could say that it was this which led him to his death, and certainly to political self-destruction in the politics of the early church. For his desire to unite Jewish and Gentile Christians was humanly speaking a loser- the Jewish converts simply would not give up their allegiance to the synagogue, with all the political and economic benefits this involved; nor would they really accept Gentiles. And Gentiles were never going to accept Jewish observances, indeed Paul knew this to be spiritually wrong. I submit that the whole epistle to the Romans is an exposition of the Gospel which has Jewish-Gentile unity as its underlying burden. This becomes apparent in the opening chapters. This to me is the key to understanding Romans 7. There Paul opens his heart and speaks frankly of his own inner conflicts. He says that he delights in [keeping] the law of God, yet he has a principle within him which seeks to make him captive to the law of sin (Rom. 7:22). I suggest he may be referring to his love, as an ex-Pharisee, of the Law of Moses, but this leads him to desire to keep the whole Law, including the *halakah* [the ordinances of the Rabbis]. He speaks of his struggle to both ignore the Jewish laws, and yet keep them. He concludes that he cannot keep them adequately, and so he surrenders to justification by faith in Christ alone. I read Paul as saying that he initially accepted justification in Christ, but then after his conversion he went through a period of seeking to keep the Law, and "sin revived". And so he strongly concluded that he must throw himself solely upon Christ's grace.

1 Pet. 3:4 speaks of the spiritual man within us as "the hidden man of the heart... a meek and quiet spirit". This confirms that this "man" is the personification of a spirit, or attitude of mind. Thus our real spiritual person is "hidden". The world therefore cannot understand us, or be truly close to the believer who has the spiritual man utmost in their heart. The Gospel itself is a "mystery" ('something hidden'), yet this hidden mystery is the dynamic power in our "hidden man" of the Spirit. All that is hidden will be openly revealed in the Kingdom (Mt. 10:26). The inward man of Rom. 7:22 is what is so important; yet the LXX in Lev. 3:14-16 uses the same word to describe the fat surrounding the intestines, which God appeared to so value in the sacrifices. It was not that He wanted that fat in itself; but rather He saw that fat as representing a man's essential spirituality, that which is developed close to the heart, unseen by others, but revealed after death.

7:23 *I see*- Gk. to behold, view. Paul is speaking as it were from outside of himself, or more accurately, from outside of the hopeless sinner whose behaviour and weakness he so laments. This device serves to indicate the degree to which he chose to be identified not with that 'person', but with the man Christ Jesus to whom in his mind, in his deepest heart, he belonged and ultimately identified with. Looking at our position this way, it becomes apparent that what I would term 'ultimate identity' is the ultimate question of our whole existence- who in our hearts do we identify

with, wish to be with, love rather than hate? Christ, or sin? We see in this whole passage the very clear answer in the case of Paul. I can say at this time, it's clear in my own case. And I know it is in that of so many believers.

Another law...- Paul speaks of a battle between two laws. A battle is usually unto death, but in this case, Paul is taken captive, and captives taken in battle [if they were spared] always entered slavery. So Paul implies he is in slavery- at least, in the flesh. The 'law' is perhaps that of 7:21- the principle that whenever he would do good, there is another reasoning which appears next to ["present" AV] that desire to do good. And this principle invariably wins. But we are tempted to see an association between that law / principle and the Law of Moses. For the very same word is used, and if Paul simply meant 'principle', he could have used such a word in Greek.

Warring- a related word is used in James 4:1, about lusts warring in our bodies. The existence of such warring isn't wrong in itself, it's part of being human; it's which side wins the battle which counts; and even moreso, which side we in our deepest hearts identify ourselves with.

7:24 *Wretched*- the Greek word is elsewhere used about the feelings of the rejected before God's judgment (James 5:1; Rev. 3:17), likewise in the LXX (Is. 47:11; Mic. 2:4; Joel 1:15; Zeph. 1:15). Paul feels as if he is even now standing before the judgment seat of God, and is condemned- yet suddenly he rejoices that he is in fact amazingly saved by Christ. This is the very theme of the earlier sections of Romans- that we are suddenly declared right, justified, as we stand condemned in the dock before God. This lends weight to the suggestion that Romans 7 is indeed autobiographical of Paul, declaring the process of his own conversion, yet telling the story, as it were, in terms which present him as personifying every Jew under the Law.

Deliver me – the same word occurs in Romans in the excursus about Israel in Rom. 11:26- where Christ is "the deliverer" who comes to deliver hopelessly sinful Israel, whom Paul embodies in this section in Romans 7.

Body of this death- yet Paul has argued at the beginning of Romans 7 and elsewhere that just as the body of the Lord Jesus died on the cross, so every believer has already died with Christ. And yet clearly Paul still feels trapped within the body, with all the temptations which are part of being human.

Romans 7 and 8 are so opposed to each on surface level reading. At the end of Romans 7, Paul is lamenting 'Oh wretched man that I am!'. At the end of Romans 8, he is rejoicing in the utter certainty of salvation, apparently lost for words [even under inspiration] to gasp out the wonder of it all. So huge is the difference of spirit that expositor after expositor has concluded that this must all be read biographically- as if in Romans 7 Paul is speaking of his life before conversion, and goes on in Romans 8 to describe his life afterwards. But Greek tenses [unlike Hebrew ones] are precise. The tenses in Romans 7 make that a very strained reading. Paul is saying that he *right now* feels utterly frustrated by his constant doing that which he doesn't want to do, his apparent inability to do good, and his wretchedness. I submit that the two chapters dovetail together. It was only through the appreciation of personal sin which we meet in Romans 7 that Paul could reason through to the paean of praise and confidence which he reaches by the end of Romans 8.

The Bible has so much to say about death, depicting us as having a "body of death" (Rom. 7:24). And yet humanity generally doesn't want to seriously consider death. Yet death is the moment of final truth, which makes all men and women ultimately equal, destroying all the categories into which we place people during our or their lives. If we regularly read and accept the Bible's message, death, with all its intensity and revelation of truth and the ultimate nature of human issues, is something which is constantly before us, something we realistically face and know, not only in sickness or at funerals. And the realness, the intensity, the truth... which comes from this will be apparent in our lives.

7:25 *Through Jesus Christ*- in the sense that we can become “in Christ” and all that is true of Him becomes true of us.

With the mind I myself- the classic statement of personal identity, the climax of the whole exclamation of relief, the answer to all the spiritual frustration and anguish of this chapter. He himself, his real self. Identified with being a slave of God; but his flesh continued to serve sin.

8:1 *No condemnation* – referring back to the idea of Rom. 5:16,18, which are the only other places in the NT where the word occurs. We have been declared right before God’s judgment; there is now no condemnation any more. Even though in Rom. 7:24 Paul has been saying he feels the wretchedness of condemnation as a sinner (see note there).

Who walk not after the flesh- too easily the wonderful promise that there is no condemnation for those in Christ can become muted by this apparent rider, that we must walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Yet Paul has been lamenting throughout the preceding chapter 7 that he walks after the flesh. His argument throughout the letter so far has been that although we continue committing sin, by status we are in Christ. The condemnation, the adverse verdict, has been removed. We are justified, declared righteous. And this is because we are located “in Christ”. Paul is surely aware of the apparent contradictions and tensions within his argument- so he’s surely foreseeing our objection, that we still walk after the flesh. And he states that we who are in Christ Jesus do not walk after the flesh. It’s not a condition- as if to say ‘There is no condemnation for us who are in Christ *if* we walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh’. For this would make salvation contingent upon our ‘walking’, our works- and his whole argument has been that salvation is by grace and not works. Those who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh is therefore a description of, rather than an exhortation to, those who are in Christ. His Spirituality is counted to them. By status we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, and this is confirmed by the Spirit dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9). Rom. 7:5 likewise speaks of our being “in the flesh” as something in the past, our previous status. Another possibility is that “walk after” here describes not to a total way of life, but rather a following after, an inclination towards, rather than a final arriving at the destination. And that again fits in so precisely with our position as believers in Christ today- as Paul has been saying in Romans 7, we incline after, follow after, dearly aspire to, the things of the Spirit; even if we don’t attain them as we would wish.

8:2 Paul starts to speak here in chapter 8 about the Spirit. He has explained that we are declared right by God, even as we stand in the dock condemned; he has said that we must believe this, and that faith in this rather than any works is what makes it true for us. He has then started to explore the mechanics of how it all works out- that we believe “into Christ” by baptism into Him, whereby we are counted as Him; and so we have changed spheres, positions, identities, from “sin” to “Christ”. He has observed that this doesn’t mean that we don’t sin, and he laments the power of sin within him, always eager to point out the Law has strengthened sin rather than helped us overcome it, and that therefore grace is the all important basis of our salvation. He characterizes the two positions or spheres in various terms, and in chapter 7 he starts speaking of them as “flesh” and “spirit”. He observes that there is in himself a struggle between the two, but his real self definitely identifies himself with the Spirit rather than the flesh. Being in the Spirit is the same as being “in Christ”, and “the Spirit” is a title of Christ in Rom. 8:26,27. Romans 8 now proceeds to explore the function of “the Spirit” in more depth.

The spirit of life in Christ has set me free- The spirit of life in Christ sets us free from sin (Rom. 8:2); but Gal. 5:1 simply says that “Christ” has set us free [the same Greek phrase] from sin. The Man Christ Jesus is His “spirit of life”; the man and His way of life were in perfect congruence. They always were; for in Him the word was made flesh. Rom. 6:18,22 explain simply that we are “made free from sin” by baptism into Christ. Here we are given more detail; we were made free from the principle of sin and death, the law which Paul had observed at work within him in chapter 7, that our sinful desires are stronger than our spiritual intentions, and therefore “in the flesh” we are

condemned to death. Our slavery to this principle has been overcome by “the spirit of life in Christ”. Rom. 6:18,22 says that we were simply freed from sin by becoming “in Christ” by baptism and belief into Him. Rom. 8:2 is saying that this operates, is effectual, by “the spirit of life in Christ”. This could mean that the spirit of life which was in the Lord Jesus Christ as a person- the perfection of spirit or character which was His, which was like God- is counted to us by our status “in Christ”. It could also, or alternatively, mean that this status we have is as it were mechanically made effective by the work of the Spirit, which sanctifies us before God. It’s not so much that the Spirit enters our hearts and makes us righteous, for in chapter 7 Paul has been lamenting how we still sin and are in one sense still enslaved to sin. Rather it could be that “the Spirit” works in our lives to make us sanctified before God, rather than in the realities of daily life. The “sanctification of the Spirit” which we read of elsewhere in the NT (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:29; 1 Pet. 1:2) would therefore refer to *how* God counts us as righteous, as in Christ, with a spirit like His. In this sense Christ is made unto us sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). It’s by the working of the Spirit. We can on one hand simply accept that God counts us as righteous, as Christ, because we are “in Him”. But probing further as to how, mechanically as it were, this is the case- the answer is, ‘Through the work of the Spirit sanctifying us, making us holy in His sight’.

Paul’s writings are packed with allusions to the Jewish ideas about the “ages” ending in the Messianic Kingdom and the destruction of Satan. Paul was correcting their interpretations – by saying that the “ages” had ended in Christ’s death, and the things the Jewish writings claimed for the future Messianic Kingdom were in fact already possible for those in Christ. Thus when 1 Enoch 5:7,8 speaks of ‘freedom from sin’ coming then, Paul applies that phrase to the experience of the Christian believer *now* (Rom. 6:18–22; 8:2).

Law of sin- as lamented in Rom. 7:23,25. The law of sin there refers to the principle of sin within us that keeps on beating us, winning the struggle against our weak spirituality. But *even this* has been overcome because of the status we have “in Christ” and by the work of the Spirit this involves.

The New Testament develops the theme of ‘living in the spirit’. We can often understand ‘spirit’ in the NT to mean the dominant desire, the way of life, the essential intention, the ambience of a man’s life. The idea of life in the Spirit is often placed in opposition to that of living under a legal code. We are asked to live a way of life, rather than mere obedience to a certain number of specific propositions. And yet whilst we are free from legal codes, we aren’t free to do as we like. We are under “the law of the spirit” (Rom. 8:2), “the law of Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21). The law of Christ isn’t only His specific teaching, but the person of the real, historical Jesus. This is the standard of appeal which should mould the spirit of our lives. We must live “according to Christ” (Rom. 15:5; Col. 2:8), and the character of Jesus is the basis of Paul’s appeals to us to live a spiritual life (Rom. 15:3,7,8; 1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 5:2,25; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Thess. 1:6).

8:3 *The law*- i.e. obedience to the Law.

could not do- s.w. in Romans only at Rom. 15:1: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the *weak*”, those who ‘can not’. The connections between the doctrinal and practical sections of Romans are so frequent that this link too is surely intended. The “weak” Paul had in mind were therefore the Jewish believers who still trusted in the Law; patience with the legalistic, acceptance of those whose faith in Christ’s grace is weak, bearing with the ungracious, is really the test of our Christ-likeness. For He does this with us so very often.

Weak- s.w. Mt. 25:36 “sick”. Our attitude to the weak / spiritually sick is our attitude to Christ personally- because amazingly, they especially represent Him. “Weak through the flesh” is surely alluding to the essence of what Paul has been writing in Romans 7- that our flesh is so weak. The implication is that our weakness is related to an attitude that keeping the Law would lead to justification. And this in turn confirms my suggestion that Romans 7 is a section specifically written to first century Jewish converts who had once been under the Law of Moses. The same word occurs

in Rom. 5:6- when we were “without strength”, weak, Christ died for us. Our weakness, our spiritual weakness, is therefore no barrier to God’s love and Christ’s devotion to us. Amazing, but true.

God sending- the connection with Phil. 2:7,8 suggests this ‘sending’ was specifically in the crucifixion. Likewise God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die on the cross (Jn. 3:16).

In the likeness of sinful flesh seems to be parallel with “in the likeness of men” and “in fashion as a man” (Phil. 2:7,8). “Sinful flesh” refers therefore to ‘sinful humanity’, rather than implying that we are sinful and offensive to God simply by reason of being human beings. The spotless lamb of God had full human nature, He looked like a man because He was a man, and therefore He looked just like the same men who regularly perform sinful actions. Whatever we say about ‘human nature’, we say about the Lord Jesus- for He bore our ‘nature’ and yet was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It’s actually very hard to Biblically define what we mean by ‘human nature’; it’s not some intrinsic piece of ‘sin’ that somehow is metaphysically ingrained into us, upon which the wrath of God abides. So I prefer to speak rather of ‘the human condition’ to avoid this impression. In passing, let’s get it clear that Rom. 8:3 doesn’t speak of something called ‘sin-in-the-flesh’. Students as varied as John Carter and Harry Whittaker [in *The Very Devil*] have faithfully pointed out that this is neither grammatically nor contextually correct. The Lord Jesus condemned sin; and where and how did He condemn it? In “the flesh”, in that He too lived within the nexus of pressures and influences of this sinful world. He appeared just another man, so much so that when He stood up and indirectly proclaimed Himself Messiah, those who knew Him were amazed; because He had appeared so very ordinary. Truly He was in “the likeness of sinful flesh”, yet without personal sin. See on 2 Cor. 7:1.

It could even be argued from Rom. 8:3 (“in the likeness of sinful flesh”) that the Lord Jesus appeared to be a normal sinful human being, although He was not a sinner (see on Jn. 2:5,10). This would explain the amazement of the townspeople who knew Him, when He indirectly declared Himself to be Messiah. Grammatically, “it is not the noun “flesh” but the adjective “sinful” that demands the addition of “likeness”” [F.F. Bruce, *Paul And Jesus* (London: S.P.C.K., 1977) p. 78.]. He appeared as a sinner, without being one. Of course we can conveniently misunderstand this, to justify our involvement with sinful things and appearing just like the surrounding world, in order to convert them. But all the same, it was exactly because the Lord Jesus appeared so normal, so closely part of sinful humanity, that He was and is our Saviour and compelling example. I have elsewhere argued that Rom. 8:3 is alluding specifically to the Lord’s death, where He was treated as a sinner, strung up upon a tree like all those cursed by sinful behaviour, although in His case He was innocent.

Rom. 8:3 speaks of the Lord Jesus as being “in the likeness of sinful flesh” in order to achieve our redemption. The Greek word translated “likeness” elsewhere is used to express identity and correspondence- not mere external ‘appearance’ (consider its usage in Rom. 1:23; 5:14; 6:5; Phil. 2:7). Scholars, even Trinitarian ones, are generally in agreement on this point. Two examples, both from Trinitarian writers commenting upon this word in Rom. 8:3: “Paul consistently used “likeness” to denote appropriate correspondence or congruity. Thus Paul affirmed Jesus’ radical conformity to and solidarity with our sinful flesh (*sarx*)”. “The sense of the word (likeness) in Rom. 8:3 by no means marks a distinction or a difference between Christ and sinful flesh. If Christ comes *en homoioimati* of sinful flesh, he comes as the full expression of that sinful flesh. He manifests it for what it is”.

The total identity of the Lord with our sinfulness is brought out in passages like Rom. 8:3, describing Jesus as being “in the likeness of sinful flesh” when He was made a sin offering; and 1 Pet. 2:24, which speaks of how He “his own self... in his own body” bore our sins “upon the tree”. Note that it was at the time of His death that He was especially like this. I believe that these

passages speak more of the Lord's moral association with sinners, which reached a climax in His death, than they do of His 'nature'.

"For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin" (Rom. 8:3) – cp. Gal. 4:4–5, "Made of a woman, made under the Law (cp. "sinful flesh") to redeem them that were under the Law". The drive of Paul's argument in its primary context was that having been baptized, they should leave the Law, as that was connected with the sin from which baptism saved them – it introduced them to salvation by pure grace in Jesus. The Hebrew writer had the connection in mind when he wrote of "*carnal* ordinances" (Heb. 9:10; 7:16). To be justified by the Law was to be "made perfect by the flesh", so close is the connection between Law and flesh (Gal. 3:2,3). "We (who have left the Law)... have no confidence in the flesh (i.e. the Law). Though I might also have confidence in the flesh..." (Phil. 3:3–4), and then Paul goes on to list all the things which gave him high standing in the eyes of the Law and the Jewish system. These things he associates with "the flesh". See on Col. 2:14.

Likeness- s.w. Rom. 6:5, we are planted together in the "likeness" of Christ's death. His being made like us is to be responded to by our being made like Him, starting in a baptism into His likeness.

Sinful flesh- these two words have just been used together by Paul in Rom. 7:25 [also Rom. 7:5], in lamenting how in our 'flesh' status, we seem to so easily serve sin as our master. The Lord Jesus had our nature, the same struggle against a tendency to unspirituality, egged on by living in a social environment where sin is everywhere and ever present.

For sin- The Greek *peri hamartias* "is the Septuagint's technical term for the sin offering" (Stephen Finlan). It should be better rendered as "for a sin offering".

Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

Condemned sin- as a judicial action, the passing of sentence, s.w. Mk. 14:64 "they all condemned Him to be worthy of death". This is how and why there is no condemnation for those in Christ (8:1). In the earlier chapters of Romans, Paul likened us as standing ashamed and condemned in the dock before the judgment seat of God; but then declared right, justified, by grace. And if we believe in that grace, it shall be true for us at the final judgment. But here the image changes slightly- for it is "sin", not just ourselves personally, which was condemned on the cross by the fact that Christ died there as a human who never yielded to sin. Remember that someone or something can be "condemned" by someone else in the sense that that person shows the condemned party to be in the wrong in comparison with their behavior, e.g. Noah condemning the world around him (Mt. 12:41,42; Lk. 11:31,32; Heb. 11:7). It was perhaps in this sense that the Lord condemned sin by His sinlessness and obedience unto death. The context of this phrase "condemned sin" in 8:3 is to be found in 8:1- there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ", and Paul is explaining why- because not only have they been declared right, but as "in Christ", all that is true of Him becomes true of us. He was not only uncondemned by sin, but He went onto the offensive- and condemned sin.

8:4 Righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us- Paul explores how in fact we have been declared righteous, justified in a legal sense. All that is true of Christ becomes true of those who are in Him. He perfectly fulfilled the Law, and I have suggested earlier that this in a sense entitled Him not to have to die. No longer was Adam literally everyman; there was one Man, the Lord Jesus, who did not sin like Adam did. The righteousness or "requirement" of the Law was ultimately love, love unto death, even the death of the cross. Both "love" and Christ's death on the cross are elsewhere stated to be the fulfillment of the Law (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). We who have broken the Law are counted as in Christ, and therefore we are counted as having fulfilled it to its' ultimate term- love unto the death of the cross. The passive verb form of "might be fulfilled" suggests that we are

reading here about something being done for or in us; the fact it is fulfilled “*in us*” rather than *by us* confirms that we aren’t reading here some exhortation to do the righteousness of the Law, but rather a statement about what has been fulfilled in us- by the representative death of Christ for us and our identification with it. Thus we are changed by status from being condemned lawbreakers to being counted as having ultimately fulfilled it. In a clearly parallel passage in terms of thought, 2 Cor. 5:21 says that God made Christ “sin” for us “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”. The Law was fulfilled in the perfect character of the Lord Jesus and finally in His death. Baptism into death means that we are counted as having died with Him- and therefore we too fulfilled the Law to perfection.

Who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit- cannot mean, given the context, that our righteous ‘walk’ fulfills the Law- for we stand condemned by it. Rather is this again a reference to the two spheres of life- flesh and Spirit, Adam or Christ, out of Christ or in Christ, condemned or justified. We are to “walk”, to practically live, in the sphere of the Spirit. I am inclined to interpret the idea of “walk after” as meaning ‘to be occupied with’, as the Greek is indeed elsewhere translated in the AV. If our orientation is around the Spirit and not the flesh, then we are demonstrating that indeed our change of status has been for real. Because we are “in Christ”, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us insofar as it was fulfilled in Christ and has been counted to us.

Paul states that because of the Lord's death "as an offering for sin", thereby the 'commandment ["requirement" RVmg] of the Law is fulfilled in us' (Rom. 8:3,4). But in the practical part of that same letter, Paul defines the requirement / commandment of the Law to be one thing- simply "love" (Rom. 13:10). Love as God understands it is that we keep or fulfil His commandments (1 Jn. 5:3). What, then, is the connection? How could the Lord's death on the cross lead to the fulfilment *in us* of the Law's commandment / requirement of love? Quite simply, because it is now impossible for a man to be passive before the cross, and not to be inspired by Him there towards a life of genuine love. Paul isn't simply making some mechanistic, theological statement- that the cross fulfilled the Law, because it fulfilled all the types etc. It fulfilled the Law in that the Law intended to teach *love*; and the cross and dying of the Lord Jesus is now the means by which we can powerfully be inspired to the life of love which fulfils the entire Law.

8:5 *Do mind*- this is the crucial definition of whether we are in the Spirit status or that of the flesh. The definition of ‘minding’ the things of God or of the flesh is therefore important. The Lord Jesus rebuked Peter for ‘savouring’ the things of men rather than God (Mt. 16:23); Phil. 4:10 translates the word as ‘to care for’, Col. 3:2 as ‘affection’. Being spiritually minded isn’t therefore a question of not sinning- for Romans 7 has made it clear enough that believers do continue sinning after baptism and yet can still confidently rejoice in hope of the final redemption. It’s rather a question of wanting spiritual things, loving them, savouring them, having them in our heart, just as Paul could say that in his heart he loved and rejoiced in God’s law, although in practice he continued sinning. This I believe is where most believers stand. So loving, admiring and delighting in spiritual things, but feeling bad because their flesh still so easily gives way to temptation. That failure isn’t excusable, for Paul began Romans by pointing out that the perfect, sinless Lord Jesus all the same lived in our flesh.

After the Spirit- as in “after the flesh”, the Greek word *kata* is used. This really means in this kind of context ‘to be concerned with, to be around, in the sphere of’. This is exactly the idea we have been trying to express- we are to be concerned with, have in our hearts, the Spirit rather than the flesh.

8:6 *Carnally minded... spiritually minded*- the definition of ‘walking after’ the flesh or spirit spoken of in 8:5. If we are in the sphere or realm of the Spirit, of Christ, then we will think about those things in our hearts. If we have believed, known to be true and felt the truth of those things which Paul has so far explained- we will have these things uttermost in our hearts, be enveloped by them. I take what Paul writes here to be a description of our status, rather than a command to be spiritually minded rather than carnally minded. For by status we are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit

(8:9). This fits the context of the argument so far in Romans- which has always been about a change of status, and our living in ever growing appreciation of that status change that has occurred. The mind of the flesh “is death”, here and now; whereas the mind or *phronema* of the Spirit “is life” here and now. *Phronema* means the inclination, the purpose, the intention. It doesn’t mean that we will consciously think of spiritual things all the time (not that this is any bad aim or desire). Rather our intentions, inclinations, should be to the Spirit and not the flesh.

8:7 *The mind of the flesh*- this is defined in 8:5,6 as the mindset which inclines to flesh rather than Spirit; that reads novels rather than God’s word; than thinks of money and cars and holidays and restaurants and fine clothes and expensive jewellery... rather than the things of God’s people and His service. That willingly thinks about banality rather than the things of Jesus and the Spirit. That doesn’t really think much about the things of God’s Kingdom but rather the things of this world. This kind of mindset is hatred towards God. So says Paul. This is the mindset of those who are in the flesh status, who mind the things of the flesh (8:5). Note that Paul is here talking mindsets, not total sin nor total righteousness. This kind of mindset of the flesh can never be “subject” to God’s law, His principles, His Spirit. It is self-centred rather than God centred. Yet the same Greek word for “subject to” occurs in Rom. 8:20, where we read that we have been subjected beneath the state of vanity which there is in this fallen world, and yet we in Christ have been subjected to this in hope. The point is, whatever sense we have of being ‘subjected under’ the things of the flesh and indeed this present world, this is involuntary. It’s not what our real self would wish for. We have subjected ourselves under the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3), become servants to that wonderful concept that His righteousness has been imputed to us. We find ourselves therefore in subjection to this righteousness and yet involuntarily living in subjection to the sinful state we find ourselves in.

8:8 *In the flesh*- not so much in status, for we are all still “in the flesh” in the sense Paul describes in Romans 7. Paul is surely speaking of being fleshly minded, having a mindset which is of the flesh not the Spirit. This simply cannot please God.

Please God- the Greek definitely suggests that God Himself has emotions which can be excited. And this is an amazing idea- that we here on earth, so very far from Him in so many ways, can touch the heart of God. Notice that the other references to ‘pleasing’ in Romans are to pleasing our neighbour (Rom. 15:1-3)- our attitude to God, and His pleasure in us, is related to our attitude to our neighbour and our pleasure in him or her.

8:9- see on Rom. 6:12.

Not in the flesh but in the Spirit- by status, by position. Note from 1 Cor. 3:16 that believers, even those who have the gifts of the Spirit, can still be “carnal” or fleshly in some aspects of their actual behaviour. Hence Paul must be talking here in positional terms.

If so be- could imply that Paul doubted whether some of his readership really were in the sphere of the Spirit. However, this would contradict the entire tone of this section and the argument so far- that all those baptized into Christ must be considered by us as unquestioningly “in the Spirit”. It would also jar with the otherwise positive tone Paul takes towards the Roman believers, speaking in 8:12 as if “we”, he and his readership, are all in the same status. “If so be” can be read quite comfortably as meaning ‘Seeing that’. This is how it is translated in 2 Thess. 1:6, “*Seeing that it is...*”. We can be assured that our status is “in the Spirit” rather than “in the flesh” by the fact that the Spirit dwells in us. If we don’t have the Spirit of Christ, then we are not “his”- and the Greek for “his” would I suggest better be translated “Him”, or even “He himself”. We are reckoned as Christ Himself because we are in Him by faith and baptism into Him. His Spirit is counted as our spirit, in the sense that His character, His personality, His totally obedient mind, are counted as ours. So we aren’t so much as reading that we had better ensure we are spiritually minded and have the mind of Christ; we are being assured that we can be sure we are “in Him” because we are counted as Him, His perfect mind and character, His spirit, are counted as ours. Hence Paul can write with such

confidence that “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). We do not in fact think like Him, at least, our mind and spirit are not of themselves like His were and are. But His mind / spirit is counted to us, because of our status in Him. And “the spirit of God” is paralleled with the spirit of Christ in the sense that Jesus was perfectly like God in the way He thought, felt and acted. And this is counted to us. We thereby have also the mind of God counted to us- the family spirit is counted to us as we have been adopted into that family of Father and Son (Rom. 8:15).

8:10 *Christ in you*- parallel with the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ (8:9) and “the spirit” later here in 8:10. Paul is now exploring what it means to be “in Christ”. It’s not just that we opted into Him through baptism; He is in us as much as we are in Him. “Christ in you” is an idea Paul elsewhere uses (2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27). The exposition of the Spirit which follows in Romans 8 is further insight into what it means to be “in Christ”, to be declared right by God, and to believe it insofar as believe into Christ by baptism. The words “in” and “Christ” have been frequently used already by Paul in describing us as “in Christ”. But there’s a mutuality in our position- we are in Him, but He is also in us. Whilst we need exhortation to live as “in Him”, Paul here isn’t exhorting us- rather is he rejoicing in our status, and seeking to persuade us of it. “If Christ be in you” shouldn’t be read as something uncertain- the idea is clearly “Seeing that Christ is in you”.

The body is dead because of sin- because we are in Christ and He is in us, our body is counted as His dead body. The idea has been common throughout Romans 6- because of our baptism into Him, we are “dead to sin” (6:2), “he that is dead is freed from sin” (6:7), “truly we are dead to sin” (6:11). It’s as if the day of judgment has come already for us- it was the day of our baptism into Christ. We have sinned and so were counted as if we had already died. How did we die? In that we symbolically connected ourselves with the death of Christ. In going under the water, therefore, we not only align ourselves with Christ’s death; we also state our recognition that we have sinned, and that sin brings death. Through doing so, we are enabled to rise again with Christ- as if our final, literal justification in resurrection to eternal life will just as surely take place. In this sense, it can be said that baptism is related to salvation. Not that dipping in water as a ritual can itself save anyone, but because that association with the death and resurrection of Christ really does save- involving as it does a willing recognition of our sinfulness and just condemnation, and only thereby resulting in a part in the resurrection. All this indicates the importance of repentance before baptism; it outlaws any kind of infant baptism, and likewise any attempt to claim a consciously performed baptism into the Lord’s death and resurrection, after repentance, is in any sense invalid and requires rebaptism by other hands.

But the Spirit is life because of righteousness- surely uses “righteousness” in the way it has been earlier used in the letter, with reference to the righteousness of Christ which is reckoned to all those in Him. It is from the Spirit that we shall reap life eternal when Christ returns (Gal. 6:8), but through association with the death and resurrection of Jesus in baptism, His righteousness really is counted to us. But as His spirit is counted to us, so in a sense it does actually become our spirit- as Paul has been saying in Romans 7, although in the flesh we sadly do sin, yet in our spirit, which is the spirit / mind of Christ, we delight in God’s law.

We feel at home with Paul’s matchless confession of his innate tendency to sin, so strong that “When I would do good, evil is present with me... how to perform that which is good I find not”. Yet it is no accident that this dire recognition of the seriousness of our spiritual position in Romans 7 should lead straight on to Romans 8, one of the most positive passages in all Scripture. It is instructive to trace the parallels between these two chapters. For example, Paul’s lament “I am carnal” (Rom. 7:14) is matched by “To be carnally minded is death” (8:6). His argument in Romans 6-8 runs along these lines: ‘We are all carnally minded by nature; but Christ had our nature, yet achieved perfection. If we are in Christ by baptism and by His spirit/disposition being seen in us, then God will count us as Christ, and will therefore raise up our bodies to immortality, as His was’.

The fact we still retain the old nature in this life means that we will be aware of the tremendous conflict within us between flesh and spirit. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin" (Rom. 8:10). Paul obviously didn't mean that we would not have the power of sin active in our natures any more- the preceding chapter 7 makes that crystal clear. The obvious connection with Rom. 6:11 explains the point: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin". The apostle recognized his own innate sinfulness and spiritual failures which were solely his own fault ("When I would do good...", Rom. 7), yet he was confident of salvation (Rom. 8). This was because he intensely believed in Christ's perfection, and that he was in Christ, and that at baptism he had received the condemnation of death which he deserved. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). There is the certainty of salvation.

8:11 *But if the Spirit*- seeing Paul is talking about positions, status, and rejoicing so positively about it all, it seems appropriate to chose the equally valid translation "Seeing that the Spirit...".

The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus dwells in you- as often in the NT, the Spirit of God is paralleled with the spirit of Christ which was mentioned in v. 10 and previously. Interpretation becomes difficult largely because of the very wide range of meaning in the word "spirit". I don't mean so much that the same word has many different meanings, but rather that within that one word is a range of meaning. God's "spirit" refers to both His power and His mind, His thinking, His attitude, His character, personality. All He does is a reflection of His mind, just as human actions, the use of human 'power', is a reflection of the spirit within the person. Hence to think thoughts is judged by God as if the action has been done. The spirit of God and the spirit of Jesus are therefore parallel- because Jesus was at one with the Father. Yet as His prayer of John 17 demonstrates, that unity of spirit between the Father and Son is now shared with us who are in Him. It was the Spirit of God which raised up Jesus from the dead, and that same spirit / disposition of mind is counted to us, and is indeed in us- Paul has said this in Romans 7, where he rejoices that despite his lamentable practical failures, in his heart, in his spirit, in his deepest person, he is without doubt with God and delights in His ways. Paul, and all true believers, have a heart [or, a spirit] for God- despite the failures of the flesh. So the spirit / personality of Jesus- which is and was the very essence of righteousness- is counted to us, as if we are Him; and yet in our deepest selves, as believers, His spirit *is* in fact *our* spirit. Because this spirit within us is the spirit of Jesus and God, we can be assured of a resurrection like Christ's- for the spirit of God raised up Christ from the dead, and we have identified with that hope through baptism into His death and resurrection. The spirit / mind of God is also His power; not naked power, like electricity, but a power which is at one with His mind, which acts in congruence with what He really thinks and is, without posturing or hypocrisy. It's therefore the case that since that spirit dwells in us- because we are in Christ and His spirit is counted as ours, and because we have a spirit / heart for God as outlined in Romans 7- therefore we shall surely be raised from the dead as Christ was. This is what Paul has said in Romans 6; but he explains here on what basis that happens. It happens on the basis of the spirit of God, or the spirit of Christ, which is counted as ours, and which is in fact actually ours within our deepest heart, the weakness of the flesh notwithstanding. The spirit of God is not just a mental attitude, it is also His power, and it was that same spirit which raised the dead body of Christ from the dead. And it shall do the same for us at the last day.

Quicken your mortal bodies- Paul's expectation and assumption seems to have been that Christ would return in the lifetime of his readership, and that instead of dying and being resurrected, they would come before the judgment seat of Christ in their current mortal bodies, and then be changed. He hints at the same when he speaks of how mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and our present "vile body" shall be "clothed upon" but not, he hopes, dissolved in death (2 Cor. 5:4). How could Paul, writing under inspiration, make an apparent mistake like this? I suggest that he was writing *as if* the return of Christ was imminent, because that is how we should live; part of the Christian life is to live as if we expect His return imminently. Another option is that perhaps the second coming was indeed scheduled for the first century; but the failure of various human preconditions resulted in this

not happening and it being deferred [perhaps issues like the repentance of Israel, the spiritual maturity and unity of the body of Christ, or their spreading of the Gospel and making converts from all nations].

The Spirit of Jesus, His disposition, His mindset, His way of thinking and being, is paralleled with His words and His person. They both ‘quicken’ or give eternal life, right now. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth [present tense]... the words that I speak unto you, they are [right now] spirit, and they are life... thou hast [right now] the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:63,68). Yet at the last day, God will quicken the dead and physically give them eternal life (Rom. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:22,36). But this will be because in this life we had the ‘Spirit’ of the eternal life in us: “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by [on account of] his spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11). The NT describes our final redemption as our “soul” and “spirit” being “saved”; our innermost being, our essential spiritual personality, who we *really* are in spiritual terms, will as it were be immortalized (1 Pet. 1:9; 1 Cor. 5:5). This means that our spiritual development in this life is directly proportional to the type of person we will be *for evermore*. If, for example, we develop a generous spirit now, this is “a good foundation” for our future spiritual experience (1 Tim. 6:19). This is a stupendous conception, and the ultimate fillip to getting serious about our very personal spiritual development. Our mortal bodies will be changed to immortal, Spirit nature bodies according to the Spirit which *now* dwells in us (Rom. 8:11 Gk.). The attitude which we have to the Lord Jesus *now* will be the attitude we have to Him at the day of judgment (Mt. 7:23 cp. Lk. 6:46).

8:12 *We are debtors*- note the positive tone Paul takes towards the Roman believers, speaking here as if “we”, he and his readership, are all in the same status. Given the wonderful certainty of our salvation, we can’t be passive. The Greek translated “debtor” is usually translated ‘sinner’ in the sense of having a debt to God. Paul has said that his debt is to preach the Gospel to others [1:14 s.w.]. The fact we truly shall be raised to eternal life, have been counted right, as having the spirit of Christ Himself- cannot be merely passively accepted. We have a debt to live appropriately, and one aspect of that debt is to share the great hope with others. And in our personal lives we likewise cannot be passive to this great salvation. We must make some realistic effort to bring our life spirit into conformity with the spirit and works of the Father and Son. We cannot go on living for the flesh, just indulging ourselves.

Not to the flesh, to live after the flesh - This verse is really saying the same as Rom. 6:1- we cannot continue living fleshly lives on the basis that we shall be saved by grace anyway. This is a repeated concern of Paul’s- that his bold, positive message that we who are in Christ shall be saved by grace regardless of our works could so easily be misunderstood, leading to passivity and sin rather than the vigorous, joyful practical response which is really the only thing we can do if we really ‘get it’. The practical section of Romans uses the same word in saying that Gentile believers have a debt to help their poorer Jewish brethren (Rom. 15:27). Be it in preaching the Gospel or in practical care for others, we are paying back our debt to God through paying to others- as if the debt to Him has been transmuted, and we are to pay Him back through giving to others, both spiritually and practically.

8:13 *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die*- Paul happens to use this same phrase ‘to live after’ in describing his life ‘living after’ Judaism (Acts 26:5). As he has implied elsewhere in his argument, to live according to law, hoping for justification by works, is in fact not spiritual but fleshly. Again, the point is made that legalism doesn’t defend the law and curb sin, rather does it encourage unrighteousness and spiritual failure.

you shall die- note the change from the otherwise positive spirit earlier in this section [“we”]. As all believers have the “mortal body” of which Paul spoke in Rom. 6:12, it would seem that Paul is here threatening some kind of spiritual death; or, ‘you shall die eternally at the coming day of judgment’. He starts to balance out all his positive talk with this warning that we cannot just continue in sin, unaffected by the change in status and justification we have received by grace. Perhaps Paul here is alluding to the serpent’s lie: “You shall *not* surely die”, and putting the record straight again.

Mortify- see on Rom. 8:14 *led by the Spirit*.

You shall live- yet the whole tenor of Paul's argument has been that it is not by steel willed battle against the flesh that we shall attain the life eternal. He laments in Romans 7 that we simply don't have that strength of ourselves, but rather are we saved by our status in Christ. We "shall live" only because of the life of Christ being given to us at our resurrection, because we are in Him. The deeds of the body are therefore 'mortified' not in our own strength- as Paul makes clear in Romans 7, we simply lack the power to do this- but on account of the Spirit. We are made dead to the law by our participation in the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4 s.w.). Here in 8:13 we learn that we mortify the flesh by "the Spirit". The spirit of Christ in this sense *is* Christ personally. Hence "the spirit" is used as a title of Christ later in this chapter (Rom. 8:26,27). "The spirit" isn't defined, i.e. as to whose spirit it is- because the spirit / mind of God is that of Christ and is that which is to be found in the believers. So I suggest the idea is that we shall live "if", or 'because of the fact that', the Spirit- the Lord Jesus- puts to death the deeds of the flesh in that we are in Him, and in Him was no sin, no deed of the flesh. His death on the cross is counted as our death- several usages of the Greek verb "mortify" used here are actually speaking of the death of Christ on the cross (Mt. 26:59; 27:1; Mk. 14:55; 1 Pet. 3:18). And significantly, the word occurs a little later in Romans 8- "For [Christ's] sake we are killed ['mortified'] all day long, we are counted [s.w. imputed, reckoned as] the sheep for the slaughter [i.e. Christ on the cross]" (Rom. 8:36). So we are counted all day long as mortified, put to death, with Christ; for we are counted, 24/7, as being in Him, counted as the sacrificial lamb. His dead body becomes ours. It is in this way that through / on account of our being in "the Spirit", "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18), we have the deeds of our flesh put to death. As Romans 7 labours, this doesn't mean that we will not commit the deeds of the flesh. But we have identified ourselves with Christ, with His body, and in this sense those deeds of the flesh are rendered meaningless.

8:14 *Led by the Spirit*- the Greek may not imply mere guidance but something stronger- the Spirit leading us where *it* choses. The same word is used about animals being led. It is the Spirit which mortifies the deeds of the body (8:13) more than us doing so. We want to know, of course, whether we really are "in Christ", whether we really have His spirit. The phrase "led by the spirit" is found only in Lk. 4:1, where the Lord Jesus was led by the spirit into the place of testing. Perhaps the connection is intentional. As Jesus the son of God, the prototypical child of God, was led by God, into testing, to the cross, and to resurrection- so it will operate in our lives and lead us, who are also the sons of God. The overall impression may be of allowing the Spirit, which operates in the lives of all in the sphere of the Spirit, to lead us and do things in our lives. We who have a heart for God have surely sensed God leading us, over and above our own will; and as Paul goes on to develop, this may involve elements of predestination and Divine calling which were over and above our own will to control. Sensing these things, this Divine leading, is an encouragement that truly we are God's sons, as Jesus was supremely- for the spirit of the Father works in us His children. In the context, Paul has been arguing that for those in Christ, His death becomes theirs. The Greek word for "led" is repeatedly used about the 'leading' of God's Son to His death (Lk. 22:54; 23:1,32; Jn. 18:28; 19:4,13), "led as a sheep to the slaughter" (Acts 8:32). We have commented under 8:13 that 8:36 speaks of all those in Christ as likewise being "the sheep for the slaughter". Every detail of the Lord's death and sufferings becomes ours. "Led by" could just as well be rendered "led *in* the Spirit", with reference to Christ as "the Lord the Spirit". This would suggest that our status "in Christ" means that we are going to be treated like Him- led as He was, to testing, to the death of the cross, to resurrection. Paul many times during his trials was "led", just as Christ was. This same Greek word occurs many times in the Acts record regarding Paul. He wrote here from personal experience.

They are the sons of God- not in the sense that the Spirit makes us sons of God, but that the children of God are characterized (among other things) by the Spirit leading them. "Sons of God" would've been understood by the Jewish readers and hearers as a phrase referring specifically to Israel (Ex. 4:22; Jer. Jer. 3:19; 31:9; Hos. 11:1); Paul's emphasis is that now all in Christ and within the sphere

of the Spirit are now God's children, regardless of their ethnicity. But above all, all who are "in" the Son of God (Rom. 8:3), in Christ by baptism, are likewise therefore "sons of God". The spirit that was in Christ must therefore be in us, or rather, be allowed to work in and with us. This phrase is preparing the way for the appeal to be conformed to the image of God's Son which is coming up in Rom. 8:29.

Jesus was led of the Spirit at His time of testing (Lk. 4:1); and Paul uses just those words of us in our present experience of trial (Rom. 8:14). His victory in the wilderness therefore becomes a living inspiration for us, who are tempted as He was (Heb. 4:15,16).

8:15 *Not received the spirit of bondage*- "bondage" is associated with the Mosaic law in Gal. 4:24; 5:1; Heb. 2:15.

To fear- the contrast is between bondage [slavery] and adoption; and therefore between fear and 'crying Abba, Father'. The fear Paul has in view must surely be the fear of not being good enough, the phobia about rejection at the day of final judgment. This fear of rejection is associated with bondage to a legalistic system, of obeying rules in order to seek acceptance with God. Such a system is itself bondage, slavery. And the image of slavery has been used by Paul with reference to slavery to sin. Once again, he associates sin with legalism and attempted justification through obedience to the Law- for this is where that mindset leads in practice. The implication seems to be that although Paul's readership had received the "spirit of adoption", yet they still feared. Paul is seeking to convince them of their high status in Christ, and to perceive, to the point of it affecting their feelings [e.g. of fear or otherwise], that really- it's all true. The good news that seems too good to believe is really as good as it sounds.

Spirit of adoption- the fact we have become sons of God [see on Rom. 8:14] by means of being in Christ, the Son of God, means that God will send His Spirit into our hearts, to make us more natural members of the family we have now joined by status. Gal. 4:6 thus speaks of how "God sent forth the spirit of *His* Son into *our* hearts". Thus *our* hearts have to become transformed to be like that of *His* Son. This can be so successful that we even call to God as Abba, daddy. Note that the Spirit and our hearts are connected- this Spirit works on the human heart, miraculous gifts aren't in view here. The NRSV renders: "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!', it is that very spirit bearing witness" (8:15,16). The feeling we have toward God as Abba is proof enough that He has sent His Son into our hearts. The obvious question is begged: Is that how we feel? God wants us to feel like that towards Him. We can and should be able to! This is one of the most bottom line questions for us as believers; not what theological position we have on this or that point, not what precise statement of faith we follow with what clarifications or caveats, addendums or amendments; not whom we fellowship; not how smartly we have lived our lives even. But whether we really feel to God as Abba, Father. If it takes a woman three divorces or another man 10 years in prison or another a lifetime's battle with alcohol- this is the end point to which we are being brought. This is the "witness" that we really are God's dear children, if we feel like that toward Him, if we can call Him "Abba, daddy" just as the Son of God did in prayer. If we do, then "the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (8:16). And Gal. 4:6 becomes so true of us: "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father". Roman law legislated that the adopted child took over the full identity of the adoptive father; what was true of that family became legally true of the adopted person- a concept which was apparently foreign to Greek and Jewish culture, but the concept would've been appreciated specifically by the Romans. The idea is similar to the concept of righteousness being "imputed".

There is only one Spirit- the spirit of God, of Christ, of the true believer, of adoption- is all the same. The statement here that those in Christ received "the spirit of adoption" must therefore surely be paralleled with the frequent comments elsewhere in the NT that the believer has "received" [s.w.] the Spirit at conversion, just as the apostles "received the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 7:39; 14:17; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:33,38; 8:15,17; 10:47; 19:2; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 3:2,14). Whilst the apostles had

their receipt of this gift confirmed by miraculous displays of Holy Spirit gifts which have now been withdrawn, the assumption is clear from that list of verses that after “the hearing of faith” and baptism into Christ, the Spirit was “received” (Gal. 3:2 etc.). Baptism was seen as bringing about the receipt of this gift (Acts 19:2; Gal. 3:14 cp. 27-29). When we became “in Christ” at baptism, we were counted as Christ. Just as He called God “Abba”, so we can. The way Jesus addressed God in this way is wonderful, indeed beautiful. It almost seems inappropriate that this personal relationship of the Son to the Father, calling Him “Daddy”, should be observed by us even; and yet now Paul says that it has been applied to *us*, seeing we are truly “in Him”. We have received such an extraordinarily realistic “spirit of adoption” that really, as Jesus was God’s Son, so are we. Through the work of the Spirit, even the virgin conception and birth of the Lord Jesus is now no barrier between Him and us; for in essence, our spiritual rebirth and adoption as God’s children is such that we too are God’s very own children just as He was. Our excuse for not fully following Him is that ‘Well He was a bit different to us, you know... virgin birth and all that’. If we grasp what Paul is saying, this now has far less validity. For the same Spirit which caused the virgin conception is what has birthed each believer, and through the spirit of adoption we too can feel towards God as “Abba”, just as His Son did. The unity between Father and Son has now been realized between the Father and all His children; the prayer of John 17 to this effect has now been answered. At least, potentially, and if we will accept the answer. And yet, it has to be said that we do not feel to God as Jesus did. The Lord Jesus could not have written the bitter lament about spiritual failure which we find in Romans 7. As we have often concluded, the answer is that we are asked to believe that really we are indeed “in Christ”, and seen, counted and felt towards by God as if we really are His beloved Son.

Whereby we cry- “whereby” can be rendered “in whom”. Because we are in Christ, we have His spirit, God’s Spirit. We “cry”- in allusion to how in Gethsemane, the Son of God “cried” to God as “Abba”. He there really can be our pattern. The Greek for “cry” really means to scream or croak- the idea is very much of a baby or young child crying out to “daddy”.

Abba - In prayer, we address God as Abba, Father- precisely because “God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). I take these passages to refer to the way successful prayer involves the spirit / will of a believer becoming united with the Spirit / will of the Father and Son. Gal. 4:6 says that it is the Spirit of Jesus who prays to God “Abba, Father”; but Rom. 8:15 says that it is us of course who pray to God “Abba, Father”. We are not slaves but God’s very own dear children. The spirit / will / mind of the Lord Jesus is therefore seen as the mind of the believer. And thus Paul could write that it was no longer he who lived, but Christ who lived in him (Gal. 2:20). The whole of the new creation groans or sighs in our spirit; and Jesus, the Lord the Spirit groans in prayer for us too. God’s Spirit is to dwell in us, right in the core of our hearts (Rom. 8:11; Gal. 4:6).

"We cry Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), as our Lord did then (Mk. 14:36). We can, we really can, it is possible, to enter into our Lord's intensity then. Paul saw his beloved brother Epaphroditus as "heavy" in spirit (Phil. 2:26), using a word only used elsewhere about Christ in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:37; Mk. 14:33). Luke and other early brethren seemed to have had the Gethsemane record in mind in their sufferings, as we can also do (Acts 21:14 = Mk. 14:36). I have wondered, and it's no more than me wondering, whether it could be that Rom. 10:9,13; Acts 22:16 and the other references to calling on the name of the Lord at baptism imply that the candidate for baptism made the statement “Jesus is Lord!” after their confession of faith or just before their immersion, and then they shouted the word “Abba! Father!” as they came out of the water, indicating their adoption as a child of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

Biblical prayers rarely request things; if we ask according to God's will, we will receive (1 Jn. 5:14); and yet if God's word dwells in us, we will ask what we will, and receive it (Jn. 15:7). Thus if our will is purely God's will, we will receive answers to every prayer. That our will can be God's will is

another way of saying that our spirit can be His Spirit. This is why several passages speak of how God's Spirit witnesses with our spirit (Rom. 8:15,16,26; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13). It's why the early church sensed that not only were they witnessing to things, but the Holy Spirit of God also (Acts 5:32; 15:28). His Spirit becomes our spirit.

Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer", although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point. *Desire* is also seen as effectively praying for something (Rom. 10:1; Col. 1:9; 2 Cor. 9:14). Weeping, desiring, waiting, meditating etc. are all acts of the mind, or 'spirit' in Biblical terminology. There is therefore a big association between our spirit or state of mind, and prayer. The spirit (disposition) of Christ which we have received leads us to *pray* "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). "Praying in the holy spirit" (Jude 20) is to be seen in this context. Prayer is part of the *atmosphere* of spiritual life, not something hived off and separate- it is an expression of our spirit. Thus there are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (Ps. 86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray *always*" in the last days likewise connects prayer with *watchfulness*, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer *in no sense* refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

8:16 *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*- see on 8:15 *spirit of adoption*. The Greek can be read as "The Spirit himself bears witness *to* our spirit, that we are the children of God". But the idea seems to be of a joint witness- our spirit is in fact *the* Spirit, and bear witness [in a legal sense] that we are really God's children. As we have observed several times, there is only essentially one Spirit- God's, Christ's, the believer's, are all the same spirit. Paul uses the same idea in Rom. 9:1, where he asserts that his conscience [and he may as well have said his spirit, for the idea of essential, inner personality is the same] bears joint witness [s.w. 8:16] with the Holy Spirit. God's personality, His Spirit, is congruent with the person who has a spirit / heart for God. This meeting of minds between God and the believer is what confirms to us that we really are His children. Being His beloved children isn't dependent upon our moral perfection- we must keep remembering that we are reading the words here in their context as the extension of what Paul was saying throughout Romans 7:15-25.

Paul here reverts to the image he used in chapter 3, of us for a moment acting as the judge (3:4), deciding whether God's promises and claims about us are in fact true, or lies. Our own spirit and God's Spirit bear legal witness- to whom? To us as the judges. They both testify, that really we are the children of God. Not only is the spirit of Christ, His righteousness, counted as ours; but God's spirit / mind really is ours in experienced reality. Thus we are joint witnesses in the box together, and v. 17 will develop this theme- joint heirs, joint sufferers, and thus jointly glorified together. All because of our connection with Him, we are counted as Him. Note how Paul seems to be aware of the huge doubt there would be about these things in the hearts of the baptized believers to whom he writes; and such doubt is with us today. Hence the enormous relevance and power of what he writes, and the need he felt to appeal to detailed intellectual argument in order to prove his point time and again.

Imputed righteousness is given us on the basis of our faith. This means that insofar as we can believe all this is true, so it will be. In this sense "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,

that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). We are His dear children (Eph. 5:1), the pride and joy of Almighty God, counted as wonderful and righteous by Him.

Personal Bible reading and reflection are so important; for there the individual finds the essence of God’s will and strives to make it his or her very own. This is how we can come to understand Rom. 8:16, which says that in prayer, God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that is within us. Thus even although “we do not know how to pray for as we ought, the Spirit himself intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit of the Father and Son speaks in us when we pray (Rom. 8:15), if our will / spirit is theirs. To put this in more technical but I think very telling terms: “The subject-object scheme of ‘talking to somebody’ is transcended; He who speaks through us is he who is spoken to”. It’s perhaps the thought behind Mt. 10:20: “It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you”. This is why Paul can thank God that he finds himself praying constantly for Timothy (2 Tim. 1:3)- because he recognizes that not only can we influence God by our prayers, but He influences us in what we pray for.

8:17 *Children... joint heirs*- very much the ideas of Gal. 3:27-29, where Paul taught that baptism makes us the children of God and join-heirs with Christ of what God promised Abraham. For all that is true of Christ becomes true of us. If He was the seed of Abraham, then so are we; and what was promised to the seed personally thus becomes true for us all. Again, Paul is seeking to explain to the Romans the significance of their baptisms.

The law taught that the firstborn was to have a double portion above his brethren. But we are made joint-heirs with Christ, the firstborn (Rom. 8:17). This is yet another paradox of grace. Likewise in the parable of the prodigal son, both sons receive equal inheritance, rather than the elder son getting more.

If so be that we suffer with Him- again, “if so be” is a misleading translation. This phrase is common in this part of Romans. It can indeed mean “if so be”, but the idea is equally of “seeing that...”, “although...”- and this is how it is commonly translated elsewhere. The good news Paul is teaching is almost unbelievable, too good news- and it was for the translators too, who for the most part have chosen to give a ‘conditional’ feel to the message by inserting all these “if...” statements as if they are conditions. But this impression contradicts the colossal positivism which Paul has, positivism expressed in the face of his own admission of failure in Romans 7; and such translation also fails to give due weight to the idea of positions, status “in Christ” as opposed to in Adam, which is so fundamental to Paul’s argument. Because we are in Christ, we are joint heirs with Him; and seeing that we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified with Him in that we will share in His resurrection. This is the very teaching of Romans 6:3-5; baptism into His death and resurrection means that for sure we will be resurrected as He was. Note that we co-suffer with Christ right now- which suggests that He also in some sense suffers in this life, the essence of His cross is lived out in His experience even now, as He suffers with our sufferings, and we with His. The only other time this Greek word for co-suffering occurs is in 1 Cor. 12:26- we co-suffer with the sufferings of other members of the body of Christ. This is one way in which “we suffer with Him”- to have an empathetic mind. Whilst we must strive for this, Paul’s point is more that we do suffer with Him, because we are in Him; just as in Romans 6 he has demonstrated that we suffered, died, were buried and rose again with Christ, because we are “in Him”.

The suffering and groaning of which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:17, 22-26 could have specific reference to the ‘groaning’ he has just been making about his inability to keep the Mosaic Law. Our helplessness to be obedient, our frustration with ourselves, is a groaning against sin which is actually a groaning in harmony with that of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who makes intercession for us with the same groanings right now (Rom. 8:26). Indeed, those groanings are those spoken of in Heb. 5:7 as the groanings of strong crying and tears which the Lord made in His final passion. In this sense, the Spirit, the Lord the Spirit, bears witness with our spirit / mind, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). This clinches all I am trying to say. Our inability to keep the Law of

God leads to a groaning against sin and because of sin, which puts us into a unity with the Lord Jesus as our Heavenly intercessor in the court of Heaven. But that wondrous realization of grace which is expressed so finely in Romans 8 would just be impossible were it not for the conviction of sin which there is through our experience of our inability to keep the Law of God. Our failure and groaning because of it becomes in the end the very witness that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). God thereby makes sin His servant, in that the experience of it glorifies Him.

8:18 *I reckon*- s.w. to count, impute. As God counts us as in Christ, imputing us as having suffered and died with Him, we too in our turn must impute this to ourselves; and if we do, then we will realize that if our present sufferings are in fact seen by God and imputed by Him as being a part in the sufferings of Christ- then we can truly rejoice in the certainty that we will surely share in His resurrection life. If God counts us as He does, we should count ourselves that way too, and have feelings and emotions which are appropriate to such an exalted position.

The sufferings- elsewhere Paul emphasizes that if we are “in Christ”, then His sufferings become ours in the same way as His glory and victory become ours too. The tribulations of Rom. 8:35 could therefore be understood specifically as aspects of Christ’s sufferings, with Rom. 8:36 likening us in our sufferings to the sheep for the slaughter, which spoke of Christ facing the cross. See on Rom. 7:5. The only other time in Romans that Paul uses the word here translated “sufferings” is in Rom. 7:5, where he speaks of “the motions [s.w. sufferings] of sin”. He may be implying that even the sufferings caused by our sins are part of the sufferings which connect us to Christ- for His sufferings were directly because of His bearing of our sins. This is a very profound thought- that even the sufferings of our sins serve only to connect us to the sufferings of Christ, in a mutual bond; for He suffered because of our sins. And for those in Him, our connection with His sufferings is the guarantee of our resurrection to glory with Him.

Glory which shall be revealed- the contrast between present suffering and future glory is common in Jewish texts. But they all tended to emphasize that the individual who does righteousness will receive personal glory (e.g. Apocalypse of Baruch, 2, 15:8). Paul is saying that the glory to which we look forward is a sharing in the glory of Christ in a material way. This glory exists now in that Christ exists glorified, but that glory must yet be revealed in us literally (1 Pet. 5:1).

Revealed in us- the “glory” is something internal, rather than referring to some unusually Divine light or cloud of shekinah glory, as imagined by 1st century Judaism and many others today. The Greek for “revealed” carries the idea of revealing, taking the lid off something to expose it. We are in Christ and He is thereby in us- the whole thing has a mutual quality to it. He dwells in us not only in that His righteous character, His spirit, is counted to us- but in actual fact, it is placed within us. This is the “spirit” which Paul will go on to claim is in fact within us. It doesn’t mean we are thereby made righteous in our actual thoughts and actions- for he has bitterly lamented in Romans 7 that this isn’t actually the case. At the day of judgment, when we share in the Lord’s resurrection just as surely as we have in this life shared in His sufferings, that glory, that spirit, that personality within us shall be revealed openly. Perhaps Peter uses flesh and spirit in the same way that Paul does, when he says that believers are “judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Pet. 4:6), just as Jesus was likewise judged (1 Pet. 3:18). We are considered by our peers as mere human beings, they may even judge us for the kind of failures in the flesh which Paul admits to in Rom. 7:15-25. But God judges us according to the “spirit”, the fact that the spirit / character of Christ is counted to us, and in some hard-to-define sense is in fact latently placed within us. And this of course is how we should seek to perceive our weak fellow believers.

8:19 *Manifestation of the sons of God*- could imply that the believers aren’t really revealed for who they are in this life. This shouldn’t encourage our hypocrisy nor the idea that we can be a believer whose faith is invisible to the world; but it’s some comfort too. Because we look, smell, speak and act identically, for the most part, to the unbelievers around us. The huge difference in status and

position has to be perceived by faith alone in this life. This “manifestation” is the same word as used in 8:18, “revealed”- see notes on 8:18.

Earnest expectation of the creation- the whole of creation is somehow looking forward to the revelation of the Christ that is within us. Christ, the spirit of Christ, is concealed deep within our flesh and will be manifested at the last day, even though we as it were feel the baby kicking, as Paul describes in Rom. 7:15-25 when he speaks of the two persons struggling within him. On a different scale, we are as it were concealed deep within the creation, as the seed, the germ, which will sprout forth into the full Kingdom of God when Christ returns. All that is material and fleshly, this present system, will no longer conceal the Christ within us personally, and on a global scale it will no longer conceal *us*, who we really are. This element of hiddenness explains why we simply cannot judge others. Here in this closing section of Romans 1-8 there also seems a connection of thought with the opening section of Romans 1-8, where Paul wrote of how the invisible things of God which were as it were hidden within creation are in some sense declared to those who know God (Rom. 1:20)

8:20- see on Rom. 8:7.

The creation- given the way Paul writes of “they” as opposed to “ourselves” in 8:23, the creation here perhaps refers to all peoples (or maybe even, all created things) apart from the believers.

Subject to vanity- the connection with the opening of the entire section in Romans 1 continues. There Paul used the same word to describe how sinners ‘become vain’ (Rom. 1:21). They willingly glory in the fallen state of creation, seeking out every opportunity to gratify sinful desires. Although we are indeed “subject to vanity”, we don’t need to in our own turn ‘become vain’. If we can be made free from the daily grind in order to serve God, let us choose it. Let’s not fill our minds and lives with the things of basic human existence, gathering food, reproducing, indulging sexual desire. In one sense, as part of God’s creation, we are subject to vanity- and perhaps that’s why Paul uses the same word in the practical section of Romans to say that we “must needs be subject” to worldly powers (Rom. 13:1,5). By doing so we accept how things are in creation at this time. The idea of submission is quite a theme in Romans. Our natural mind, the status / person “in Adam”, isn’t submissive to God’s law and never can be (Rom. 8:7); the natural creation, of which our fleshly, human side is a part, is subject, in submission to, vanity. Yet we are to submit ourselves- our real selves- to God’s righteousness (Rom. 10:3).

Not willingly- continues the parallel between the believer in Christ’s fallen and weak state, and the state of the entire creation. Again, this is a development of the theme of Rom. 7:15-25- that we sin because of our weakness in dealing with the state we find ourselves in, but our sin isn’t willful- it is in fact committed not willingly, “that which I would / will not” (Rom. 7:19).

Him who has subjected the same in hope- a reference to God. This is a major deconstruction of the popular idea of ‘Satan’, who was and is supposed by many to be the one who has tied the world down under the consequences of sin. But it is *God* who has done the subjecting, and therefore He has done it “in hope”, which He will be the One to bring to realization.

8:21 *The creation itself also*- Ultimately, the creation will share the deliverance which we personally experience now and shall experience in its final term at the Lord’s return. The *whole* of creation earnestly looks forward to the manifestation of the sons of God. The whole of creation was made “subject to vanity, not willingly” - it was not their fault that the curse came upon them. “The *whole* of creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together”, longing to share in the manifestation in glory of God’s spiritual creation. The sadness and bitterness of the animal creation is due to their longing for that day of “the glorious liberty of the children of God” in which they will share.

Shall be delivered- the same word has been used by Paul in speaking of how even now, we have been delivered from slavery to sin and death by becoming “in Christ” (Rom. 6:18,22; 8:2). The same word is also used about our having been made free from slavery to the Mosaic Law (Gal. 5:1), which connection could suggest that the “creation” here has some specific reference to the entire Jewish system.

From the bondage- Gk. ‘slavery’. The idea of being in slavery to sin and the Law has been common in Paul’s argument so far. The believer in Christ is saved from such slavery- and God’s long term plan is that the entire creation will share in this redemption too.

Corruption- used by Paul in Col. 2:22 with special reference to the Law of Moses. But he also uses the word in explaining how our present corruptible body shall be changed to incorruption when Christ returns (1 Cor. 15:42,50). The whole creation will be changed and redeemed as we personally will be. In this sense the work of the Lord Jesus will bring about the creation, or re-creation, of a new earth without the results of Adam’s sin. His achievement on the cross in this sense saved the world and not just the believers.

Into the glorious liberty of the children of God- The redemption and freedom from corruption which the believers shall experience will be experienced by all of creation. When at the end of Romans 11 Paul appears to rejoice in the totality and universality of Divine redemption in Christ, he may well have this in mind. Not that all human beings who have ever lived will be saved, but rather that the whole of creation, in a physical sense, will be saved / delivered just as the believers will have been. Our freedom is ‘of glory’ in the sense touched upon in Rom. 8:18- the glory of the character of Christ which is latent within us but which is yet to be revealed openly. Paul always uses the Greek word used here for “liberty” to exalt how believers in Christ have been set free from the Jewish law (1 Cor. 10:29; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 2:4; 5:1,13). He clearly has this at least as a subtext in his argument here, encouraging us to wonder whether by ‘all of creation’ he has in view “all Israel”. In this case, his argument would be brought to its full term in Rom. 11:26, when he exalts that finally “all Israel shall be saved”. When Paul speaks of “all [AV “the whole”] creation” in Rom. 8:22, this is the same word translated “all” in Rom. 11:26. They will finally share in the blessed redemption made possible by the Messiah whom they crucified, they will also experience the glorious liberty from sin and the Law which was the strength of sin, which was exalted in by those like Paul whom they persecuted and reviled. For it is those who received Jesus as Christ rather than rejected Him as did the Jews, whom the NT styles “the children of God” (Jn. 1:12). In this sense, Paul in this very context notes that the Jews under the Law are not the true “children of God”- but the believers in Christ are (Rom. 9:8).

This “liberty” in which the NT so frequently exults (Lk. 4:18; 1 Cor. 10:29; Gal. 2:4; 5:13; James 1:25; 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:16) will be fully revealed in the freedom of the Kingdom: “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). As it will be then, so now: we will not be free to do what we like morally, but within the context of God’s covenant, we are free, totally and utterly free, in our service of Him.

8:22 *The whole creation* – Gk. “all” creation, s.w. Rom. 11:26 “all Israel”. See on Rom. 8:21.

Groans together- Groans together with whom? Perhaps the idea is that creation together, all parts of it, groan together. But I suggest the groaning is together with us and the Lord Jesus. The Greek for “groan” is used about the groaning of the Lord Jesus in intercessory prayer in Mk. 7:34. The believers in Him likewise groan in awaiting the change of our nature which shall come at Christ’s return (2 Cor. 5:2,4). This is the groaning we have heard throughout Romans 7:15-24, groaning at the hopelessness of our position as sinners. Paul perceived [“for we know”, Gk. ‘perceive’] that he wasn’t alone in his groaning, but there is even within the natural creation some premonition that a redemption is yet to come, and a groaning in discontent at the present situation. Thus he didn’t perceive nature as at peace with itself, as many today naively imagine. Rather is it groaning with us.

And if we follow up Paul's hints that "all creation" has some reference to "all Israel", their groaning which he perceived would have been in terms of 'not having found that which they sought after', as he put it in Rom. 11:7; they sought righteousness but didn't find it (Rom. 9:31). They were looking for the right thing in the wrong places and by the wrong way. And yet their groaning, our groaning, the groaning perceived in the natural creation, are in fact but birth pangs- we groan and travail in pain together. The birth which this leads to is the new day of God's Kingdom, the final birth of the Spirit which believers in Christ have experienced in prospect through baptism. And again, Paul's subtextual reference to the bankruptcy of the Law to save is still there, for the only other time he uses this word for "travail" is in his allegorical comment that Judaism is barren and doesn't travail, and yet the true Zion is in travail, groaning to bring forth many children (Gal. 4:19,27). And yet he is perhaps hinting that just as the Jews subconsciously knew that Jesus was Messiah ["this is the heir, let us kill him"], so the Jewish system was in fact groaning and travailing towards the bringing forth of faith in Christ. The same idea of travailing in birth pangs is to be found in the descriptions of the situation just before the return of Christ (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:3). The significance of Paul's emphasis that this is happening 'right up until now' might then be a hint that he expected the return of Christ imminently. However, as previously touched upon in this exposition, it could be that Paul believed we should live as if the return of Christ is imminent; he therefore interpreted prophecy, Scripture and contemporary situations in that manner, just as we should. The groaning of creation and of ourselves also is therefore but the prelude to something far better- the actual birth at the second coming of Christ. My own interpretation of the radical changes in natural phenomena on earth at this time is that it's all an indication that creation is indeed groaning, now as never before, in a subconscious pleading for the Lord's return.

Groans and travails- a reference to natural disasters and the animal violence which there is within this fallen world?

Our groanings, our struggling in prayer, is transferred to God by the Lord Jesus groaning also, but with groanings far deeper and more fervently powerful than ours (Rom. 8:22,23 cp. 26). See on Rom. 8:17; Col. 2:1.

Romans 8 teaches that there is in fact just one Spirit; the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God, and is "the Spirit" in the believer (Rom. 8:9-11). There is "one Spirit" (Eph. 4:4). If the will of God is in us, if His will is embedded in our conscience, we will ask what we will, what our spirit desires, and it will be granted. This is because if our Spirit is attune with the Spirit of God and of Christ, our desires, our wish, is transferred automatically to Him. Whatever we ask being in the name of Christ, being *in* His character and the essence of His spirit, will therefore be done (Jn. 15:16). It doesn't mean that saying the words "I ask in the name of Christ" gives our request some kind of magical power with God. It must surely mean that if we are in Him, if His words abide in us, then we will surely be heard, for our will is His will. We are guaranteed answers if we ask in His name, if we ask what we will, if the word dwells in us, if we ask according to God's will... all these are essentially the same thing. If we are truly in Him, if the word really dwells in us, if our will has become merged with God's will, then we will only request things which are in accordance with His will, and therefore we will receive them. Thus the experience of answered prayer will become part of the atmosphere of spiritual life for the successful believer. The Lord knew that the Father heard Him always (Jn. 11:42). It is for this reason that the prayers of faithful men rarely make explicit requests; their prayers are an expression of the spirit of their lives and their relationship with God, not a list of requests. It explains why God sees our needs, He sees our situations, as if these are requests for help, and acts accordingly. The request doesn't have to be baldly stated; God sees and knows and responds. This is why Romans 8 appears to confuse the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ in the believer, and Christ himself as "the Lord the Spirit". Yet what Paul is showing is that in fact if we are spiritually minded, if our thinking is in harmony with the Father and Son, prayer is simply a merger of our Spirit with theirs; the idea of prayer as a means of requesting things doesn't figure, because God knows our need and will provide. The whole creation *groans*; we ourselves *groan*

inwardly; and the Spirit makes intercession with *groans* that can't be uttered. Clearly enough, our groans are His groans. He expresses them more powerfully and articulately than we can. It has been observed: "As I read Paul's words, an image comes to mind of a mother tuning in to her child's wordless cry. I know mothers who can distinguish a cry for food from a cry for attention, an earache cry from a stomachache cry. To me, the sounds are identical, but the mother instinctively perceives the meaning of the child's nonverbal groan. It is the inarticulateness, the very helplessness, of the child that gives her compassion such intensity". In deep sickness or depression it can simply be that we find formal, verbalized prayer impossible. Ps. 77:4 speaks of this: "I am so troubled that I cannot speak" (formally, to God). It's in those moments that comfort can be taken from the fact that it is our spirit which is mediated as it were to God. Tribulation is read as prayer- hence even the Lord's suffering on the cross, "the affliction of the afflicted", was read by the Father as the Lord Jesus 'crying unto' the Father (Ps. 22:24). This is sure comfort to those so beset by illness and physical pain that they lack the clarity of mind to formally pray- their very affliction is read by the Father as their prayer.

8:23 *Not only they but ourselves also... even we ourselves*- A fair emphasis by Paul on the fact that our groaning are in some sort of harmony with the groaning of all creation. If we understand 'all creation' as "all Israel", Paul's emphasis on the commonality of our groaning together would be as if to say 'Jews and Christians aren't that far apart really; we are united by our groanings'. And he argued the same at the opening of his argument in Romans 1-3; that Jew and Gentile are united by the desperation of their sinfulness, their common need for redemption.

Which have the firstfruits of the Spirit- I have explained earlier that Paul is teaching that the spirit or personality / mind of Christ is counted to us by imputed righteousness; but more than that, the Spirit of Christ is actually placed within us, although that spirit of Christ which dwells within us is latent, hidden beneath the flesh and failures of which Paul speaks in Romans 7. As we are in Christ, so He is in us, indwelling us by His Spirit. Clearly enough, the resurrected Christ is the firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20,23), and we shall only be the firstfruits "afterward... at his coming". Yet because all that is true of Christ is true of we who are counted in Him, we too are the firstfruits. "The Spirit" could refer to Christ personally, "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RVmg.).

Groan within ourselves- Paul writes this in explanation of his groaning within himself which is outlined in Rom. 7:15-24.

Waiting for- The Greek rather carries the idea of expecting. For if we are in Christ, His sufferings counted as ours and ours as His, then our ultimate salvation is assured. We are therefore expecting it, rather than waiting to see what shall happen at His return.

The adoption, the redemption of our body- Continuing the image of adoption which was introduced in 8:15. We have already received the spirit of adoption. We are adopted unto God for the sake of our being in Christ, the supreme Son of God (Eph. 1:5). We are God's adopted children in that we are in Christ, the ultimate child of God. But as has been lamented in Romans 7, our body, our flesh, is still as it is, unredeemed, and in practice unable to be subject to God's law. We with Paul and with all creation, groan for redemption from this situation. Gal. 4:5 speaks of the death of Christ as being required "to redeem that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons". The ideas of redemption, adoption and "sons" are repeated. So although we have attained such adoption as God's sons in that we are in His Son by status, we long for the physical manifestation of that redemption which we have received- and we groan for it. Note that "the adoption of *sons*" isn't sexist language; it is as sons that we are adopted rather than as daughters or androids because we are counted as in God's Son, Jesus, who happened to be male. We are counted as Him. The status we have received in Him is one of redemption, we are labelled as it were "redeemed". We in Christ have already received this redemption by grace (Rom. 3:24). He is "redemption" and we are in Him (1 Cor. 1:30). Consistently Paul speaks of 'redemption' as being "in Christ" (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), and we have been baptized into Him and are counted in Him, as Paul has laboured throughout

Romans so far. But our bodies still need that redemption, and we await / expect it at the Lord's return. Eph. 1:14; 4:30 likewise speak of "the day of redemption" as the second coming of Christ, and yet urge us to believe that we "sealed" by our receipt of the Spirit, as a guarantee, that this day will really come for us. The "spirit" referred to is the same as here in Romans 8- the indwelling of Jesus personally within all them who are "in Him", and the counting of His spirit to them by imputed righteousness.

Adoption... redemption- just as our minds have received the spirit of adoption, so our bodies will be transformed at the final judgment into a body like that of Jesus (Phil. 3:20,21).

8:24,25 *Saved by hope-* Better translated as "saved in hope". God's grace and the blood of Christ, believed in by faith, are what saves, rather than hope of itself. We have been saved, but in hope- for the fullness of salvation will only be revealed when Christ returns. As commented under 8:23, we have been redeemed, but the redemption of the body is our expectation at the second coming. Note that the Greek for "hope" means a confident expectation- the English 'hope' tends to carry a somewhat less confident flavour of meaning, the implication being that we 'hope for the best' rather than confidently await. But because we are saved in Christ, our hope is certain. Likewise the Greek translated in this section as "wait" better translates as 'confidently await'. We're not waiting to see what happens, but rather awaiting with confidence what must surely come for us- the redemption of our body. Anything less than this approach wouldn't have left Paul pulling out of his groaning within himself of Romans 7 with the confident cry of rejoicing, the scream in the night, of Rom. 7:25- that he has indeed found the way of escape and deliverance through Christ. Jesus personally is "our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1). And we are in Him. But we don't physically see Him yet, nor physically have we seen the redemption of our bodies. We therefore wait, or await confidently, the fulfilment of the hope which is now reserved for us (Col. 1:5).

Why does Paul labour his point here- that we don't have ["see"] what we know is coming for us, therefore we must patiently wait for it? Maybe to encourage patience in the waiting- perhaps the crux of his argument in these verses is on the word "patience". But maybe he is back to addressing the old worry which he know lurks in every reader: Why, then, am I still such a sinner right now, today? Given that reality, how then can I so confidently await the future redemption? And Paul's answer is that yes we have been redeemed, but no we don't see that redemption physically, no, we don't yet see it, but we are patiently awaiting it in confidence. Despite all our weakness and failure in the flesh. Our waiting is paralleled with the awaiting of all creation for the manifestation of God's children [the same word is used in Rom. 8:19,23,25]. The New Testament associates this 'waiting' with the faithful awaiting of Christ's return (s.w. 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28). Yet here in Romans we are awaiting the manifestation of ourselves as the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). Christ is us and we are Him, if we are in Him and He in us. His manifestation or 'coming' (s.w. 1 Cor. 1:7, we wait for the manifestation / coming of Christ) will be the same as the manifestation of the sons of God, all those who are in Him. His manifestation will therefore be ours; His glory shall be manifested in us in that day [s.w. Rom. 8:18] just as He personally shall be manifested. And thus we read that in a sense, Christ shall return with all those who are in Him with Him; for the faithful shall be snatched away to meet Him in the air, as clouds (1 Thess. 4:17), and then He shall come to earth with clouds, of the faithful believers (Rev. 1:7). In this sense the second coming of Christ is likened to the new Jerusalem, the spotless bride of Christ, coming down from Heaven to earth (Rev. 21:2). His manifestation is ours, for all that is true of Him is true of us. Our *hupomone* ['joyful endurance', AV "patience"] in awaiting the return of Christ is therefore possible because we are awaiting our redemption. We can only joyfully await His coming [and *hupomone* can carry an element of 'joy' within the wide flavour of its meaning] if we are confident that His coming means our redemption rather than our judgment to condemnation. If our attitude to the return of Christ is that we shall only then find out, only then will our destiny be sorted out- then we are of all men most fearful and uncertain. But clearly enough for those in Christ, His revealing

physically to the world shall be our revealing. His coming is going to be ours. “For thee he comes, His might to impart, to the trembling heart and the feeble knee”.

8:26 *Likewise also*- A phrase hard to interpret in this context. The sense may be more of “And even moreover”, “even so”; “And now guess what, even more...” might be the dynamic sense. That apart from us having a wonderful hope which we confidently await, it’s not all jam tomorrow. The spirit, both as the Lord the spirit, i.e. Jesus personally, and also as His spirit which indwells us, is actively at work even now.

The Spirit- a title for Christ personally. See on Rom. 7:14.

Helps our infirmities- “helps” occurs in the LXX of Ex. 18:22 and Num. 11:17, where Moses is the one helped. Paul is suggesting that each believer can rise up to the pattern of Moses; he was no longer to be seen by Jewish believers as some distant, untouchable, stellar example of devotion. He was a pattern that through the Spirit could be realistically attained; although the point is being cleverly made that he too had weakness that needed Divine help.

Paul made it a credo of his own life, and urged other believers to follow his example in this, that he would labour to support [s.w. help, Rom. 8:26] the weak (Acts 20:35). For we are all weak, and helped only by grace. But the Greek word Paul uses for ‘helps’ also carries the meaning of ‘to participate it’. It clearly has this sense in 1 Tim. 6:2, “partakers [participators in] the benefit”. The Spirit participates in our infirmities and thus helps us; just as we should seek to empathize as far as we can in the infirmities of others, both practical and moral. The “infirmities” Paul has in mind would seem to be the infirmity of spirit he laments in Rom. 7:15-24; our moral weakness. The same word is used of how the Lord Jesus in His ministry fulfilled the prophecy of Is. 53:4 that on the cross He would ‘take our infirmities’ (Mt. 8:17). These “infirmities” according to Is. 53:4 were our sins, but sin’s effect is manifested through sickness. The moral dimension to these “infirmities” has already been established by Paul in Romans, for in Rom. 5:6 he uses the word to describe how “when we were yet *weak* [s.w. ‘infirm’], Christ died for the ungodly; and he explains his sense here as being that “when we were yet *sinners*” (Rom. 5:8). Jesus as the Lord the Spirit engages with our infirmities, on the plane of the spirit, the deep human mind and psyche. What He did on the cross in engaging with our moral infirmity He did in His life, and He continues to do for us in essence. He does not turn away in disgust at our infirmities, rather through His Spirit within us He engages with them, perhaps deep within our subconscious, beneath our conscious will. The allusion to Mt. 8:17 seems certain- for there we read the same word for “infirmities” and “took” is *lambano*, a form of which is used by Paul in saying that the Spirit “helps” our infirmities. We are therefore led to understand “the Spirit” as a title of Christ personally. That title is used, however, because of the fact that in this context, His Spirit, His personality, is within us, He personally indwells us within our spirit; as we are in Christ so He is in us. His strength is perfected through our weakness (s.w. “infirmities”; 2 Cor. 12:9). He knows even now the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15; 5:2). If the Lord Jesus so engages with our weaknesses, we therefore ought to unhesitatingly “support the weak” [s.w., 1 Thess. 5:14].

What to pray for- Mt. 20:22 = Rom. 8:26. This is an example of where appreciating the links with the Gospels opens our understanding of Paul’s letters. Paul is implying that we are like the mother of Zebedee’s children, in that when we pray, we know not what we ask for in the sense that we don’t *appreciate* what we ask for. I know what to pray for: my redemption, and that of others. Read wrongly, Rom. 8:26 implies we haven’t the foggiest what on earth to ask God for. But we *do* know what to ask for; the point is, we don’t *appreciate* what we are asking for, just as that woman didn’t appreciate what she was praying for when she asked that her two boys would be in the Kingdom.

Pray for- a related word is used in this same context by Paul in Rom. 9:3, where he says that he “could wish”, s.w. “pray”, that he himself were condemned by God so that Israel might be saved. His allusion is to Moses’ prayer that he would be excluded from God’s book rather than Israel be

excluded from the Kingdom. But Paul learnt the lesson from how God responded to Moses- that He doesn't accept substitutionary sacrifice. Paul is admitting he too doesn't know how to pray for Israel as he ought, but he leaves their salvation in the hands of their Saviour, whilst so earnestly desiring it in his own spirit.

As we ought- We don't seem to have within us to pray as we *ought*, i.e. as we [s.w.] 'must'. It's not that we just don't know what to pray about; we don't pray as we ought to / must, and yet our gracious Mediator makes intercession with unutterable groans. And the older Paul can lament his failures to preach as he "ought", as he *must*, and therefore he appeals for prayer that he will witness to the Gospel as every believer of it *must* (Eph. 6:20; Col. 4:4).

The Spirit Himself- a clear reference to Christ, whose spirit indwells us and is in dialogue with *our* spirit on some unconscious level. Our innermost spiritual desires are thereby transferred to God by our Heavenly mediator. And our innermost desire is to be right with God, to obtain salvation, deliverance from this body of death and life of spiritual failure. Now we can better understand why all we are reading here flows on naturally from his groaning of spirit in Romans 7. The Lord Jesus indwells us, His spirit perceives the spiritual groaning of our spirit, and transfers it as it were to Himself; for if we are in Christ, then He is in us. And His intercession for us is in that sense successful; our salvation was obtained on the cross thanks to His own groaning in spirit there, and this guarantees that He will obtain it for us [the idea of 'intercession', we have noted, includes that of 'obtaining'].

Maketh intercession- A return to the legal metaphors. The Lord Jesus is our interceder, the counsel for the defence, and also an emotional witness, pleading with groanings to the judge in support of our case. The Greek for "intercession" cannot be taken too far, but it is derived from the verb 'to obtain'. The obtaining of our salvation, the winning of our case, was achieved on the cross, in the groanings of Jesus in Gethsemane and on the stake; but in essence, He groans for us still in intercession, and in doing so, His groanings are in sympathy with our groaning for salvation. The type of groanings of spirit of Rom. 7:15-24 become the groanings of our Heavenly intercessor. He is not separate from our frustrations at our failures; He takes them fully on board. The crucial thing is that we have them; that we can read Rom. 7:15-24 with empathy and know that 'That's me'. Which I believe most readers of these words can indeed say.

Groanings - Heb. 5:7 comments that Christ prayed "with strong crying and tears". These words are certainly to be connected with Rom. 8:26, which speaks of Christ making intercession for us now with "groanings which cannot be uttered". One might think from Heb. 5:7 that the Lord Jesus made quite a noise whilst hanging on the cross. But Rom. 8:26 says that his groaning is so intense that it cannot be audibly uttered; the physicality of sound would not do justice to the intensity of mental striving. No doubt the Lord Jesus was praying silently, or at best quietly, as he hung there. The point is that the same agonizing depth of prayer which the Lord achieved on the cross for us is what he now goes through as he intercedes for us with the Father. Heb. 5:7 describes Christ on the cross as a priest offering up a guilt offering for our sins of ignorance. He did this, we are told, through "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears". This must surely be a reference to "Father forgive them". Those were said with a real passion, with strong crying, with tears as He appreciated the extent of our sinfulness and offence of God. There is a connection between these words and those of Rom. 8:26,27, which describes Christ as our High Priest making intercession for us "with groanings". "Groanings" is surely the language of suffering and crucifixion. It is as if our Lord goes through it all again when He prays for our forgiveness, He has the same passion for us now as He did then. Think of how on the cross He had that overwhelming desire for our forgiveness despite His own physical pain. That same level of desire is with Him now. Surely we can respond by confessing our sins, by getting down to realistic self-examination, by rallying our faith to truly appreciate His mediation and the forgiveness that has been achieved, to believe that all our sins, past

and future, have been conquered, and to therefore rise up to the challenge of doing all we can to live a life which is appropriate to such great salvation.

The suffering and groaning of which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:17, 22-26 is in my view a reference to the 'groaning' he has just been making about his inability to keep the Mosaic Law [see on Rom. 7:18]. Our helplessness to be obedient, our frustration with ourselves, is a groaning against sin which is actually a groaning in harmony with that of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who makes intercession for us with the same groanings right now (Rom. 8:26). Indeed, those groanings are those spoken of in Heb. 5:7 as the groanings of strong crying and tears which the Lord made in His final passion. In this sense, the Spirit, the Lord the Spirit, bears witness with our spirit / mind, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). This clinches all I am trying to say. Our inability to keep the Law of God leads to a groaning against sin and because of sin, which puts us into a unity with the Lord Jesus as our Heavenly intercessor in the court of Heaven. Because of this, we are declared justified, there are no credible accusers, and the passionate intercessor / advocate turns out to be the judge Himself. Thus through our frustration at our own failure, we are led not only to Christ but to the certainty of an assured salvation. But that wondrous realization of grace which is expressed so finely in Romans 8 would just be impossible were it not for the conviction of sin which there is through our experience of our inability to keep the Law of God. Our failure and groaning because of it becomes in the end the very witness that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). God thereby makes sin His servant, in that the experience of it glorifies Him. How God works through sin is revealed in the way that although God always provided food for Israel in the wilderness, He 'suffered them to hunger' for 40 years, in order to try to teach them that man lives not by bread alone, but by God's word (Dt. 8:2,3). The Jews in the wilderness despised the food God gave them as worthless (Num. 21:3); they went hungry not literally, but in the sense that they despised the manna of God's provision. And He allowed them to have that hunger, in order that He might [try to] teach them about the value of His word. He didn't simply punish them for their ingratitude. He sought to work through it in order to teach them something. Even the process of rejection results in the victims coming to 'know the Lord'.

Cannot be uttered- In the same way as our inner groanings for salvation, for deliverance from how we are, are unspoken, rarely verbalized (although Rom. 7:15-24 is a fine exception), so His intercession for us isn't in human words, it's a dialogue of the Spirit with God, a meeting of innermost minds. Our sinfulness and desire to be free from it is articulated through the spirit of God's perfect Son, to the mind or spirit of God Himself. Intercession, therefore, isn't a question of translating words which we say in prayer into some Heavenly language which is somehow understandable to God, rather like a translator may interpret from one language to another. It is our spirit which is perceived for what it is and articulated before God. This explains why both in Biblical example and in our own experience, our unspoken, unformulated desires of the spirit are read by God as prayers and responded to. I devote a whole chapter in my analysis of "Prayer" to exemplifying this Biblically, but we should also know it from our own experience. Desires which we had, above all we asked or thought, are read by God as prayers and responded to. Paul gives an example of this in saying that Elijah made intercession to God *against* Israel (Rom. 11:2,3), when clearly it was his thoughts in this context which were being interpreted as prayer. Perhaps the statement that the Lord Jesus intercedes for us without human words, in terms which "cannot be uttered", is intended as a comfort to those who feel they're 'not good at praying' because they don't know how to put it all in words. Verbalization skills are hardly a prerequisite for powerful prayer- because some people are more verbal, better with words, than others.

Rom. 8 speaks of the importance of being spiritually minded, and then goes on to say that our spirit, our deep inner mind, is transferred to God by Christ, called by His title "the Lord the spirit" , *without* specifically spoken words. This is surely proof enough that the Lord does not mediate our prayers as an interpreter would, from one language to another, matching lexical items from one language with those from another. "We know not what to pray for", so the Lord Jesus reads our

inner spirit, and transfers this on a deep mental level, without words, to the Father. The whole process of mediation takes place within the Lord's mind, with the sort of groanings He had as He begged the Father to raise Lazarus (Rom. 8:26 cp. Jn. 11:38), and as on the cross He prayed with strong crying and tears for our redemption (Heb. 5:5 cp. Is. 53:12). The Lord Jesus is the same yesterday and today. That same passion and intensity of pleading really is there. This is why the state of our mind, our spirit, is so vitally important; because it is this which the Lord Jesus interprets to the Father.

The Lord's Spirit struggles in mediation with crying and groaning (Rom. 8:26), as He did for the raising of Lazarus. There is a further connection with Heb. 5:5, where we learn that the Lord prayed on the cross with a like intensity. And this Lord is our Lord today. He can be crucified afresh, therefore He has the capacity for struggle and mental effort. The Greek for "groanings" in Rom. 8:26 also occurs in Mk. 7:34: "Looking up to heaven, he *sighed* and saith unto him, Ephthatha". The sighing of intense prayer by the Lord was His more spiritually cultured reflection of the number one desire of that man's spirit, as was His groaning and tears for Martha's desire to be granted, and Lazarus to be raised. It has been wisely observed that the language of Christ's mediation can be quite misunderstood. The picture we should have "is not that of an orante, *standing* ever before the Father with out-stretched arms... pleading our cause in the presence of a reluctant God... but that of a *throned* Priest-King, asking what He will from a Father who always hears and grants His request".

The description of Christ groaning in spirit to transfer our spirit to God (Rom. 8:26) is a reflection of the fact that we groan for redemption and the coming of the day of the liberty of God's children (Rom. 8:22,23), when what is guaranteed by "the firstfruits of the Spirit" which we have, will at last be realized. "All things work together for good" to this end, of forgiveness and salvation. It certainly doesn't mean that every story ends up happily-ever-after in this life. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26) seems to be some kind of allusion back to the mother of Zebedee's children asking Christ to get her two sons the best places in the Kingdom (Mt. 20:22). He basically replied 'You know not what you pray for', in the sense of 'you don't appreciate'. It may be that Paul in Rom. 8 is saying that in our desire for the Kingdom, in our groaning for it, we don't appreciate what we ask for as we ought, yet Christ nonetheless makes powerful intercession for us to this end.

Because there is only "one Spirit", even the terms "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" can be paralleled because they are manifestations of that same one Spirit: "Ye are... in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you... the Spirit is life... if the Spirit of (God) that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you... the Spirit (Christ, 1 Tim.2:5; 2 Cor.3:18 R.V.) maketh intercession for us" (Rom.8:9-11,26). See on Jn. 7:39.

8:27 *He that searches the hearts*- A clear reference to God, whom many Bible passages present as the One who searches human hearts. God knows and recognizes what the Lord Jesus is 'saying' because He Himself anyway knows the true state of our hearts, searching our motives and the inner thoughts which lay behind the external actions and words which are judged by men. Hence we can be judged [harshly] by men according to the flesh, but justified by the God who knows our spirit (1 Pet. 4:6). The 'searching' of human hearts is also done by the Lord Jesus (s.w. Rev. 2:23), as well as by God. And their findings are of course congruent. In this sense, the intercession of the Lord Jesus is "according to God" [Gk.], or "the will of God" [AV], or to fill out the ellipsis another way, 'according to the searching of God too'.

Knows what is the mind of the Spirit [Jesus]- God who knows our minds knows the mind of Christ too. Because His mind is our mind, His Spirit is intertwined with, in dialogue with, reflective of, our deepest spirit in our inner, spiritual person. The hearts / minds of the believers are in this sense the mind of Christ; for due to our status in Him, "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). Thus the mind of Christ as He comes before the Father in intercession for us is at one with God's mind, as

well as at one with our mind. In this we begin to see the profound depths, or something of them, of what it means to be “in Christ”, and how, mechanically, if you wish, reconciliation is achieved between God and man through Christ.

The Lord Jesus does not just transfer our words to God as pieces of language. Seeing that we do not know how to properly express ourselves to God, He transfers the thoughts of our spirit to God (Rom. 8:26,27). It is in this context that Paul encourages us to have a spiritual mind in our daily life; because that is relayed to the presence of God by the Lord Jesus, “the Lord the Spirit”. Therefore our whole lives can be a life of prayer, lived out in the presence of the Lord God. However, we are encouraged to pray with our human words as well; indeed, Scripture is full of examples of men doing just this.

8:28 *For good*- a reference to the eternal “good” of the Kingdom age, i.e., ‘so that we might enter the Kingdom’? The future Kingdom is called “good things” in Is. 52:7 (quoted in Rom. 10:15) and Jer. 8:15. *All things work together for good* doesn’t mean that somehow everything will work out OK for us in this life- for so often they don’t. We are asked to carry the Lord’s cross, to suffer now and be redeemed in glory later at His return. “All things” may refer to “all creation” in Rom. 8:22, as if to say that everything in the whole of creation works together for our ultimate “good”. But that “good” must be defined within Paul’s usage of the term in Romans; and he doesn’t ever use it in the sense of material good in this life. Consider how he uses the word: “Doing good”, righteous behaviour (Rom. 2:7,10); “a good man”, a righteous man, maybe in reference to the moral purity of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:7); “no good thing dwells within me... the good that I would do, I do not” (Rom. 7:18,19). Remember that Paul is writing Romans 8 in commentary upon and extension to his lament in Romans 7 that he cannot do the good that he would. Now he is taking comfort that in the bigger picture, man is not alone in creation; all things in this world are somehow working together within God’s master plan so that we shall in fact do good, be righteous; both in our lives in Christ today and ultimately for eternity in God’s Kingdom. For those who “love God”, who in their innermost beings delight in God’s law, somehow life works out, albeit in a very complex way, so that we may do that which is good, and have the goodness of Christ’s righteousness eternally counted to us. Despite having lamented that he himself fails to “do good” as he would wish (Rom. 7:19), Paul urges us all to “do good” in the practical section of Romans. We are to cleave to the good, overcome evil with good, do good, be wise to that which is good and simple concerning evil (Rom. 12:2,9,21; 13:3; 16:19). Clearly Paul doesn’t wish us to understand his frustration with his human condition as any excuse for giving up the effort. And the indwelling spirit of Christ seeks to orchestrate all things in the whole of creation to work together so that we may succeed in that doing of good. Snow in Latvia or flash floods in Australia may be brought about by cosmic forces which operate exactly so that we may... help up that old man who has slipped on the ice, take in that family who lost their home. And of course it all works out far more subtly than this, hour by hour. God has begun a “good work [s.w.] in us” and will bring it to completion in the day of Christ’s return (Phil. 1:6). And all things in the whole of creation are somehow orchestrated to that end. Thus at baptism we were created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2:10). And He gives us “all sufficiency to abound to every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8), we are sanctified and prepared [Gk. ‘provided for’] to perform every good work God intends for us (2 Tim 2:21); fully equipped by God to do every good work in His purpose for us (2 Tim. 3:17). Each time in these verses, the Greek word for “good” is the same as in Rom. 8:28. All this puts paid once and for all to the idea that we can do no good work because we don’t have the money, the life situation, the resources. We have every sufficiency to do those good works intended for us; but we must “be ready to every good work” (Tit. 3:1), prepared to grasp the moment, living in the spirit of *carpe diem*. And thus we shall be ‘established’ in every good work we put our hands to (2 Thess. 2:17), none shall ultimately harm us if we follow after performing these good works (1 Pet. 3:13), we shall be made perfect or completed “in every good work in the doing of His will” (Heb. 13:21).

All things work together for good especially when the “good works” are in the context of assisting others towards the Kingdom. Paul’s concise summary of us in this verse as those who “love God” recalls 1 Jn. 4:20,21; 5:2- we only love God when we love others. The uncommon Greek word translated ‘work together’ is to be found in the great preaching commission in Mk. 16:20, where it is observed that the Lord Jesus ‘worked together with’ those who sought to preach the Gospel in all the world. This appears to be a comment upon the Lord’s promise that in this work of preaching the Gospel, He would be with His preachers unto the end of the world (Mt. 28:20). Whilst this can be understood as the end of the age, it seems to me that the Lord is saying that in taking the Gospel to the whole world, He will be with them in it, right to the ends of the world- be it in witnessing to Amazonian Indians or to your unbelieving family in a run down apartment block in Moscow or London or New York. We are workers together with Him in the work of saving others (2 Cor. 6:1); yet all things in all creation are also working together to this end. By becoming part of that huge operating system, dynamized as it is by God’s Spirit, we will experience God working with us. Somehow, resources become available; somehow we meet the right people. But all this happens if we are those who “love God”. If our love for Him and the furtherance of His glory in human lives is paramount, then we will naturally find ourselves part of this positive, triumphant system which always is lead in triumph in Christ. All this isn’t only encouragement to those faced with decision making on a large scale- e.g. a mission organization wondering if they have the resources to open a new front of work, or provide significant care to a needy group. More personally, it applies to each of us. We each have good works before ordained that we should walk in them, live a way of life which achieves them (Eph. 2:10). We need to ask the Lord to reveal what they are, to review our station and place within life’s network and perceive them, remembering that “the unexamined life isn’t worth living”, and seek to go for them. The idea is commonly expressed that for now, I shall work in my career, in my business, and then I shall have the resources to serve God as I vaguely imagine I could in some specific way. Manic capitalism has succeeded in commodifying everything, turning everything into a price tag. But the good works God has in mind for us aren’t usually of that nature. Kindness, acceptance, comfort, forgiveness, interest in others’ needs and sufferings... these are the essence of being as Christ in this world. This is Christianity, Christ-ness, being like Christ. For He achieved all He did “with a minimum of miracle” as Robert Roberts put it, and with hardly any cash behind Him. And so all this working together towards ultimate “good” shall be possible and is possible, for those who in the core of their hearts truly “love God”. This is another allusion, surely, to Romans 7:15-24, where Paul is saying that in his heart he loves God, but is frustrated by his flesh. I have no doubt that most of you my readers are in this category- of loving God. The Jewish mind would’ve been jogged by the reference to ‘loving God’ to the classic definition of loving God- to love Him with our heart and mind (Mt. 22:37). And this is exactly what Paul is saying he does in Romans 7, delighting in God’s law in his mind, despite serving sin in his flesh.

Them who are the called according to His purpose- Here Paul starts to introduce the concept of calling, election according to God’s purpose. He doesn’t just start talking of Divine calling and predestination without a context. His whole message in Romans 1-8 is that we are saved by grace; and the fact there is some element of predestination and calling over and above our will and works is solid proof that salvation is by grace- and that we who know we have been called, in that we have heard the call of the Gospel which contains that call, really are those who have been chosen to live eternally. Again and again, the message Paul preaches here is too good news. We struggle to qualify what he is saying, to allow our works and obedience a greater factor in the final algorithm of Divine salvation. But time and again we return to the question- why do I know all this, why am I reading these words, hearing this call, when so many others have lived and died without it? Why is it that I ‘get it’ about God, but my brother or my sister was never interested from babyhood? Why me, why her, why you, and not the guy next door? For all our philosophy, wise cracks and clever words, there is no abidingly satisfactory answer. It is of God’s grace and not of ourselves. Paul specifically connects our calling with God’s grace in 2 Tim. 1:9: “Who has saved us, and called us with an holy

calling, not according to our works, but according to His purpose and grace". Note how the ideas of calling, grace and God's purpose all run together here as they do in Rom. 8:28. The "purpose of God" is further defined in Rom. 9:11 as not depending upon human works. We were called because we were called, by grace, quite independent of what works we would or would not do. Eph. 1:11 says that we are "predestinated according to the purpose of [God]". The whole idea of calling according to a predetermined Divine purpose means we are predestinated. We need not struggle over whether we have been called or not. The call, the invitation to the Kingdom, is in the Gospel. Any who hear it have been called. If I invite you to an event, you are invited, you are called to it. Lest there be any doubt, Paul began Romans by assuring us that we are called just as surely as he was (Rom. 1:1,6,7). He opens 1 Corinthians the same way- speaking of his calling and then using the same word to describe how his readers are likewise the called (1 Cor. 1:1,2,24). The calling of God is "without repentance" in the sense that we can never be disinvited, become 'uncalled' (Rom. 11:29). And if we are called, then we are predestinated (Eph. 1:11). Whilst calling doesn't mean final acceptance with God- for we must make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10), to not be saved at the last day would require us to have wilfully fought against the predestined desire of God to save us, to have reasoned against destiny. Paul's great theme in Romans 1-8 is that we are "in Christ" by status through having believed into Him by baptism. This connects with this theme of calling according to the Divine purpose, because God 'purposed His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Eph. 3:11). If we are in Him, then we are in God's eternal purpose, we will continue eternally because God's purpose for us is eternal. We would have to wilfully reject that status if we are to somehow come out of that eternal purpose. Being "in" God's purpose means that His purpose, His will, His Spirit, is to become ours- hence Paul can use the same word to speak of his "purpose" in life (2 Tim. 3:10).

According to His purpose- can be applied to the first clause of the verse, "all things work together for good" within the overall purpose of God to save us. It doesn't have to modify the idea of our calling.

Joseph stands as a pattern for us all. When Paul wrote that all things work together for our good (Rom. 8:28), he was echoing how in all the grief of Joseph's life, the rejection by his brethren, the cruel twists of fate [as they seemed at the time]... *God meant it for good* (Gen. 50:20). This same wonderful process will come true in our lives- for they too are equally directed by a loving Father.

God's whole purpose, according to Paul, is that we should become like His Son-and to this end all things are directed in God's plan for us (Rom. 8:28,29). To achieve the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" is the 'perfection' or maturity towards which God works in our lives. As we read of Him day by day, slowly His words and ways will become ours. The men who lived with Jesus in the flesh are our pattern in this; for the wonder of the inspired record means that His realness comes through to us too. Time and again, their spoken and written words are reflective of His words, both consciously and unconsciously.

8:29- see on Rom. 6:5.

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate- We are called for sure, therefore we were predestinated for sure, and therefore we personally were foreknown. To the Jewish mind, it was the prophets and Messiah who were personally foreknown. And Paul uses this shockingly exalted language about each of us, reasoning back from the basis that we know we have been called. His logical path is irresistible, at least intellectually. But in practice it amounts to an almost too good news. We were predestinated to be saved, to be part of God's eternal purpose, a plan for us which shall last for ever. It would require a battle of wills against God, a conscious, wilful desire *not* to be in that purpose any more, to make us no longer a part of that purpose. No wonder we should strive to spread the invitations to that Kingdom far and wide, to call people to the Kingdom. We who have heard and accepted that call are even now part of a plan, a purpose, which shall last eternally- this is the significance of God's purpose with us being an "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11). This may explain

why often we feel that God is indeed working with us, that we are part of some far bigger cosmic plan, but we're not sure exactly where it's going to end. All we can do is to play our part in that purpose as enthusiastically as possible, knowing that we are playing a part in some unseen purpose, which shall have eternal consequences. Why was the train cancelled, the airport closed by snow? So that for those who wish to be part of God's purpose, who "love God", we had time to make a phone call to brother X or pay a visit to sister Y or stay the night with family Z, so that we might play some part in encouraging them towards God's Kingdom? We cannot see it clearly, but we sense something of God in these things, even in death itself. The situation gets the more complex, the waters muddled, in that both we and others can at times and in some ways not respond as God intends, or not as far as He intended. And so the eternal purpose is in a sense thwarted, God's intentions delayed or forced by human failure to be rescheduled, reinterpreted, fulfilled in other ways or at other times. But all the same, we continue to play our part as best we can, as far as we can, loving God with our whole heart, soul and mind, not on a hobbyist, part-time level; and so we shall eternally continue.

To be conformed to the image of His Son- This is parallel to our being fully born into the family of God, of which the Lord Jesus is the firstborn. Whilst the process of being formed after the image of Christ is ongoing in this life, it will come to full term only at our final birth of the Spirit when we enter God's Kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5). The Greek for "conformed" is used only in one other place, in Phil. 3:21, where we read that at Christ's return, our vile body shall be "fashioned like unto" [s.w. 'conformed'] the now glorious body of Christ. The conforming is therefore referring to our final change of nature at Christ's return, even though the conforming process begins in this life (Rom. 12:2). The end point, therefore, isn't so much eternal life, but to be like Christ, the Son of God. Paul has been arguing that we are counted as Christ now, His character, personality and spirit are counted to us. But finally we shall be changed into persons like unto Christ Himself. But the form of Jesus to which we shall be con-formed in that day is the "form" which He had on earth- for Phil. 2:6 speaks of the Lord Jesus as having "the form of God" at the time of His final spiritual climax in the death of the cross. This *morphe* or "form" refers not to His 'very nature', as Trinitarians wilfully misinterpret this passage, but rather to the image of God mentally. Who Jesus was in His time of dying was in fact "God"; not that He 'was God' then, but in that His character and spirit finally matured to an exact replica of who God is in essence. And this is who or what we are counted as today- for all in Christ are counted as Him. And this is who we shall be conformed to in the final triumph at the day of His coming. Our calling is to be like Him; not simply to have eternal life in God's Kingdom. More essentially, the call of the Gospel is a call to be like Him in this life, and to then be finally made like Him. The parables which explain the good news of the Kingdom therefore speak of how life can be lived now, in forgiveness, service, kindness etc. This is the good news of the Kingdom life; the good news isn't simply an invitation to live eternally in a future Kingdom on earth; rather is it the good news of a form of life that can be lived now and shall eternally be lived to its intended fullness.

That He might be the firstborn among many brothers- Because we shall be made like Him morally, we will have the essential family characteristic: moral perfection. We will thereby become God's children also, as He was and is. We shall become His "brothers" in that we have been counted as Him now, and then shall be made like Him. So the language isn't thoughtlessly sexist, rather is it reflective of how we shall be made like Him. Through the resurrection, Christ became "the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15,18; Rev. 1:5); the same Greek phrase for "all creation" is to be found in Rom. 8:22. The idea may be that ultimately all creation somehow will follow this same path to glory, to ultimate reconciliation with God. And yet Col. 1:23 uses the same phrase in this context to speak of how the Gospel has been preached to "all creation", in fulfilment of the great commission to take the Gospel to "all creation" (Mk. 16:15 same phrase). "Firstborn among many brothers" here in Rom. 8:29 therefore becomes parallel to being the firstborn of "all creation" in Colossians 1. In the end, "all creation" will be God's redeemed children. And we will only be there because

someone went out into our world and preached the Gospel to the “all creation”. In this lies the eternal significance of calling others to that Kingdom by obeying the great commission.

When Paul writes of our being transformed into “the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49) he seems to have in mind Ez. 1:28 LXX: “The appearance of the image of the glory of the Lord”. “The glory” in Ezekiel is personified- it refers to a person, and I submit that person was a prophetic image of Jesus Christ. But Paul’s big point is that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the Lord’s glory (2 Cor. 3:16- 4:6); just as he did on the Damascus road, and just as Ezekiel did. It follows, therefore, that not only is Paul our example, but our beholding of the Lord’s glory propels us on our personal commission in the Lord’s service, whatever it may be. See on Acts 9:3.

Martial described a crucifixion victim [in *Liber Spectaculorum*]: “In all his body was nowhere a body’s shape”. We are to be “conformed to the image of [God’s] son” (Rom. 8:29)- to share His *morphe*, which was so marred beyond recognition that men turned away in disgust (Is. 52:14 cp. Phil. 2:7). The mind that was in Him then must be in us now (Phil. 2:5).

8:30 *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

This is partially a recapitulation of the argument of Rom. 8:29; a repeating for emphasis of something which is almost too good news to believe. We were called because we were predestinated; and Paul has earlier outlined in his argument that we who are in Christ have been “justified”, declared right, at the judgment seat of God. We haven’t yet been glorified, in that our bodies haven’t yet been changed, the final day of judgment hasn’t yet come. But Paul uses the past tense as if it has already happened. This ‘prophetic perfect’ was a Hebrew style which was quite grammatically acceptable, even if it may seem strange when translated into other languages such as Greek or English. Paul’s point is that if we are in Christ, declared right before God’s judgment right now, then we can be assured of final salvation, the glorification of the body- should Christ return at this moment, or if we should die at this moment. For tomorrow of course we might throw it all away. But we are not to worry about tomorrow in that sense; we can rejoice here and now that we are saved and are as good as ultimately saved and in the Kingdom. We have already been predestinated, already called, already justified- and therefore in prospect, already glorified. Yet again, Paul succeeds in making us gasp for breath, struggling as we do with the too good news of the Gospel. It is the Lord Jesus who has now been “glorified” (s.w. Jn. 12:16; Acts 3:13); and seeing that all that is true of Him is now true of us who by status are now “in Him”, it can be also said that we have been in this sense already glorified. Perhaps the practical section of Romans connects to this verse when we read in Rom. 15:6,9 that the Gentiles shall glorify God for His mercy; because He has glorified us, we are to glorify Him.

Also glorified- from God’s standpoint, outside of our kind of time. For that glory has yet to be revealed in us (1 Pet. 5:1).

8:31 *What shall we then say to these things?* – Paul returns to the rhetorical, legal style which he used earlier in Romans. The phrase could be an allusion to a legal one; as if to say to the accused or to the jury: ‘What then do you say to these things?’. We are invited to be the jury at our own trial. The evidence that we shall be saved is devastating; nothing can be said against it. Or it could be that Paul is in the place of the defence, going on the attack against the prosecutor. What can be argued against all this evidence? And there would have to be silence. The case is set in concrete. The arguments simply cannot be answered. Paul has previously thrown down the challenge after some of his previous depositions of evidence in this very public case of God’s Gracious, Certain Salvation vs. All Human Doubts And Fears. Four times he has challenged: What then shall we say to this (Rom. 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7)? And there can only be silence. But Paul’s rhetorical style is almost aggressive; he is the counsel for the defence who is on the offensive rather than the apologetic and defensive. But it seems Paul isn’t satisfied with winning the case. He drives it home now in the final

verses of this chapter in a kind of *tour de triumph*, a victory lap before all of creation. He is exalting, both intellectually and emotionally, in God's grace and the certainty of our salvation. But he's not exalting just for the sake of it; he is aware of his own cries of frustration with his own failure which he voiced in Romans 7, and he is aware of how cautious and weak in faith are we his readers, who struggle to believe the goodness of this good news, this Gospel of grace. And so he has to hammer it home. "What shall we then say to these things?"- i.e. 'what form of words, of 'saying', is adequate response to them?' (Rom. 8:31; Paul uses that phrase seven times in Romans, so beyond words did he find the atonement wrought in Christ). Words aren't symbols sufficient for our experience of God's grace and love; all commentary is bathos, like trying to explain a symphony in words; we experience a collapse of language. What remains, I suppose, is to live, to exist, in the sober knowledge of this grace, to never lose sight of them in our hearts; and all the rest, the rest of life and living and all the decisions and responses we are supposed to make, will somehow come naturally.

If God is for us, who can be against us?- The songs of the suffering Servant are applied to us in Rom. 8:31, where Paul exalts that "if God be for us, who is against us?"- alluding to Is. 50:8 "The Lord God is helping me- who is he that would convict me?". If we are in Christ, we like Him cannot be condemned. In the legal context, if the judge of all is legally "for us", then there effectively is no accuser, nothing and nobody standing against us. It's as if Paul has rightly guessed his readers' response: 'OK Paul, I have nothing to say against your argument, but all the same you don't know what a sinner I am, what a line of sins I have waiting there to condemn me'. And Paul's exultant answer is that if God is "for us"- and he has demonstrated this time and again, that God quite simply wants to save us- then nothing and nobody, not even our own sins, can ultimately stand against us. The idea of God being "for us" is repeated twice elsewhere in Romans. In Rom. 5:8 we read that God commended His love toward us in that Christ, His Son, died "for us". This is the extent to which God is "for us". And in Rom. 8:34, Christ makes intercession "for us" to God the judge; and yet God the judge is also "for us". All this legal language is only metaphor, and all metaphors break down at some point if pushed too far. If in this case we push it too far, we would end up saying that God is somehow unjust, His sense of legal justice lacks integrity and so is worthless in an ethical, moral sense. However, the broad brush impression is that in the highest, ultimate court analysis of our case, both the judge and the counsel for the defence are passionately "for us" on a personal level. In God's case, He was "for us" to the extent of giving His Son to die "for us", for the sake of our sins and failures for which we are in the dock. Col. 2:14 uses the same phrase to describe how the Mosaic Law which was "against us" has been taken out of the way through Christ's death; and Paul has argued that the strength of sin is in the Law. If that is taken away, then sin will not have power in the lives of those who are "in Christ", in whom such law and legality is now no more.

As an aside, it should be noted that when the Lord told John to "Forbid not; for he that is not against us is for us" (Lk. 9:50 Gk.), He could have been referring to God; as if to say that we don't need to as it were defend Him against possible impostors, because God Himself is the One who is not against us but for us. In this case, here in Rom. 8:31 we would have yet another of Paul's allusions to the Gospels; his point would be that if God is for us and not against us, then nothing at all nor anybody, not even ourselves and our sins, can be against us.

8:32 *He that spared not His own son*- Perhaps alluding to how God commended Abraham for not having spared his son (Gen. 22:16). As noted on Rom. 8:31, God our judge is "for us" in that He gave His own Son to die "for us", for our sins. The idea of God not sparing people is usually used in the sense of 'not sparing them from condemnation', and it is used like this twice elsewhere in Romans (Rom. 11:21 [twice]; 2 Cor. 13:2; 2 Pet. 2:4,5). The Lord Jesus bore our sins in that He identified with them; and the Old Testament idea of sin bearing meant to bear condemnation for sin. As the representative of we who are sinners, He in some sense died the death of a condemned man;

His final cry "Why have You forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46) was surely rooted in the Old Testament theme that God will forsake sinners but never forsake the righteous. He felt *as* a sinner, although He was not one. The language of God not sparing His own Son could be read as meaning that God treated Him as condemned, in the sense that the Lord Jesus was to such an extent our representative. If this is the correct line of interpretation, then Paul would again be tackling our objection that we are such awful sinners that perhaps his fantastic news of grace still doesn't apply to us personally. And he would be answering it by saying that because we are in Christ and Christ in us, Christ died as our representative, deeply identifying with us as characters and persons and thereby with the sinfulness and failure which is such a significant part of us. And therefore as our representative He died and rose again, so that we might be able to believe 'into Him' and thereby share in His resurrection and glorification.

Spared not - God 'spared not' His own son (Rom. 8:32)- alluding to the LXX of Gen. 22:16, where Abraham spares not his son. The Greek phrase is elsewhere used about God not sparing people when He assigns them to condemnation (Rom. 11:21; 2 Cor. 13:2; 2 Pet. 2:4,5). The Lord Jesus knows how not only sinners feel but how the rejected will feel- for He 'bore condemnation' in this sense. We should be condemned. But He as our representative was condemned, although not personally guilty. He so empathized with us through the experience of the cross that He came to *feel* like a sinner, although He was not one. And thus He has freed us from condemnation. When Paul asks in Rom. 8:33,34 'Who can accuse us? Where are those people? Who can condemn us, if God justifies us?', he is alluding to the woman taken in adultery. For the Lord asked the very same rhetorical questions on that occasion. Paul's point is that we each one are that woman. We are under accusations which we can't refute. The Lord never denied her guilt; but He took it away. The Lord comforted her that no *man* has nor can condemn her, and He who alone could do so, instead pronounces her free from condemnation.

Delivered Him- the Greek is three times used in Is. 53 LXX about the handing over to Jesus to His death. The moment of the Lord being delivered over by Pilate is so emphasized. There are few details in the record which are recorded verbatim by all the writers (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:25; Jn. 19:16). The Lord had prophesied this moment of handing over, as if this was something which He dreaded (Mk. 9:31; 10:33); that point when He was outside the legal process, and must now face His destruction. The Angels reminded the disciples: "Remember *how* he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men" (Lk. 24:6,7). The emphasis is on "*How*", with what passion and emphasis. Rom. 4:25 makes this moment of handing over equivalent to His actual death: "Who was *delivered* (s.w.) for our offences, and raised again for our justification". So much stress is put on this moment of being delivered over to crucifixion. The Gospel records stress that Pilate delivered Him up; but in fact God did (Rom. 8:32); indeed, the Lord delivered Himself up (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25). Always the same word is used. These passages also stress that He delivered Himself up, and was delivered up, *for us*. It was *our salvation* which motivated Him at the moment of being delivered up. Perhaps it was at that moment that He had the greatest temptation to walk through the midst of them and back to Galilee. As the crowd surged forward and cheered, knowing they'd won the battle of wills with Pilate..."take ye him and crucify him" ringing in His mind... this was it. This was the end. How He must have been tempted to pray again His prayer: "Let this cup pass from me...". Jerusalem was a small town by modern standards, with no more than 10,000 inhabitants. There must have been faces in that crowd which, through swollen eyes, He recognized; some whose children had benefited from His miracles, whose ears had heard His discourses with wonderment. The emphasis on this moment of delivering up is so great that there must have been an especial sacrifice on the Lord's part. But He "gave himself up" to *God* not men (1 Pet. 2:23); He knew He was giving Himself as an offering to *God* as the crowd came forward and the soldiers once again led Him. The almost terrifying thing is

that *we*, for the sake of our identity with Christ, are also "delivered up to death" (2 Cor. 4:11). We are asked to share, in principle, the height of devotion that He reached in that moment.

How shall He not with Him freely give us all things- If so much was given to us by the death of Christ, if God gave His Son for us, then how much 'easier' is it for Him to give us absolutely anything. For nothing compares to the gift of God's Son to die; this is the ultimate gift from God to man. To give us eternity and forgiveness for our sins is in far less than the gift of the blood of His Son. And further, if God gave us His Son in order to save us, in order to "give us all things"- is it really feasible that having given us His Son *so that* He might "give us all things", He would then *not* "give us all things"? Again, Paul's logic is intrusive and powerful. We may shut the book, stop reading or listening, but the force of the argument silently echoes within our narrow and fearful minds. God did "not spare" His Son- by contrast, He "freely gave" Him [Gk. 'to grace with'], His Son was indeed "all things" to God, His only and beloved Son. Seeing God gave us Him, it's obvious that He is going to give us the things which that gift was given in order to make possible. "Shall He not with Him also" could be a reference to the resurrection- if God gave us so much in the *death* of His Son, think how much more was achieved and given to us through His resurrection. "With him" could be read another way, however- as referring to how Christ will meet the believers "in the air", and they shall come "with him" to judgment (1 Thess. 4:14), with Him their judge clearly "for them". However we must remember Paul is driving here at our fears that our sins are too great for the good news, however good it is, to be true for us personally. The Greek translated "freely give" is a form of the word *charis*, grace, and is often translated "forgive". It's the same word used in Lk. 7:42, where God 'frankly forgives' all the sins / debts of His servants. Perhaps Paul has this in mind. If God gave up His Son to die for us, in order to achieve forgiveness for our sins, then rather obviously, surely, He will "frankly forgive" or "freely give" us forgiveness for all things, all and any sin. We shouldn't think that this is somehow harder for God than to give us His Son to die for our sins. He has already done that. And so giving us the forgiveness which Christ died to attain isn't therefore so difficult. If we are in Christ, then God has "quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us [s.w. "freely give" in Rom. 8:32] all trespasses". The "all things" of Rom. 8:32 can thus be understood as "all our trespasses". And so Paul goes on to triumph in Rom. 8:37 that we are conquerors in "all things", over all our sins, because we are in Him that loved us.

8:33 *Who shall lay anything to the charge* – Again, legal language. Where is our accuser? Can anyone accuse us of anything? No, insofar as we are "in Christ". The allusion is to the Gospels, to the way the Lord Jesus could calmly challenge: "Which of you can convict me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46). If He could not be seriously accused of sin, neither can we. The records of the Lord's trials are perhaps also in view here- for the accusers failed to produce any case which held together (Mk. 14:59). All this takes on striking relevance to us, as we stand in the dock before the righteous judgment of God- and are declared right, without any credible accusers. This of course is only possible because we are "in Christ". The only other time the Greek for 'lay to the charge' occurs is in the records of Paul's own trials, where again no credible accusation was found against him (Acts 19:38,40; 23:28,29; 26:2,7). As so often, Paul is reasoning from his own personal experience. He knew what it felt like to stand in court and see your accusers' case just crumble before your eyes. He makes the point in his own defence that there is no proof of anything of which he is accused, and that significantly the witnesses against him aren't even present in the courtroom (Acts 24:13,19)- all very much the scene of Rom. 8:33. And he says this is true for each one who is in Christ.

God is the prosecutor- yet He is the one who shall search for Israel's sin, and admit that it cannot be found (Jer. 50:20). God is both judge, advocate for the defence, and prosecutor- and this is God *for us*, the guilty! Rom. 8:33,34 develops the figure at length. The person bringing the complaint of sin against us is God alone- for there is no personal devil to do so. And the judge who can alone condemn us is the Lord Jesus alone. And yet we find the one 'brings the charge' instead being the very one who justifies us, or as the Greek means, renders us guiltless. The one who brings the charge becomes this strange judge who is so eager to declare us guiltless. And the judge who can

alone condemn, or render guilty, is the very one who makes intercession to the judge for us- and moreover, the One who died for us, so passionate is His love. The logic is breathtaking, literally so. The figures are taken from an earthly courtroom, but the roles are mixed. Truly “if God be for us [another courtroom analogy], who can be against us” (Rom. 8:31). This advocate / intercessor is matchless. With Him on our side, ‘for us’, we cannot possibly be condemned. Whatever is ‘against us’ - our sins- cannot now be against us, in the face of this mighty advocate. Let’s face it, the thing we fear more than death is our sin which is ‘against us’. But the assurance is clear, for those who will believe it. With an attorney for the defence such as we have, who is also our passionate judge so desperate to justify us- even they cannot stand ‘against us’. Rom. 8:33 states that there is now *nobody* who can accuse us, because none less than God Himself, the judge of all, is our justifier in Christ! And so whatever is said about us, don’t let this register with us as if it is God accusing us. Not for us the addiction of internet chat groups, wanting to know what is said about us or feeling defensive under accusation. For all our sins, truly or falsely accused of, *God* is our justifier, and not ourselves. And thus our consciences can still blossom when under man’s false accusation, genuinely aware of our failures for what they are, not being made to feel more guilty than we should, or to take false guilt. This is all a wonderful and awesome outworking of God’s plan of salvation by grace.

If *God* is our justifier, where is he that condemns us, or lays any guilt to our charge (Rom. 8:33,34)? And yet in family life, in ecclesial relationships... we are so so quick to feel and hurt from the possible insinuations of others against us. We seek to justify ourselves, to correct gossip and misrepresentation, to “take up” an issue to clear our name. We all tend to be far too sensitive about what others may be implying about us. All this reflects a sad lack of appreciation of the wonder of the fact that we are justified *by God*, and in His eyes- which is surely the ultimately important perspective- we are without fault before the throne of grace, covered in the imputed and peerless righteousness of the Lord. Paul, misrepresented and slandered more than most brethren, came to conclude: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me [right now] is the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:3-4). The judge is the justifier, according to this argument. Paul is not justified by himself or by other men, because they are not his judge. The fact that God alone is judge through Christ [another first principle] means that nobody can ultimately justify us or condemn us. The false claims of others can do nothing to ultimately damage us, and our own efforts at self-justification are in effect a denial of the fact that the Lord is the judge, not us, and therefore He alone can and will justify.

When a man is under accusation, his conscience usually dies. He is so bent on self-defence and seeking his own innocence and liberation from accusation. And we see this in so many around us. But for us, we have been delivered from accusation, judged innocent, granted the all powerful and all authoritative heavenly advocate. Rom. 8:33 states that there is now *nobody* who can accuse us, because none less than God Himself, the judge of all, is our justifier in Christ! And so whatever is said about us, don’t let this register with us as if it is God accusing us. Not for us the addiction of internet chat groups, wanting to know what is said about us or feeling defensive under accusation. For all our sins, truly or falsely accused of, God is our justifier, and not ourselves. And thus our consciences can still blossom when under man’s false accusation, genuinely aware of our failures for what they are, not being made to feel more guilty than we should, or to take false guilt. This is all a wonderful and awesome outworking of God’s plan of salvation by grace.

Of God’s elect- The reason why there are no accusers against us, not even our own sins, is because we are “God’s elect”. The supreme chosen one of God was of course the Lord Jesus, “mine elect, in whom my soul delights” (Is. 42:1). And yet later on in the servant songs of Isaiah, “mine elect” clearly refers to the people of Israel (Is. 45:4; 65:9,22). The true Israel of God are therefore those counted as somehow “in” the elect one, the singular servant of God, Messiah Jesus. Those baptized into Him are therefore His elect. And how do we know we are “God’s elect”? If we are baptized

into Christ, “mine elect”, then for sure we are. And further, we have heard the call of the Gospel, we have been called- so, we are God’s elect, His chosen ones. Of course the objection can be raised that the whole idea of calling or election may appear unfair. Indeed, the Greek word for “elect” can carry the idea of ‘the favoured / favourite one’. There is no ultimate injustice here. The chosen One is the Lord Jesus, beloved for the sake of His righteousness, His spirit of life. Those who respond to the call to be “in Him” are counted likewise. And all this is the way, the method used, in order for God to be the one who counts us as right in the ultimate judgment- for “It is God that justifies”.

8:34 Who is he that condemns?- There are many links between Romans and John's Gospel; when Paul asks where is anyone to condemn us (Rom. 8:34), we are surely intended to make the connection to Jn. 8:10, where the Lord asks the condemned woman the very same question. It's as if she, there, alone with the Lord, face down, is the dead ringer of every one of us. The legal allusion is definitely to the judge, the one who will pass sentence. The question is “Who is?” rather than “Where is?”. It's not that God, the judge of all, abdicates His judgment throne and ceases to tell right from wrong. There is an integrity in His judgment. The answer of course is that it is *God* who is the One who passes sentence. The rest of the verse goes on to speak of the Lord Jesus as our intercessor at His right hand. The point is, that God the righteous judge is going to take notice of the pleadings of His Son, whom He gave to die for our forgiveness and redemption. The idea of condemning must be seen in the context of Rom. 8:3, where we have just read that it is sin which is condemned by God, and He has already condemned it, in the crucified flesh of the Lord Jesus. “Sin” is condemned; we are not condemned. The point clearly is that it is our status “in Christ” and our disassociation from “sin”, as strongly as Paul disassociated himself from “sin” in Rom. 7:15-23, which is the means by which we are saved, and not only saved but declared right.

Christ died, and moreover, is risen again- This is said in the context of the comment that it is God who judges. It's not that the death and resurrection of a person of itself can change the mind of God or lead Him to not condemn us, in some mystical way. We are saved by the Lord's death and resurrection in that we can identify with it by baptism into His death and resurrection, and be counted as Christ, the Son of God. It is this which affects how God judges us.

Who is moreover at the right hand of God- Note the double use of the idea of “moreover”. Paul is building up his logic towards the final crescendo- that we are in fact saved from condemnation in Christ. This is classic Paul. The death of God's Son for us would be enough to persuade God the Judge of all. But further, He rose again; and we who are in Him are counted likewise to have died and risen again, as Paul has laboured in Romans 6. So, for sure we are saved. But yet further, God's risen Son is now at His right hand, pleading for us! I suggest that the sequence here of “Died, rose again, alive at God's right hand interceding for us” is somehow repeated in Rom. 14:9: “Christ both died and rose and revived”. In this case the “revived” would be a reference to the fact that He not only resurrected but is alive and active for us in mediation. In this sense, perhaps, “we are saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10). Being at the right hand was the position of favour, of honour. The point in this context is that if God so deeply respects His Son- and the theme of the Father's genuine respect of His Son is a beautiful theme in Scripture- then surely He will be very open to the Son's work for us. The suggestion has been made that the Greek for “right hand” is from the root word “to receive”, and in this verse the idea that Christ stands to receive is balanced with the comment that from that position He makes intercession or request for us His people. He is in the supreme place to receive- and He asks from there for us to be counted as in Him.

Makes intercession - see on Rom. 8:27. We should not think that whenever we sin, we have an intercessor in Heaven who can gain forgiveness for us and set us back right with God. The whole argument in Romans is that we are “in Christ” by status and are counted as Him; all that is true of Him becomes true for us. It is not that we are in Christ one moment and then out of Him the next, to be brought back into our “in Christ” status by His intercession. For if this were the case, the implication would be that we were perfect when we were ‘being good’; and if one happened to die

at a point of weakness, then we would be eternally damned. God's way is more profound. We are counted permanently as "in Christ" by status, and in this sense we have already been redeemed, and are simply awaiting the physical articulation of that redemption at the Lord's return. The imagery of the Lord Jesus as a priest offering Heavenly sacrifices is metaphor, and as such is limited. The position between Him today, His work for us, and the work of the Mosaic priests is not completely analogous. We do not need a Levitical priesthood because the Lord Jesus has replaced that, but this is not to say that He is exactly for us what the Levitical priests were for sinful Israel. For what, then, does the Lord Jesus make intercession? I suggested under Rom. 8:27 that the intercession involves a transference of our mind, our spirit, to that of the Lord Jesus as He sits before God. In this sense the intercession of the Lord Jesus for us personally has an eternal quality to it (Heb. 7:25) in that our spirit, the essence of who we are, continues in the mind of the Lord Jesus even after we die; just as the memory or spirit of those we love lives on within us after their falling asleep. We are eternally positioned before God, thanks to the intercession of the Lord Jesus. However, it cannot be denied that the Greek for "intercession" does indeed carry the idea of obtaining something. It is used here in the very context of stating that the intercession is made at the "right hand" of God, the place of receiving (see commentary above). Paul uses a related word to that translated "intercession" in saying at another judgment seat that he has "obtained help from God" (Acts 26:22). Perhaps he said that fully aware that he in fact had a Heavenly intercessor, a true counsel for the defence. The same word for "obtain" which is part of that translated "intercessor" occurs in the context of our obtaining salvation and resurrection to life (2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 11:35). It is this which has been interceded for and obtained for us by the Lord Jesus, seated as He is at the right hand, the place of receiving, of the Judge of all. In this sense His intercession has that eternal quality to it which we earlier observed (Heb. 7:25). And yet even this idea, that the intercession is for our salvation, still seems to be a too simplistic summary of what Paul really has in mind here. The Lord's intercession for Stephen in his time of dying was surely not simply for Stephen's salvation. Rather it seems to involve a representation of our spirit, our deepest essence of thought, feeling, personality and life situation, before the Father; intercession for our salvation; and also for other things which are on the Lord's agenda for us, and which we in this life may always be ignorant of.

For us- This pregnant phrase *huper hemon* may mean simply "for us", but *huper* could suggest the idea of over and above, beyond us, more than us. In this case, there would be connection with the thought recently expressed by Paul that although we know not how to pray for as we ought, the Lord Jesus as "the Lord the Spirit" makes intercession for us, beyond what we can verbalize. And of course the idea would freely connect with Eph. 3:20, where Paul exalts that the Lord Jesus can do "exceeding [Gk. *huper*] abundantly above [Gk. *huper* again- the sense of 'beyond' is very strong here in the Greek] all we ask or think, through the power that works in us". The wonder of it all will literally take us eternity to appreciate. Our innermost desire is for salvation, to serve God, to be as the Lord Jesus, to achieve His glory, both in our own characters and in all of creation. This, yet again, is the significance of Rom. 7:15-23, that despite our failings and weakness, these are indeed our core desires. And it is this spirit of ours which is transferred to the Lord Jesus and understood by the Father and Judge of all. And in response to those desires, even now, there is a power working within us to do and be for us, to work in and for us, things beyond our wildest dreams and spiritual fantasies.

Rom. 8:34,35 suggest that the love of Christ, from which we cannot be separated, is manifested to us through His intercessions for us. He doesn't offer our prayers to God all the time; He is our intercessor in the sense that He is always there as our representative, and on this basis we have acceptability with God, as we are in Him. This is proof enough that intercession is not equal to merely translating our prayers into a language God understands. We offer our prayers ourselves to God, as men have ever done. We are, in this sense, our own priesthood. We offer ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5). He Himself made only one offering of Himself; He does not offer Himself

again. If He were on earth, He would not be a priest. It is the fact we are in Him that makes our offerings acceptable.

Many passages concerning mediation refer to the Lord's mediation of the new covenant through the atonement God achieved through Him. None of them associate His mediation with the offering of our prayers to God. Indeed, several passages suggest that the actual fact of the exalted Lord now being in heavenly places, and we being in Him, is in fact the intercession necessary to bring about our redemption- rather than His translating, as it were, of our actual words (Rom. 7:25; 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1). The references to intercession likewise never suggest that Christ intercedes in the sense of offering our prayers to God. "Intercession" can be read as another way of describing prayer; this is how the term is invariably used (Jer. 7:16; 27:18; Rom. 11:2; 1 Tim. 2:1). Thus when Jeremiah is told not to intercede for Israel, this meant he was not to pray for them; it does not imply that he was acting as a priest to offer Israel's prayers to God. Nowhere in the Bible is the idea floated that a man can offer another man's prayers to God and thereby make them acceptable. The Greek for "intercession" essentially means to meet a person; prayer / intercession is a meeting with God. There is evidently nothing morally impossible about a man having direct contact with God in prayer without any priest or 'mediator'; the Old Testament abounds with such examples. The fact we are called upon to make intercession for others is surely conclusive proof that "intercession" means prayer, not relaying the words of another to God (1 Tim. 2:1). This meaning of intercession needs to be borne in mind when we consider its occurrences in Rom. 8. There we are taught that we know not what to pray for as we ought; the Lord Jesus makes intercession for us- i.e. He prays for us- not with words, i.e. not transferring our human words into God's language, not shuttling to and from between us and God as it were, but with His own groanings of the spirit. We don't know how to pray, so Christ prays (intercedes, in the language of Rom. 8) for us.

There seems to be a link made between the Lord's death and the judgment in Rom. 8:34: "Who is he that judgeth / condemneth? It is Christ that died...", as if *He* and His death are the ultimate judgment. The Old Testament idea of judgment was that in it, the Lord speaks, roars and cries, and there is an earthquake and eclipse of the sun (Joel 3:16; Am. 1:2; Jer. 25:30; Ps. 46:7; Rev. 10:3). Yet all these things are associated with the Lord's death.

8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*- The "who?" may be a reference to God, because the "who?" of Rom. 8:33,34 was God. But the point there as here was that seeing God is the only One who can do such things, then we can rest assured that they will not happen. Because God, for the sake of His Son, will not do these things. We are "in Christ" by status, and what happened at baptism is not breakable by anything human. We cannot be separated from Him by all the calamities listed in this verse, an 8:36 goes on to remind us that this cannot happen because we are counted as the slaughtered Lamb, the Lord Jesus. The Greek for "separate" is usually used about divorce (1 Cor. 7:10,11,15; Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9). Only if we chose to as it were divorce from Christ can we be separated from Him. Only we can make that choice- no human situation in our lives is to be interpreted as meaning that Christ has withdrawn His love from us. Reading the list of awful tribulations which follows, we are to understand that the love of Christ does not, therefore, guarantee that we will not suffer in this life. Indeed, as Rom. 8:36 will go on to show, we as "in Christ" must be prepared to be slain with Him all the day long, so as to live with Him. "The love of Christ" frequently refers to His death for us. The fact He died for us should be enough to persuade us that having loved us so much, no human tribulation could possibly be interpreted to mean that He in fact doesn't love us. And yet people stumble from their faith in Christ because of tribulation, as the parable of the sower makes clear. Why this happens is partly because they have failed to be focused daily upon the cross- that He there, then, did that *for me* today. This, then, is our challenge- to view all of life's tragedies, pain and unfairness through the lens of the simple fact that the Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me, and I as a man or woman in Him shall therefore live eternally.

Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword- This list is to be understood in the context of Rom. 8:36, that we are counted as in Christ, the slaughtered lamb, and therefore all His sufferings we expect to be somehow articulated in our own lives, just as His resurrection life also shall be. In the first century context, this list was the kind of ‘par for the course’ which anyone could expect who had signed up to be counted as “in Christ”. Twenty centuries later, the list may be more subtle, but nonetheless as painful. For the cross of Christ is the cross of Christ. The forms in which we share it may vary over history and geography, but the essence shall remain. Shall divorce, betrayal, cancer, false accusation- separate *us* from His love? They should not, but rather be seen as a very real sharing in His death and sufferings, from which we shall just as surely arise into new and eternal life.

Tribulation- - see on Rom. 5:3; 8:18. The word used in the parable of the sower and also about the tribulations of the last days before Christ returns (Mt. 13:21; 24:9,21). Only through such tribulations shall we enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22). Significantly, Paul uses the word earlier in Romans, in speaking of the tribulation which shall come upon the rejected at the last day (Rom. 2:9). It’s either tribulation then, or now. In this sense we can glory in tribulation, knowing it is the guarantee that we are really in Christ (Rom. 5:3). Hence in the practical part of Romans we are exhorted to patiently endure tribulation (Rom. 12:12).

Distress- Again, the same word used in Rom. 2:9 [“anguish”] about the distress of the rejected in the last day. We must experience it now, or then. Paul uses this word again in 2 Cor. 12:10, along with words similar in meaning to the list here in Rom. 8:35, in saying that we experience distresses “for Christ’s sake”, for the sake of the fact we are in Him and must have a part in His sufferings.

Persecution – The same word is used in the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:21), to which Paul seems to be making allusion in Rom. 8:35. Many of the words in this list are appropriate to Paul’s personal sufferings for the sake of His being “in Christ”. He too was persecuted (Acts 13:50; 2 Tim. 3:11), distressed etc. The list of his sufferings in 2 Cor. 12:10 includes this word and others in the list here. Again and again, Paul writes as if talking to himself, and as such sets himself up as the parade example of what he means.

Famine- Lack of food. Again, this word is in the list of Paul’s own sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:27. Perhaps Paul has specific reference to the famine which there was in the first century which affected the believers (Acts 11:28). And again, famine is to be one of the latter day tribulations (Mt. 24:7).

Nakedness- Lack of clothing. Again, this word is in the list of Paul’s own sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:27.

Peril - This word is only used elsewhere in the list of Paul’s own sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:26.

Sword- Note that Paul envisaged his readership as likely to suffer from the sword. And yet in Rom. 13:4 he speaks of the first century authorities as using the sword to execute God’s will against those who do wrong. This would lead us to interpret Rom. 13:4 as having specific and limited reference in time and space, perhaps only to the Rome ecclesia at a certain point in time and in some aspects of justice.

Nothing, whatever, can separate us from the love of Christ towards us in His death (Rom. 8:35). His cross is therefore the constant rallying point of our faith, in whatever difficulty we live through. The resolve and strength we so need in our spiritual path can come only through a personal contemplation of the cross.

8:36 – see on Rom. 8:13. The key word in this verse is “accounted”. Because we are counted as Christ, the lamb slain (and the allusion here is definitely to Isaiah 53), then we should not be phased by our experience of His cross in this life. Indeed we should expect it.

We cannot look passively at the cross. It must change how we see ourselves. It must radically affect our self-perception and self understanding. For we are in Him. It was us who hung with Him there, and who hang with Him still in the tribulations of life. For we are to account / impute ourselves as

the sheep for the slaughter, i.e. the Lord Jesus, for whose sake we are killed all the day long in the sharing of His sufferings (Rom. 8:36); with Paul, we “die daily”, because we are in Christ. And if we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12). To see ourselves as in Christ, to have such a positive view of ourselves, that the essential ‘me’ is actually the sinless Son of God, is almost asking too much of men and women living with all the dysfunction and low self-worth that seems part of the human condition.

8:37 *No*- Paul seems again to be interpreting his readers’ response. ‘Surely it can’t be right that if we are in Christ, then we will suffer so much? Aren’t all these terrible tribulations the sign that we are rejected by God rather than accepted by Him?’. And Paul answers that “No!” - in fact the way that we lose in this life is a sign that we have won, and more than won- we have become “more than conquerors”. Truly “I feel like I win when I lose” can become our credo in spiritual life.

In all these things- Every time they happen to us, they are the proof that we have therefore already won, in the very thing wherein it seems we have ‘lost’. The sense here is very much what we meet in the sermon on the mount- that we are to rejoice when we are persecuted, attacked and abused, because in that moment our reward is very great in Heaven.

More than conquerors- See on Rom. 8:34 “for us”. Again the word *hyper* is used; there is the idea of being over and above conquerors. There is something superlative about the great salvation which there is in Christ. We don’t just scrape in to God’s Kingdom and sit there in humble gratitude for eternity thinking how blessed / lucky we were. Not at all. We are in Christ, and all that is true of Him is now and shall eternally be true of us. We are crowned as conquerors- and “more than [*hyper*] conquerors”. There’s something ‘hyper’ about the nature and quality of our salvation. It is all so hyper abundantly above all we ask or think. And it begins now, and in this sense we have some sense, at least a gasp from a great distance, of the ‘hyper’ nature of it all. Paul surely has in mind how the Lord had comforted His people that “I have overcome [s.w. ‘conquer’] the world” (Jn. 16:33). We are counted not only as overcomers just as Jesus was; but hyper-conquerors, hyper-overcomers. John alludes to this passage in his Gospel record when he comments in his letters that *we* have overcome the world because of our belief into Jesus (1 Jn. 2:13,14; 4:4; 5:4,5). Clearly John like Paul perceived the believer into Christ [involving baptism into Him] as having the same status as Christ; if He has overcome, so have we. There is also a legal connotation to the word translated “conquerors”. The same word has been used in Rom. 3:4 to describe how God ‘overcomes’ when He is put in the dock and judged by human disbeliefs in His declared plan of salvation. Paul is now drawing his treatise to a conclusion. He began with us as sinners in the dock, accused by our own sins. He has argued that we have been declared right because we are in Christ; not simply ‘let off’, but declared right. We have won the case; the whole thing has been turned round. We the condemned are now the justified, we leave the courtroom as conquerors, as having legally overcome when we were judged; all, of course, because we are in Christ. We are right now more than conquerors through Christ (Rom. 8:37); and yet to he who overcomes [s.w. conquers] the Kingdom shall be given (Rev. 3:21). This doesn’t mean we can sit back and do nothing. And so Paul goes on to exhort us not to be overcome [s.w. conquered] of evil, but to overcome evil with good (Rom. 13:21). “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who (or what) *can* be against us?”. Paul caught the gloriously positive spirit of all this, and reflected it in his fondness for words with the *hyper*- prefix (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 7:4; Phil. 2:9; 4:7; 1 Thess. 3:10; 4:6; 5:13; 2 Thess. 1:3). God is not passively waiting for us to act, indifferently offering us the possible futures of salvation or condemnation according to our deeds. He earnestly desires our salvation, He wills and wishes us into the upward spiral of relationship with Him; He has given us spiritual potential and strength.

Through Him that loved us- The love of Christ is often specifically related to His death for us on the cross. We can only become “in Him” because He was so fully our representative, including in death itself. All this wonderful schema of salvation and justification of sinners, counting them as if they

are Christ, could only come true because of His death. This was and is the central point of all things; it is not simply so that Christ as a person is the central means by which all was made possible, but more specifically it was His love unto death which was and is that central point.

8:38 *For I am persuaded*- Just as we also need lengthy persuasion as to the ultimate truth that we are saved in Christ, so Paul too had gone through this process of persuasion. The same word is often used to describe how Paul “persuaded” people to continue trusting in God’s grace rather than in their own works (Acts 13:43; 18:4; 19:26; 26:28; 28:23; 2 Cor. 5:11; Gal. 1:10)- indeed, persuading people seems to have been a hallmark of Paul’s preaching. Yet Paul persuaded others on the basis of how he himself had come to be persuaded; and this will be the characteristic of any truly effective preacher of the Gospel.

That neither death nor life- In Rom. 8:35 Paul has argued that no suffering nor disaster in our lives can separate us from “the love of Christ”. Now he starts to talk in more cosmic terms, leading up to the same conclusion- that we cannot be separated or divorced from God’s love for us which is “in Christ”. For those “in Christ”, nothing can stand in the way or change that status; only we can decide to file for divorce / separation. If we die- we shall be raised again. More tellingly, however, we may fear that “life” can separate us from God’s love; Paul may refer to ‘the tribulations of life’, but he may also have in view the way we can mess up in our lives. But not even that can separate us from God’s love for those who are “in Christ”. In what sense could *life* separate us from God’s love? Surely only in the sense of sins committed in human life. Yet even these cannot separate us from the love of God which is so ready and eager to forgive us. This is the extent of grace; that not even sin, which on one hand separate from God, can actually separate us from the love of God in Christ. We are often plagued by a desire to separate out the things for which we are justly suffering, and things in which we are innocent victims. We struggle over whether our cancer or her depression is our fault, or whether we only got into unhealthy behaviours as a result of others’ stressing us... etc. This struggle to understand the balance between personal guilt and being a victim of circumstance or other people makes it hard for some people to free themselves from guilt. Seeking to understand is especially acute when we face death, suffering, tragedy, or experience broken relationships. How much was I to blame? In how much was I merely a victim? My determined conclusion is that it is impossible, at least by any intellectual process, to separate out that suffering for which we are personally guilty, and that suffering which we are merely victims of. The cross of Jesus was not only to remove personal guilt through forgiveness; all our human sufferings and sicknesses were laid upon Him there. Our burdens, both of our own guilt and those which are laid upon us by life or other people, are and were carried by Him who is our total saviour.

Angels, principalities, powers- I have argued elsewhere that Paul and the New Testament do not support the Jewish ideas of sinful Angels operating in various hierarchies and dimensions. Indeed, I have argued in *The Real Devil* that Paul consciously deconstructs these ideas. But for now Paul is prepared to allude to them, as if to say ‘Whatever you fear, whatever you believe is out there, however you believe it is in the cosmos- the wildest fears of your worst nightmares about the spirit world are not going to get in the way of God’s love for those in Christ’.

Things present nor things to come- Whatever present crises you face, and whatever you may yet face. Knowing we are secured in Christ enables us not to fear the future. For even death itself, and all that may lead up to it, emotionally or physically, are unable to affect our “in Christ” status. “Things to come” may refer to the expected latter day tribulation.

8:39 Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ, as revealed in the cross (Rom. 8:39). The idea of the love of Christ nearly always refers to the cross. And yet the same word occurs in Heb. 7:26, to remind us that the Son of God is “separate from sinners”. Here again is the paradox. We are sinners. And yet we cannot be separated from He who is personally separate from sinners. Again, the conviction of guilt is required so that we can know His saving grace. But it’s possible to understand this contradiction as just that- a contradiction. The Lord Jesus is separate from sinners;

but nothing shall separate *us* from Him, although we are sinners. This can be seen as yet another of the many irreconcilable paradoxes which express the purity of God's grace. We have elsewhere commented upon the way that God angrily speaks of permanently rejecting His people, and yet says in the same breath almost that He has not and will never reject them, because of His tender love for them.

Nor height nor depth nor any other creation- "Height" and "depth" may refer to creations supposed to exist beneath the earth or above the heavens. But no created thing can obstruct God's feelings for us in Christ. Because we are human we tend to view life in a materialistic way; what is visible and concrete assumes huge importance for us. But no created thing can get in the way of God's love for us- perhaps, the implication being, because this God who so loves us is Himself the creator of all things. Therefore no created thing, in any dimension, in this world nor any other world or dimension, can affect His feelings for us.

In exalting about the wonderful power of God in human life through Christ, Paul exalts that "neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come: nor height (Gk. *hypsoma* – the highest point a star reaches) nor depth (Gk. *bathos* – the abyss from which a star rises), nor any other creature, are able to separate us from the love of God" (Rom. 8:38,39). "The position of the stars was supposed to affect human destinies. 'Whatever the stars may be supposed to do', Paul says, 'they cannot separate us from God's love'" [A.M. Hunter, *Romans* (London: S.C.M., 1981) p. 87.]. Likewise by referring to "any other creature", Paul seems to be saying that there is no reality, nor even any supposed reality in heaven and earth, that can separate us from God's loving power. It seems to me, given the facts that Paul doesn't teach the existence of a personal Satan / demons and so often deconstructs the common ideas about them, that Paul is effectively saying here: 'Even if you think these things exist, well they are of utterly no power and consequence given the extraordinary and ultimate nature of God's power'.

And so the argument is wrapped up. God's love for us who are "in Christ" is part and parcel of His love for Christ Himself, His dearly beloved Son. We will be saved, because we are in Christ. And totally nothing and nobody, not even our own humanity and failure, can separate us from Him and His love.

9:3 One of the (many) agonies of Paul's soul was that he felt that his brethren did not appreciate the depth of love which he had for them. Israel certainly didn't; and he loved them to the same extent as Moses did, willing, at least in theory, to give his *eternal salvation* so that they might be saved (Rom. 9:3). The more (Gk. 'the more-and-more-abundantly') he loved Corinth, the less they realized his love, and the more they turned away from him (2 Cor. 2:4; 12:15); and he so earnestly wished (Gk.) that the believers in Colosse and Laodicea appreciated how much he spiritually cared for them (Col. 2:1).

"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). This was the spirit of Moses, in being willing to give his own physical and eternal life for the salvation of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32). Paul is here rising up to imitate Moses at perhaps his finest hour- willing, at least in principle, to give up his eternal life for the sake of Israel's salvation. The extent of Paul's love for natural Israel does not come out that strongly in the Acts and epistles; but this allusion to Moses says it all. The RVmg. renders Rom. 9:3: "I could pray...", more clearly alluding to Moses' prayer that the people might enter and he be rejected. Yet Paul perceived that God would not accept a substitute offering like that; and hence he says he *could* pray like this. In essence, he had risen to the same level. Likewise he wrote in 1 Thess. 2:8 RV that he was "well pleased [i.e. theoretically willing] to impart unto you not the gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us". He perceived the difference between mere imparting of the Gospel in preaching, and being willing to give one's soul, one's salvation, because of a heart that bleeds for others. No wonder Paul was such a convincing preacher, with such love behind his words.

Paul had the spirit of Moses when he could say that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for the sake of his Jewish kinsmen. He was willing in theory to give up his salvation for them, even though he knew that in actual fact this is not the basis on which God works. He emphasizes that he is not using mere words: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not [note the double emphasis], my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9:1-3). The Holy Spirit confirmed that what he felt in his conscience for them was in fact valid; this really was the level of devotion Paul reached for a nation who systematically worked for his extermination, and even more painfully, for the infiltration and destruction of his lifetime's work. The Jewish infiltrators had indirectly had their effect on Corinth, who mocked and denigrated the Paul who would have laid down his life for them. And yet time and again he calls them his brethren, he sees them as an innocent Eve in Eden, about to be beguiled by the snake of the Jewish infiltrators; he sees them as a chaste virgin. But remember how they denigrated him, in the cruellest ways. Yet his love for them was surpassing.

9:14- see on Rom. 13:12.

9:17- see on Phil. 2:15.

In the same way as Pharaoh hardened his heart, so natural Israel have done (Rom.9:17,18 cp. 11:7 A.V.mg.). They will therefore receive the punishment that will come upon their enemies.

When we read His word, we hear His voice. 1 Kings 13:21 speaks of us hearing "the *mouth* of God". Jeremiah spoke "from the mouth of the Lord" (2 Chron. 36:12). His word brings Him that near to us, if we will perceive it for what it is. Thus "Scripture" is put for "God" (Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8) and vice versa (Mt. 19:4,5). When we speak and preach God's word, we are relaying God's voice to men, and should make appropriate effort to deport ourselves as the ministers of His word and voice- not to mention diligently ensuring that our expression and exposition of His word is correct and not fanciful. We are to speak / preach "as it were oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11 Gk.). We are *His voice to men* in our preaching of His word.

9:19 There are several links between Romans 9:14,19,20 (about apostate Israel) and Job:

Romans 9

Job

:19 "Thou (the Jews) wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault (with Pharaoh and the Jews)? For who hath resisted His will? The Jews were saying that it was God's pre-ordained purpose that they should be His people, therefore their behaviour was excusable.

"He is..mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself (NIV "resisted") against Him, and hath prospered?". Job's reasoning is similar to that of the Jews- effectively he too is asking why God is finding fault with him (9:4).

:20 "O man, who art thou that disputest (AVmg.) with God"

This is what Job desired to do: "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments... there the righteous might dispute with Him" (23:4-7 cp. 9:3).

:14 "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" . The context is that the Jews were saying that their Calvinistic view of predestination allowed them to sin yet still remain God's people.

By Job saying "It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God" because he is either predestined to salvation or not, Job provoked the comment from Elihu "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity" (34:10). The link between this and Rom. 9:14 shows that Job had the same mentality as the Judaizers, and was thus also shown the blasphemous conclusion to which his

reasoning led.

9:23 In the context of the Assyrian invasion, Is. 10:20-23 prophesied that “the remnant of Israel”, those who survive it, will trust in the Lord alone and “in truth”, i.e. in covenant relationship with Him. It seems that all others of natural Israel will perish (as in Is. 4:2-4). This language of the remnant ‘returning’ unto the Lord is quoted in Rom. 9:23 about the repentance of the Jewish people and their turning to Christ. Israel were intended to repent because of Sennacherib’s invasion (Is. 37:31,32), and then “the consumption” of God’s plan could have happened. But the prophecy has been reinterpreted with reference to Israel in the last days, repenting finally as the result of the latter day Assyrian invasion. Isaiah 10 speaks of how Israel’s affliction by Assyria leads them to repentance; a “remnant shall return... unto the mighty God” (Is. 10:21)- and the “mighty God” has just been defined in Is. 9:6 as a title for the Lord Jesus. This will be a result of God using the Assyrian invader to “make a consumption... in the midst of all the land” of Israel (Is. 10:23). The “yoke” of Assyria “shall be destroyed because of the anointing” (Is. 10:27)- i.e. the coming of Christ, the anointed one, in response to the remnant returning unto Him.

The faithful learn by the condemnation of the wicked. The very existence of “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” is in order to “make known the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy” (Rom. 9:22,23 RV). After the experience of Divine judgment, “ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem”; and yet these are exactly the words used to describe how God will be ‘comforted’ after the judgments (Ez. 5:13; 14:22). We will come to share God’s perspective through our experience of the judgment process. It will teach us to be like Him, to see things from His viewpoint. As a result of it, the struggles we have over “why...?” so many things happened will be resolved. The purpose of the judgment is not only to convict us of our sinfulness, but also to make us appreciate our own righteousness for what it was and is. The faithful almost argue back with the Lord when He points out to them their righteous acts; they were done within a spirit of service that simply didn’t see them as He does.

9:24- see on 1 Thess. 4:7.

The prophecy of Hos. 2:23 about Gentiles is quoted in Rom. 9:24-26 about apostate Israel. See on Jn. 12:31.

9:27 Paul perceived through the Spirit that Isaiah *cried aloud* with passion the idea that although there were many people theoretically “of Israel” in that they were the seed of Abraham, only a remnant of them would be saved. And Paul implies that this holds true in our dispensation too (Is. 10:22 cp. Rom. 9:27).

One can sense how much Paul felt the passion of God’s word. It wasn’t just black print on white paper to him. Thus he speaks of how “Esaias is very bold, and saith... Esaias also *crieth* concerning Israel...” (Rom. 9:27; 10:20). Paul had meditated deeply upon Isaiah’s words, even to the point of considering the tone of voice in which he first spoke them. See on Acts 13:27.

9:28,29 An example of Angels shortening a time period (as they will regarding the second coming) is found in comparing Rom. 9:28,29 with Matthew 24:

Matthew 24	Romans 9
v. 22 "For the elect's sake	The seed preserved by the Lord of hosts / Angels (:29)
Those days shall be shortened	v. 28 "He will finish the account (of Israel's sin), and cut it short in righteousness: because a short(ened) work will the Lord make upon all

	the earth (land)"
...[or else] there should no flesh be saved"	v. 29 "as Sodom"

Romans 9 is quoting from Is. 28:22, which is about "a consumption, even determined upon the whole land. . . from the Lord God of hosts (Angels)". Thus the Angels planned to destroy Israel even more terribly than they did in AD70, but the "determined" "days" of "consumption" were "shortened" because the Angels- other ones apart from the destroying Angels?- had preserved a faithful seed or remnant, which is the theme of the section of Romans where the quotation from Is. 28 occurs. And there must be marked similarities in the last days too. "The remnant" of Israel will be saved, those who believe in Jesus, "For the Lord will execute his word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short. . . as Isaiah hath said before, Except the Lord of sabaoth had left us a seed [i.e. the remnant] we had become as Sodom" (Rom. 9:28,29 RV). This associates the shortening of the last days for the sake of the Jewish remnant. Paul is surely expanding the Lord's own words, that the days will be shortened "for the elect's sake". And that "elect", according to Paul's inspired exposition, are the Jews who repent and accept Jesus in the last days. Quite simply, the quicker we get the remnant of Israel to repent, the quicker the Lord will be back.

9:29 Paul makes the point that for the sake of the tiny group of Jews who did still hold and practice the truth, Israel would not suffer the judgments of Sodom in totality (Rom. 9:29 cp. Is. 1:9). This would indicate that there will also be a latter day Jewish remnant which will stop the faithless Israel of today receiving the judgment of permanent destruction.

God "left" a remnant of faithful believers in apostate Israel (Rom.9:29). Whilst their faithfulness was obviously a result of their own spiritual effort, God 'leaving' them from apostacy suggests that He was also active in preserving them from it too. The record does not speak of them saving themselves from it.

Paul makes the point that for the sake of the tiny group of Jews who did still hold and practice the truth, Israel would not suffer the judgments of Sodom in totality (Rom.9:29 cp. Is.1:9). This would indicate that there will also be a latter day Jewish remnant which will stop the faithless Israel of today receiving the judgment of permanent destruction.

10:1- see on Jude 20.

10:3- see on Rom. 8:7.

10:4 The idea that the Lord Jesus ended the Law of Moses on the cross needs some reflection. That statement only pushes the question back one stage further- how exactly did He 'end' the Law there? How did a man dying on a cross actually end the Law? The Lord Jesus, supremely in His death, was "the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4). But the Greek *telos* ["end"] is elsewhere translated "the goal" (1 Tim. 1:5 NIV). The character and person of the Lord Jesus at the end was the goal of the Mosaic law; those 613 commandments, if perfectly obeyed, were intended to give rise to a personality like that of the Lord Jesus. When He reached the climax of His personal development and spirituality, in the moment of His death, the Law was "fulfilled". He taught that He "came" in order to die; and yet He also "came" in order to "fulfil" the Law (Mt. 5:17).

10:8 The Lord foresaw in Jn. 17:20 that there would be those who would believe on Him "through their word" (i.e. the disciples'). Our word of preaching can bring others to faith. Our preaching leads to faith being created in the hearers. "The word of faith, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8) is the word (Gospel) that leads to faith; and a man cannot believe without hearing the Gospel, and he will not hear it unless it is preached by a preacher. Paul summarises by saying that faith comes by hearing [the Gospel] and hearing by [the preaching of] the word of God (Rom. 10:8,14,17). Paul's point is that whoever believes will be saved (Rom. 9:33)- and therefore, we must preach to all, so

that they might take advantage of this blessed opportunity. In his repetitious manner, Paul builds up the argument in this letter:

- Even under the law, Israel could believe God's word as preached by Moses and have righteousness imputed to them (10:5-8)
- We preach, in essence, the very same word (10:9,10)
- Isaiah said the same: that belief of his preaching would result in justification (10:11)
- We preach the same. Whoever believes in the Lord's saving Name by baptism will be saved (10:12,13)
- Therefore preach the word, for without your doing this, people can never believe it and therefore be saved (10:14,15)
- Israel had heard the word of the cross preached in the past, so just hearing the preacher will not automatically result in faith (10:16-21). Both preacher and hearer must be aware of this. Therefore there was a need for the preachers to turn to another wider audience, i.e. the Gentiles.

Note that this passage in Romans 10 reasons that men will only hear the Gospel if there is a preacher, and yet it also states that all men have heard the Gospel, in fulfillment of the prophesy of Psalm 19 that the message would go into all the earth. But later in the same epistle, Paul says that he preached because he wanted to take the Gospel to those "who have not heard" (15:21). There must be a connection within his thought with what he wrote in chapter 10, about all men hearing the Gospel through preaching. Surely he understood that the fulfillment of the prophecy that all men will hear the Gospel is purely dependent upon our freewill effort to preach to all men. This understanding inspired Paul to press ahead with his plans to expand Gospel work into Spain; and it should motivate us likewise.

Paul comments that truly Israel have already heard the essence of the Gospel we preach, in that "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8). He quotes here from Dt. 30:12: "For this command [to be obedient- or, as Paul interprets it, the word of the Gospel]... is it not far from thee [cp. how God is "not far" from anybody, Acts 17:27]. It is not in heaven above, that thou shouldest say, Who will ascend for us into heaven, and bring it to us, that we may *hear and do it*?" (Dt. 30:12 LXX). As Moses spoke these words on the last day of his life, he was at the foot of Nebo, which he ascended for his final meeting with God. He is surely alluding to the way in which he had 'ascended to heaven' before in ascending to God on Sinai, fulfilling Israel's wish that he should bring God's word to them rather than God Himself speak with them. He had returned bringing God's word to them, to which they had agreed they would "hear and do". Earlier, in Dt. 5:27, Moses had reminded the people how they had said: "Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will *hear it, and do it*". Now he is telling them that actually the word he had brought to them needn't have been brought to them as in essence it was within their hearts. It is for exactly this reason that Paul could reason elsewhere in Romans that the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the Law, although they don't know the letter of the Law. And the same principle is found in 1 Thess. 4:9: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves [i.e. from within yourselves?] are taught of God to love one another". This is rather like how the Gentiles were not 'written unto' and yet they knew from their conscience the essential spirit of the Mosaic Law.

10:9 Confessing Christ before men applies to baptism, not just bucking up the courage to give someone a tract at work (Mt. 10:32 = Rom. 10:9,10). Rom. 10:9,10 stresses that belief *and* confession are necessary for salvation. This may be one of the many links between Romans and John's gospel, in that Jn. 12:42 speaks of those who believed but wouldn't confess. Confession, a public showing forth of our belief, is vital if we are to be saved. It's perhaps worth noting that baptisms tend often to be attended largely by believers, and be performed indoors, e.g. in a bath at

someone's home, or a church hall. It's quite possible to learn the Gospel, be baptized- and nobody out in this world ever know. It's down to us to ensure this isn't true in our case.

I have wondered, and it's no more than me wondering, whether it could be that Rom. 10:9,13; Acts 22:16 and the other references to calling on the name of the Lord at baptism imply that the candidate for baptism made the statement "Jesus is Lord!" after their confession of faith or just before their immersion, and then they shouted the word "Abba! Father!" as they came out of the water, indicating their adoption as a child of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

10:10 With the heart (mind / brain) man believes unto salvation (Rom. 10:10); the early believers clung to the Lord they had believed "with purpose of *heart*" (Acts 11:23). They that had not heard of the cross of Christ were made to see, understand and therefore believe by Paul's preaching (Rom. 15:21). Our appeals likewise must be to the understanding. See on Acts 11:14; Heb. 11:19.

10:12- see on Rom. 3:30.

10:13 The pouring out of the Spirit gifts described in Joel 2 was primarily fulfilled in Acts 2, whilst looking forward to "the great and the terrible day of the Lord". Thus Joel 2:32 "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" was fulfilled primarily in the first century too; it is quoted in Rom.10:13 in this connection.

10:14 "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). This clearly states that (as a general rule) it is impossible to believe in Christ without a preacher (this theme is expanded upon in *Christians Unlimited*). The Ethiopian eunuch was the classic case of this. Bible in hand, his exasperation boiled over: "How can I (understand), *except* some man shall guide me?" (Acts 8:31). It is perfectly possible that Rom. 10:4 alludes to this, implying that this man's case was typical [and notice the connections between Acts 8:37 and Rom. 10:9]. Likewise the Lord Jesus spoke of "them also which shall believe on me through *their* (the preachers') word" (Jn. 17:20)- not through their unguided Bible reading. If all we had been given was a Bible, most of us would simply not be where we are today, spiritually. If I had started reading from Genesis, I don't think I'd have got much beyond Leviticus before giving up on the Bible. Yet there are some who have made it through, from Genesis to Revelation. And their testimony is even more emphatic: "Without doubt I needed someone to guide me, I was just crying out for all the pieces to be put into place" , in the words of one such recent convert.

10:15 There is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus preaching: "How beautiful are the feet of *him* that preaches the Gospel" (Nah. 1:15); but it is quoted in Rom. 10:15 with a subtle change of pronoun: "How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach". We are the Lord Jesus to this world, because we are brethren in Him. This alone is a powerful imperative as to who we are, how we speak, the men and women we show ourselves to be. Paul is quoting this Old Testament prophecy about Jesus to prove that we are all "sent" to preach the Gospel. The validity of our commission to preach is quite simply that Jesus Himself preached; in this way we are all personally "sent" to preach, simply because He was sent to preach. As the Father sent Him, so He sends us.

10:16 This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

The theme of Romans is the Gospel, and in this context Paul makes the point that because both Jew and Gentile are saved by the Gospel, *therefore* we should preach to both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 10:9-18). In this context, Paul quotes from Is. 52:7 and Nah. 1:15, both concerning preaching to Israel: "How shall they hear without a preacher? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of *them* (cp. 'he' in the originals- our preaching is a manifestation of the Lord) that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings". The Nahum passage is in the context of preaching to Israel the good news of their ultimate freedom from the Assyrian invasion which was then imminent. We are in a

strikingly parallel situation in these last days. Rom. 10:16 then goes on to quote Is. 53:1, which again refers to the preaching of the Gospel to Israel, and applies it to our preaching.

10:17 Faith comes by hearing God's word. But we can read God's word without faith (2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 4:2).

10:18 Paul is doubtless alluding to the great commission here. But he says that it is fulfilled by the preachers spoken of in Ps. 19:1-4, which he quotes. This speaks of the "heavens" declaring God's gospel world-wide. In the same way as the sun 'goes forth' all over the world, so will the "heavens" go forth to declare the Gospel. The 'heavens' do not just refer to the twelve in the first century; the New Testament says that all in Christ are the "heavenlies"; we are all part of the "sun of righteousness". The arising of Christ as the sun at His second coming (Mal. 4:2) will be heralded by the church witnessing the Gospel of His coming beforehand. The enthusiast will note a number of other preaching allusions in Ps. 19: "The firmament *sheweth* his handiwork" (v.1) uses a word (in the Septuagint) which occurs in Lk. 9:60 concerning the publishing of the Gospel. "Their *line* is gone out through all the earth" (v.4) is picked up by Paul in describing his preaching (2 Cor. 10:13-16 AVmg.). The idea of 'going out' throughout the earth was clearly at the root of Christ's great commission (Mk. 16:15). Yet, as we have said, the "heavens" to which this refers in Ps. 19 are interpreted by the New Testament as referring to *all* believers in Christ.

David was one of Paul's heroes; to the point that David's words are quoted by him with the preface: "I say..." (Rom. 10:18).

Israel 'heard' the word, and yet they did not "hearken" to it (Rom. 10:16,18)- we can hear but not hear. Yet if we *really* believed that Scripture is inspired, we wouldn't be like this. It is awesome to reflect how those Hebrew letters, those Greek ciphers written on parchment 1950 years ago, were actually the very words of God Almighty. But this is the real import of our understanding of inspiration. Israel literally 'heard' the words of Ezekiel, knowing that a prophet had been among them- but they weren't obedient. We too can pay such lip service to the doctrine of inspiration- and yet not be truly obedient to the word we know to be inspired.

10:19 The pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: "They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)...so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you". Thus Moses' comments on God's words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 ("I" cp. "us"). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: "If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord...that I will give you the rain of your land... I will send grass in thy fields". The "I" here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses / God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

11:1 Paul's positive approach to Israel's conversion is reflected in his whole reasoning in Romans 11, his classic statement about preaching to Israel. He begins by saying that God has not cast off His people Israel totally, because some, e.g. himself, have turned to Christ. So, seeing that God will not cast off His people Israel in the ultimate sense, it perhaps follows that in every generation some of them will come to Christ as Paul did (Rom. 11:1,2). In some sense, God has cast off His people (2 Kings 21:14 RV; Zech. 10:6); and yet, because a minority of them will always accept Christ, it is not true that God has cast off His people in a total sense (Rom. 11:1 RV). It was only because of this remnant that Israel have not become like Sodom (Rom. 9:29)- even though Old Testament passages such as Ezekiel 16 clearly liken Jerusalem to Sodom. Yet they are not as Sodom ultimately, for the sake of the remnant who will believe. Perfectly in this context, Paul draws out the lesson from Elijah's mistake (Rom. 11:2); Elijah had thought that God had totally cast Israel off, but he didn't appreciate that there was a remnant of faithful within Israel. And the existence of that remnant may likewise have been concealed from the Christian church, Paul is perhaps implying. Only *part* of Israel are blind to Messiah; a majority, but not all of them (Rom. 11:5,7,25). I don't think that Paul

is merely speaking of the situation in the first century, where clearly some Jews did believe. I say this because Jer. 31:37 clearly states that Israel will never be "cast off"; yet, according to Romans 11, Israel are only not cast off because some of them do believe in Christ. The fact Israel are not now totally "cast off" therefore indicates that there always will be a remnant of faithful Jews- faithful to God's Son and trusting in grace rather than law (Rom. 11:6). Therefore we should be hopeful that at least a remnant will respond to our preaching to them. The Jews who do not believe were "cast off" at the very time the world was reconciled to God, i.e. when they crucified Jesus (Rom. 11:15 cp. 5:10,11). It was through their "trespass" in crucifying Him that salvation came (Rom. 11:11 RVmg.). And the resurrection and second coming which actualizes that salvation will only come once they repent (Rom. 11:15). So, Israel as a whole are not "cast off" because of the remnant of Jews who will always believe in the grace of Christ; but those individuals who crucified the Lord and uphold that position have cast themselves off from God. The practical upshot of all this is that we should preach to Israel, with faith that some will repent!

11:2- see on Num. 26:9.

"Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias...?" (Rom. 11:2) suggests that Paul expected them to know this passage. "What the Scripture *saith*" rather than "what is written" might suggest that they learnt these passages by heart and spoke them out loud, probably because the majority of the early believers were either illiterate or had no access to the manuscripts.

11:3 There is such a thing as feeling lonely when we needn't. Elijah is an example of this; he felt that he was "left alone" faithful in Israel- even though there were another 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Rom. 11:3). The Hebrew in 1 Kings is hard to translate. It could mean that God reserved 7,000 of Elijah's brothers and sisters who potentially would not bow the knee to Baal. Yet Elijah didn't want to see the potential of his brethren. He set himself in a league above them, like the Psalmist, saying in his haste that all men are liars (Ps. 116:11).

"I, even I *only* am left" was Elijah's cry to God as he realized the depth of Israel's apostasy (1 Kings 19:10). But this was interpreted by God as a prayer for God to condemn Israel (Rom. 11:2,3). God read what was in Elijah's heart, and counted this as his prayer. 3 Elijah prayed to God against Israel when he told Him that he alone was left faithful- i.e. he was asking God to destroy the nation now (Rom. 11:2,3). Our essential feelings are read by the Father as prayers.

11:4 It may be that Paul's equation of the Jewish believers of the first century with the seven thousand who refused to worship Baal has a literal application (Rom. 11:4) in that there were about 7,000 Jewish believers. By the time of Acts 4:4 "the number of the men (that believed) had come to be (Greek- not as AV) about five thousand". The only verse that seems to contradict this impression is Acts 21:20: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe". However, the Greek word translated "many" is nowhere else translated like this. The sense really is 'You know what thousands believe'- i.e. 'you know the number of Jewish believers, it's in the thousands'. See on Acts 2:46.

Reflect on how God's mercy is far greater than the mercy of man- even if we are talking about very loving and spiritual people. Elijah told God that only he was faithful, and the rest of the ecclesia of Israel had turned away. God said that in *His* eyes, there were another 7,000 faithful. Paul uses this as an example of how all of us are like that 7,000- those saved by God's grace (Rom. 11:4,5). So Elijah was a spiritual man; but by His grace, God thought much higher of Elijah's brethren than Elijah did.

11:5- see on Rom. 11:1.

11:6 – see on Jn. 4:36.

11:8 The repentance of Israel will be associated with an opening of their eyes to God's word. "The Lord hath poured out upon (Israel) the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes (quoted in

Rom.11:8 concerning Israel's blindness to Christ)... the vision of all (God's word) is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed... (but) in that day (of the Kingdom) shall the deaf hear the words of the book" (Is.29:10,11,17,18). This will be when the book is *unsealed* at "the time of the end" (Dan.12:4). It will be in our last days that Israel's blindness starts to be cured, thanks to a Word-based revival, led by the Elijah ministry.

11:9- see on Acts 1:20.

11:11- see on Rom. 11:1.

Romans 11 speaks all about the conversion of Israel. My summary of the teaching there would be something like this: Initially, God's intention was that "the Jew first" would be saved, then the Gentiles. But this didn't happen. Paul's mission to the Gentiles ended up more successful than the mission to the Jews run by the Jerusalem brethren- perhaps because of their weakness, but this was how it happened. Thus God has revealed through Romans 11 a kind of re-think in the plan; now, the success of the mission to the Gentiles would provoke the Jews to conversion. It could be that the wave of Gentile conversions in the very last days dry up, and lead to Israel's conversion, which heralds the time when all peoples will be saved, or at least "all Israel" both over time and space, spiritual and natural, will be ultimately saved through the return of Jesus. Thus the conversion of the Jews, or at least a remnant, heralds the Lord's return.

11:12 The whole failure of Israel became "riches for the world." (Rom. 11:12) Nothing is ultimately wasted or lost. Nothing can be done against the Truth (2 Cor. 13:8). Meditate on your own life and identify the countless failures through which, especially as you look back over time, the "invisible" hand of God is discernible.

11:14 In Paul's case, being all things to all men meant that at times He sacrificed highest principle in order to get through to men; He didn't just baldly state doctrinal truth and leave his hearers with the problem of whether to accept it. He really sought to persuade men. He magnified his ministry of preaching to the Gentiles, he emphasized the possibility of Gentile salvation, "If by any means I may provoke to emulation ['incite to rivalry'] them which are my flesh [the Jews], and might save some of them" (Rom. 11:13,14). This hardly seems a very appropriate method, under the spotlight of highest principle. But it was a method Paul used. Likewise he badgers the Corinthians into giving money for the poor saints in Jerusalem on the basis that he has boasted to others of how much they would give (2 Cor. 9:2), and these boasts had provoked others to be generous; so now, they had better live up to their promise and give the cash. If somebody promised to give money to charity and then didn't do so, we wouldn't pressurize them to give. And we wouldn't really encourage one ecclesia to give money on the basis of telling them that another ecclesia had promised to be very generous, so they ought to be too. Yet these apparently human methods were used by Paul. He spoke "in human terms" to the Romans, "because of the infirmity of your flesh" (Rom. 6:19 NIV); he so wanted to make his point understood. And when he told husbands to love their wives, he uses another rather human reason: that because your wife is "one flesh" with you, by loving her you are loving yourself. 'And', he reasons, 'you wouldn't hate yourself, would you, so – love your wife!'. The cynic could reasonably say that this is pure selfishness (Eph. 5:29); and Paul seems to recognize that the higher level of understanding is that a husband should love his wife purely because he is manifesting the love of Christ to an often indifferent and unappreciative ecclesia (5:32,33). And yet Paul plainly uses the lower level argument too.

11:15- see on Rom. 11:1.

11:16 Paul makes an association between Job and Israel in Romans 11:16,17,30:

Romans 11

Job

:35 " Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be Elihu similarly rebukes the self-righteous Job: "

recompensed unto Him again?" . This is countering the Jewish reasoning that they were self-righteous and were giving their righteousness as a gift to God, for which they were blessed.

If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth He of thine hand?" (35:7). Without this key from Job it would be hard to understand what 'gift' Rom.11:35 was speaking about.

:16,17 use the figure of roots and branches to describe the Broken branches refer to the apostate Jews.

Bildad speaks of the wicked (i.e. Job- 18:4,7 cp.14:18 clearly Jews. refer to him) " his roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off" (18:16)

11:19 Often the Bible addresses the reader in the second person, as if he is actually present in the mind of the writer (e.g. Rom. 11:19; 14:15; 1 Cor. 7:16; 15:35). Such personalizing of Scripture is essentially how to study the Bible.

This is an apparent horticultural blunder. A dead, rejected branch can't get life by being tied on to a living tree. But in the miracle of Israel's latter day redemption, this is how it will be.

11:22- see on Mt. 3:7.

11:24- see on 2 Cor. 4:4.

Paul's parable of the Olive tree in Rom.11 warns that in some ways the Jewish branches are preferable to the Gentile ones (11:24; 3:2; Jn.4:22). Because we stand by faith, "be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee" (v.20,21). By the use of 'thee' (singular) rather than 'you' (plural) the impression is being given that each Gentile believer is hanging on to his place in God's purpose by the skin of his teeth, compared to the Jews. "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits" (v.25).

11:25 The "times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24) appears to refer to the time of Gentile opportunity to learn the Gospel, according to how Paul alludes to it in Rom. 11:25.

The Gospel is fulfilled by preaching it. And the Gospel is essentially the promises to Abraham, about all nations being blessed. This promise is fulfilled in our preaching of it- which is why the Acts references to the disciples being " multiplied" consciously refers to the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham about the multiplication of the seed. "The fullness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25) also refers to this idea of the final number of converted Gentiles being a fullness or fulfilment- of the promises to Abraham. But that fulfilment, as with that of many prophecies, is dependent upon and according to our preaching of the Gospel. See on Lk. 14:23.

11:25,26 Although Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, I understand Rom. 11:25,26 to mean that he preached to the Gentiles motivated by the knowledge that when the full number of the Gentiles had "come in", then "all Israel" would be saved by the Jews then turning to Christ. The conversion of Israel was primary in his thinking. In any case, although he was the apostle to the Gentiles rather than the Jews, he usually sought to offer the Gospel to "the Jew first" in his missionary work. He tried "by any means" to provoke Israel to acceptance of Christ (Rom. 11:14). This alone indicates how we should preach to Israel!

11:26 The Lord will come to those who have turned from ungodliness in Jacob (Is. 59:20); although Paul's citation of this is deliberately altered to teach the truth that the *majority* of Israel will not turn before He comes. To them He will come and turn ungodliness away from them (Rom. 11:26).

In the final conflict between Israel and her enemies, God's confirmation of men will be clearly seen. The Gentile nations will be gathered to make the final invasion by the Lord's evil spirits confirming

their evil spirit, whilst the repentant remnant of Israel will be confirmed in their regrets by having "the spirit of grace and supplications" poured on them (Zech. 12:10), i.e. a desire and ability to powerfully supplicate the Father for forgiveness. If men wish to turn from their sins, God will turn them. Thus "the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob" (Is. 59:20) is changed by the Spirit into: "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). Those who turn from sin are turned from sin by the Lord. The blessing promised to Abraham was not only forgiveness of sins, but that the Lord Jesus would *turn away* Abraham's seed from their iniquities (Acts 3:26). Yet we only become Abraham's seed by repentance and baptism. Our repentance and desire not to sin is therefore confirmed after our baptism.

Be aware that many NT passages mix a number of OT passages in one 'quotation'; e.g. "The deliverer will come from Zion" (Rom. 11:26) is a conflated quotation of Ps. 14:7; 53:6 and Is. 59:20. See on Heb. 13:5.

11:30 The Gentiles "have now obtained mercy (i.e. the merciful opportunity to hear the Gospel) through their (Israel's) unbelief. Even so have these (Israel) also now not believed, that through your mercy they may obtain mercy" (Rom. 11:30,31). "Mercy" here cannot be read on a surface level; it cannot be that by showing mercy, another race may obtain mercy. "Mercy" is surely being used as a figure for the preaching of the Gospel. Through our mercy to them in this way they can obtain mercy.

11:31 In the context of Israel's latter day repentance we read some admittedly strange words: (The Jews) have ...not believed, that through your (Gentile believers) mercy, they also may obtain mercy" (Rom. 11:31). Could this not mean that Israel's reconciliation to God is partly dependent on our "mercy" in preaching the Gospel to them? And now consider Peter's words to Israel: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that (firstly) your sins may be blotted out... and (secondly) he shall send Jesus Christ" at the second coming (Acts 3:19,20). Does this not suggest that Christ's eager desire for the second coming is limited by our preaching to Israel?

11:32- see on Rom. 5:20.

God works out His plan of salvation actually through man's disobedience rather than his obedience. As Paul puts it, we are concluded in unbelief, that God may have mercy (Rom. 11:32). It was and is the spirit of Joseph, when he comforted his brothers: "Now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). And again, speaking about the sin of Israel in rejecting Christ: "Their trespass means riches for the [Gentile] world" (Rom. 11:12). Or yet again, think of how Abraham's lie about Sarah and unfaithfulness to his marriage covenant with her became a source of God's blessing and the curing of Abimelech's wife from infertility (Gen. 20:17- I read her infertility as a state that existed prior to the incident with Abraham). The righteousness of God becomes available to us exactly because we have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23,24). If we lie, then through our lie the truth and glory of God is revealed (Rom. 3:7). The light comes into the world- the light of hope of salvation, forgiveness, of God in Christ- but this light reveals to us our verdict of 'guilty' (Jn. 3:18,36).

The references to "all" being saved seem to be limited by the context- and "all" rarely means 'every single one', e.g. "all" Jerusalem went out to hear John the Baptist and were "all" baptized by him. I don't suppose the city was left deserted. The only passage which appears to have some bearing is Rom 11:32: "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all". But the context speaks of how both Jews and Gentiles will be saved- not every Jew and Gentile that's lived, but those who accept the Gospel. And how does God have mercy? The preceding verse clarifies: "even so have these also now been disobedient, that by your mercy they also may now obtain mercy" (Rom 11:31). Surely the mercy we show to the Jews is preaching the Gospel of

God's mercy to them. Their obtaining mercy depends upon our mercy. Because God chooses to work through us as His witnesses. The Jews must obtain salvation in the same pattern as the Gentiles do: "For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience..." (Rom. 11:30). As Gentiles crossed over from disobedience to obedience to the Gospel, so must the Jews. And in the last days, this will happen: "...and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). This turning away of ungodliness from Israel is required before "all" - i.e. the redeemed from both Jews and Gentiles- can be saved. But the turning away of ungodliness surely implies a repentance of some Jewish people; God won't just save them regardless, they must turn away from ungodliness.

11:34- see on Job 21:22.

12 See on 1 Thess. 5:3.

12:1 The description of the believer as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1) alludes to the scapegoat, the only living sacrifice, which was a type of the risen Lord (Lev. 16:10 LXX = Acts 1:3). As the Lord ran free in His resurrection, bearing away the sins of men, so we who are in Him and preach that salvation can do the same. As Christ bore away our iniquities (Is. 53:11), so "we then that are strong ought to bear the iniquities of the weak" (Rom. 15:1).

Having spoken of the surpassing love of God in Christ, Paul urges that it is "your reasonable (Greek 'logikos' - i.e. logical) service" to totally dedicate ourselves to Him in response (Rom. 12:1). The word "logikos" is derived from the Greek 'logos', which is the word normally translated "the word" with reference to God's Word. Our "logical" response in Biblical terms is therefore one which is derived from God's Word.

Christ is the supreme priest; but because we are "in Him", we too have some part in the priesthood. Note how the priests are described in language relevant to the Lord: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity" (Mal. 2:6). Thus we must "present (our) bodies a living sacrifice" to God (Rom. 12:1); making the believer "the offering and the priest", as Christ was (and is). We are our own priests. This must have been a radical idea to those early Jewish Christians. Yet this is what Paul and Peter were driving at when they said things like: "Ye *also* are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (Gk. *logikos*) service (*service* is priestly language)" (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1). They were saying: '*You're your own priest now!*'. And the early believers found it hard to cope with. Have you considered that the most common form of apostasy (i.e. leaving the true Faith) in the early church was going back to the Jewish Law, with its system of priests? Natural Israel likewise totally failed to live up to God's desire that they should be a *Kingdom* of priests. They left it all to their priests. They *didn't* teach every man his neighbour and his brother, saying, Know the Lord (Heb. 8:11; even though when He re-accepts them, God will count them as if they did). Although it was God's original intention that each family leader sanctified themselves and slew the Passover lamb personally, they came to delegate this to their priests (so 2 Chron. 30:17 implies). See on Mt. 5:29.

Our part in the promises should enable us to live Godly in this present evil world. Ps. 89:1-3 records David breaking forth into joy simply because of the promises made to him. Although Israel were in covenant relationship with God, there was no "truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land", but rather the very opposite: swearing, lying etc. (Hos. 4:1,2). If they had truly believed the "mercy and truth" of the promises to Abraham and the covenant based around them, they would have been merciful and truthful. But they knew these promises but didn't believe them. Having expounded the deeper aspects of the promises to Abraham in Romans 9-11, Paul spins the argument round to practical issues: "I beseech you *therefore*, brethren, by the mercies of God [a technical term for the

promises- 'the sure mercies of David', Is. 55:3], that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1).

We must be living sacrifices, devoted to the Lord (Rom. 12:1); but if we flunk out of this: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). We're a sacrifice either way, tied up without the freedom of movement as we would wish. There's therefore and thereby an element of sorrow, either way in life: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of (i.e. that gift you will really, eternally enjoy): but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10).

12:2 Psychotherapists have powerfully pointed out the difference between the real, essential person- and the personas, or personages, whom we live out in the eyes of others. We humans tend to pretend to be the person others expect of us, we act out the person we feel our society or upbringing demands of us, rather than 'being ourselves'. Truly did Shakespeare write [from a worldly perspective] that all the world's a stage, and we are merely the players / actors. And as Napoleon said, "One becomes the man of one's uniform"; the persona, the act we live, comes to influence the real self, the real person, like the clown who can't stop clowning around offstage. In Biblical terms, we allow the world to push us into its mould, psychologically and sociologically, rather than allowing ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our minds by the things of God's word and His Son (Rom. 12:2). We so easily allow the world to squeeze us into its mould, rather than being personally transformed by our relationship with the Lord (Rom. 12:2 J.B. Phillips).

12:3 There was exhortation to "seek the best gifts"; and yet they were distributed "according as God hath dealt to every man [according to] the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3 and context). God doesn't just 'give' men faith. But He gave to each of them in the early church gifts which reflected the measure of faith shown by the individual believer. How much they could achieve for their Lord was limited by their faith.

12:8- see on 2 Cor. 1:12.

12:11 Paul warns the Romans not to be like the lazy servant in the parable (Mt. 25:26 = Rom. 12:11).

12:13 The amount of travel by the early brethren was extraordinary, and could only have been impressive to the world around them. The same could be said of us today, regularly travelling for days across Russia and North America to attend gatherings, flying and hitch hiking around Africa to meet each other... driving hours to meeting. The NT letters feature passages which served as letters of recommendation (Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 16:10-12 cp. Phil. 2:25-30; Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21; Philemon 22; Rom. 15:24). Thus hospitality became a required Christian virtue (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Even ordinary Christians could count on this hospitality. Yet "security and hospitality when travelling had traditionally been the privilege of the powerful, who had relied upon a network of patronage and friendship, created by wealth. The letters of recommendation disclose the fact that these domestic advantages were now extended to the whole household of faith, who are accepted on trust, though complete strangers". This was the practical outcome of the doctrines believed; a member of the ekklesia of God would be welcomed as a brother or sister in Laodicea, Ephesus, Corinth or Rome. And so it largely is amongst us today.

12:14 We must bless / forgive those who persecute us (Rom. 12:14; blessing and forgiveness are closely linked in Scripture). This is clearly to be done without waiting for the persecutor to stop or repent. Forgiveness without repentance has to be offered.

12:16- see on Mt. 25:15.

12:18 The majority of the pressures in Paul's life came from within the ecclesia. His life was based amongst the ecclesias; thus to him "all men" were the believers, not the world as a whole (Mk. 9:50 = Rom. 12:18).

Conflict in the ecclesia shouldn't actually surprise us. We should expect it. For it was the ecclesia of Christ's day who were the ones who rejected Him. "As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18) surely suggests that Paul saw conflict with others as arising due to others' attitudes over which we have no control. Paul's inspired wording tacitly accepts that we often cannot live in peace with others because it's not possible given their failures; but we can change *our* attitudes, this is the point.

12:19 We must remember that "Vengeance is *mine* [not ours, not the state's], and requital" (Dt. 32:35). That taking of vengeance, that requital, was worked out by God on the cross. There the Lord Jesus was clothed with the 'garments of vengeance' (Is. 59:17); the day of the crucifixion was "the day of vengeance" (Is. 63:4). This is one reason why God doesn't operate a tit-for-tat requital of our sins upon our heads- because He dealt with sin and His vengeance for it in the cross, not by any other way. Hence David calls Yahweh the "God of revenge", the one *alone* to whom vengeance belongs (Ps. 94:1,3). Our response to all this is to believe that truly vengeance is God and therefore we will *not* avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). I take this to apply to all the micro-level 'takings of vengeance' which we so easily do in our words, body language, attitudes etc., in response to the hurt received from others. The cross alone enables us to break the cycle.

12:20 - see on Ps. 140:9,10.

Christ's transfiguration was a cameo of the change that should be apparent deep within us (Rom. 12:20 = Mt. 17:2 Gk.).

The fire of condemnation at the judgment has already been kindled by men's attitudes now (Lk.12:49), and hence by doing good to such men when they abuse us we (now) "heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom.12:20); note that "thine enemy" here must therefore refer to someone who is responsible, i.e. in the ecclesia (cp. 2 Thess.3:15, which implies 'an enemy' was first century vocabulary for a shunned and rejected false teacher). See on Jude 23.

We are to be unconditionally kind to even our enemies, so that we may heap coals of fire upon their head (Rom. 12:20). I don't understand this as meaning that our motivation for such kindness should be the gleeful thought that we will thereby earn for them greater and more painful condemnation at the last day. Such motives would surely be foreign to all we have seen and known in the Father and Son. Rather am I attracted to the suggestion that there is a reference here to the practice, originating in Egypt, of putting a pan of hot coals over the head of a person who has openly repented. In which case, we would be being taught to show grace to our enemies, in order that we might bring them to repentance. This would chime in with the teaching elsewhere in Romans that God's goodness leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). And this is how we should be, especially with our brethren. The idea of excluding our brethren seems to me the very opposite of the spirit of grace which we have received.

Paul quotes the words of Prov. 25:21,22 in Rom. 12:20: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat... for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head". But he omits to apply the last part of Prov. 25:22 to us: "And the Lord shall reward thee". Paul's point is that we should not resist evil, leave God to glorify His Name- and enable this to happen, without seeking for a personal reward for our righteousness. Thus Prov. 25:21,22: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat... for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee" is quoted in Rom. 12:20, but with the pointed omission of the last clause: "The Lord shall reward thee". It's as if Paul is saying: 'The condemnation of the wicked, when *God*, not you, pours out His vengeance, will glorify Him. So do your part to bring this about, don't worry about the reward you're promised so much as the bringing about of His glory'.

13:1

Elders And Romans 13

The question has been asked as to how the words of Romans 13 can stand true, with their implication that Government ministers are God's representatives, punishing sinners and upholding righteousness, and therefore should be obeyed. Many young brethren are pressured by such ministers to join armies and in other ways too, to break the law of Christ. How, for example, could those words have been true in Hitler's Germany or Taliban-controlled Afghanistan?

First it must be remembered that there are other passages which do command our submission to human authorities: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Pet. 1:13-17). Whilst these words stand true, Peter himself also disobeyed human authority, with the comment that we must obey God rather than men. When there is a conflict in allegiance created, we must obey God and disobey anyone or any institution that commands us to disobey Him. And Paul likewise- the man who was jailed repeatedly for breaking the law: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (Tit. 3:1,2).

But the Romans 13 passage goes much further, saying that these "ministers" are ordained by God on His behalf, and therefore must be obeyed. Logically, therefore, one would have to obey whatever they said. Otherwise we would always be having to decide whether or not a Government minister was really ordained in God's behalf, or not. And Romans 13 seems to imply that all ministers are "ministers of God". And so for this passage I wish to suggest that it specifically refers to submission to the elders and apostles of the first century ecclesia, empowered as they were with the miraculous Spirit gifts and direct revelations of wisdom and judgment.

There is great stress in Rom. 13 that these "powers" punish evil / sinfulness. This is just not true of human Governments. Yet it is appropriate if the "powers" spoken of here are within the ecclesia. So we will consider the passage phrase by phrase- and we find that almost every Greek noun or verb in it is used elsewhere in a specifically ecclesial context.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (:1).

The Greek for "Higher" means 'to excel, to be superior, better than, to surpass'. The same word occurs in Phil. 2:3: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other *better than themselves*". We may respect human ministers but we can scarcely esteem them better than ourselves in a spiritual sense. Yet authority held by ecclesial elders is earned and not demanded- based on our respect of them as brethren more mature in Christ than we are.

For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained...

"Powers" is s.w. [same word] 2 Cor. 10:8 "our [apostolic] *authority*"; "*the power* which the Lord hath given me" (Paul; 2 Cor. 13:10). "Not because we [the apostles] have not *power*" (2 Thess. 3:9). Those powers are "ordained"- s.w. Acts 15:2, where Paul and Barnabas were "determined", s.w. "ordained", to go to Jerusalem as representative elders; the family of Stephanas "addicted themselves", literally 'ordained themselves', to the work of ministry in the ecclesia. Note how here as in Rom. 13, the ideas of being *ordained* to be a *minister* also occur together.

[ordained] of God

In the sense of 1 Cor. 12:28: "*And God* hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues".

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth... (:2)

Alexander “hath greatly *withstood* [s.w. resisteth] our words” (2 Tim. 4:15)- the words of elders like Paul. This doesn’t mean that elders are beyond any criticism- for the same Greek word is used of how Paul “withstood” Peter when he gave in to legalism and rejected grace (Gal. 2:11).

the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror... (:2,3)

“Terror” translates the Greek word used for how “fear” came upon the ecclesia when the elders exercised their powers of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:43; 5:5,11). Initially, Corinth showed such “fear” towards Paul (2 Cor. 7:11,15). Elders should rebuke publically those who sin, that others in the ecclesia might “fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). The situation in the first century as far as the authorities of the world are concerned was actually the very opposite of what we read here in Romans. The same word occurs in 1 Pet. 3:14, telling the believers to endure persecution from the authorities, not to cave in to their demands, and “be not afraid of their *fear*”. Note that the Greek word for “afraid” occurs in Rom. 13:3- we should be “afraid” of the powers God has placed in the ecclesia. The fact the two words occur together in both Romans and Peter leads us to the conclusion: ‘Respect and “fear” those who are elders truly; but don’t fear / respect those who are elders in name only and are in reality far from grace’.

[not a terror] to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? (:3)

The Greek word for “afraid” is the same word in Gal. 2:12, which criticizes Peter for being “afraid” of the Jerusalem elders who were teaching legalism. Paul doesn’t mean we should fear an elder merely because they have the office of an elder; but we fear / respect those who are indeed spiritually “higher” than us.

do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

This certainly isn’t true of worldly authorities and rulers. They don’t praise righteousness, and they certainly didn’t in the first century. Yet the same word is used in 2 Cor. 8:18 of how Timothy was “praised” in the ecclesias. Good elders and healthy ecclesias will give praise / encouragement to those who deserve it.

For he is the minister of God (:4)

Gk. *Diakonos*, sometimes translated “deacon”. The word is used 31 times in the N.T., nearly always about ecclesial elders / ministers / servants. Paul speaks of himself and Timothy with the very same words: a “minister of God” (2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Thess. 3:2), who therefore ought to be listened to.

...to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain

This seems to be a reference to the ability which some elders had in the first century to execute physical affliction upon those who were disobedient. Peter smote Ananias and Sapphira dead. Paul seems to warn the Corinthians that he could “not spare” them if he convicted them of apostasy on his next visit. It even seems that the sicknesses spoken of in James 5 are a direct result of sinful behaviour, and the gift of healing could be exercised by the elders in the case of repentance. Jesus Himself threatened immediate physical judgment, presumably through the hands of His representatives, upon some in the ecclesias of Rev. 2,3. Respect for elders is something taught throughout the N.T. letters- “remember them that have the rule over you” (Heb. 13:7). Here the writer clearly refers to elders in the ecclesia, for he bids his readers consider the end of those men’s faithful way of life and to follow their example. And yet they are described as ‘rulers’. It’s as if the point is that the real rulers of a first century believer were not the Roman administrators, but the ministers of God within their ecclesia. In illiterate ecclesias or those without access to the written scrolls containing God’s word, the elders would have played a more critical role in their relationship with God than in our age.

...for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also (:4-6)

This could be referring to the Lord's well known example of paying tribute, and simply saying that the principle of submission to authority should extend out of the ecclesia, to all those who have power over us- so long as this does not contradict our conscience toward Christ. But it could also be a reference to some form of tithing or regular support of elders. There is historical evidence that this went on early in the Christian church.

"Be subject" uses a Greek word elsewhere used about submission to elders (1 Cor. 16:16). Note how the word occurs in 1 Cor. 14:34- the sisters were commanded "to be under obedience" to their men [Gk.]. I take this to refer to the need for those sisters to be submissive to their appointed elder. When we meet the word again in the command "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22,24; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1,5), I take this as meaning that they should treat him as they would an elder- in that Paul assumes he will teach and inspire her as the elders ought to have been doing.

for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing (:6)

The question arises, *what* thing? If the reference is to their reflecting of God's judgment against those who sin, this is simply not true of human Governments. The first century authorities were persecuting the Christians, fabricating untruth against them, killing them, and insisting that those who refused to accept Caesar as Lord be punished. The words can only be true of the ministers of God of whom we read elsewhere in the N.T.- i.e., the ecclesial elders.

The Greek phrase for "attending continually" is a catchphrase usually employed to describe the zealous pastoral care of the early apostles: "These all *continued* with one accord in prayer...*continuing daily* with one accord... and breaking bread... we will *give ourselves continually* to prayer, and to the ministry [another Romans 13 idea!] of the word" (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4). By using the phrase, Paul is undoubtedly pointing us back to the example of the early apostles / elders.

Render therefore to all their dues (:7)

The Greek for "dues" is found in Rom. 15:27 about the due which the Gentile believers owe to materially support their Jewish brethren. We have no 'due' to this world (Rom. 13:8 Gk., s.w.), but our due is to love each other in the brotherhood. But admittedly Paul does seem in the next verses to extend the principle of submission further than just within the ecclesia. In the same way as elders should only be respected if they had earned that respect, and were leading brethren in the way of Christ, so too the authorities of the world should only be followed insofar as they did not lead believers into disobedience to Christ: "...tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (:8-10).

We must remember that the Romans 13:1 passage about submission to human authority was written before Nero's persecution of Christians. It seems to be written on the assumption that justice is being done by officialdom. Romans seems to have been written around AD60. The background situation in Rome, to which Paul was speaking, needs to be understood if we are to understand Paul in his context. In AD58 there were major revolts in Rome against the taxation system (as recorded in Tacitus, *Annals* 13.50,51). Jews were exempt from paying some taxes (they were allowed to pay them to the temple in Jerusalem); and Roman citizens also were exempt. There was therefore a huge

amount of resentment from the Gentile, non-Roman citizen population who had to pay heavy taxes (1). It could well be that some of the Roman Christians were tempted to share in this unrest; and Paul is instead urging them to obey those who had the rule over them, in the sense of paying their taxes, rendering tribute to whom tribute was due. Ben Witherington, one of academic scholarship's most well known and learned students of Paul, significantly doesn't see in the Romans 13 passage any suggestion that Christians should therefore bear arms, as this would contradict Paul's teaching about *non-violent* response to evil in the same section of Romans; rather does he understand the teaching about submission to authorities as being specifically in this taxation context (2).

Notes

(1) Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.5.1, Josephus, *Antiquities Of The Jews* 16.45,160-161; references in Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest* (Leicester: I.V.P., 1998) p. 180.

(2) Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest* (Leicester: I.V.P., 1998) pp. 178-184. He comments that "most ancient persons [took] it for granted that governing authorities have their authority from God" (p. 181). When Paul writes this to the Romans, he could well be quoting a well known maxim- and thus using it in order to persuade the Roman Christians to pay their taxes.

13:5- see on 1 Jn. 3:18.

13:8- see on Rom. 1:14.

Paul's conception of love to the world around him was clearly rooted in the need to preach to them, rather than provide material help. He felt he had a debt to love others (Rom. 13:8); yet also a debt to preach (Rom. 1:14). His debt was to love in the form of preaching.

13:9 Paul's references to the Gospels suggests that he had carefully meditated upon the passages to which he consciously alludes. The fact and way in which he *alludes* rather than quotes verbatim reflects the fact he had thought through and absorbed the teaching of the passages rather than learning them parrot fashion. For example, in Mt. 19:18,19 the Lord Jesus combines two quotations from the Law: Ex. 20:12-16 followed by Lev. 19:18. Paul, in a different context, to prove a different point, combines those same two passages, although separating them by a brief comment (Rom. 13:9). This surely indicates that he had meditated upon how his Lord was using the Law, and mastered it so that he could use it himself.

13:11 God actually saw us as saved right from the beginning of the world; He purposed, and effectively it was done. Perhaps this is the hardest thing our faith has to grapple with. "Knowing the time, that for us, the hour already is to be aroused out of sleep" and be resurrected (Rom. 13:11 YLT) may mean (contrary to the implication of the AV) that for us who are with God now, the time of resurrection and salvation is now with us, and therefore we should live lives which answer to this fact. The day of salvation is in that sense *today* (2 Cor. 6:2 Gk.). So sure is God's word that it is as if the concept of a delay between its utterance and the fulfillment is something not to be considered. Thus "the vision" is an ellipsis for 'the fulfillment of the vision' in Hab. 2:3. Although our day by day spirituality fluctuates, God is beyond time. He sees us either as an essentially good tree bringing forth good fruit, or as essentially bad (Mt. 7:23).

13:12 It's been pointed out and exemplified beyond cavil that Paul uses much Essene terminology. I suggest he does this in order to deconstruct it. When he urges the Roman Jews to "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13:12), calling his converts "the children of the light and children of the day" (1 Thess. 5:5), Paul is alluding to the Essene ideas. But he's saying that the children of light are to wage spiritual warfare against themselves, their own hearts, quit the things and habits of the flesh etc. – rather than charge off into literal battle with physical armour against the Romans. Likewise when Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14–18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that

the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

13:14 We must even after baptism "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14; Eph. 4:14; Col. 3:12,14; 1 Thess. 5:8), even though *at baptism* we put on the Lord Jesus (Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:10) and in prospect the flesh was co-crucified with Christ's flesh (Rom. 6:6,18). By putting off the things of the flesh and putting on the things of the Lord in our lives, we live out the baptism principle again; and thereby we are "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:22-24). See on Col. 2:6.

14:1- see on Rom. 4:19.

Romans 14 and 15 have many allusions back to the earlier, 'doctrinal' part of Romans. Between them, those allusions teach that we *are* to be as Abraham; and yet we will be accepted if we can't rise up to his standard. Rom. 14:1 exhorts us to "receive the *weak in faith*"- when we have been told that Abraham was *not* weak in faith (Rom. 4:19) and we should seek to be like him. But we are to receive those who are in his seed by baptism, but don't make it to his level of personal faith. Rom. 14:5 bids us be *fully persuaded*- as Abraham was "fully persuaded" (Rom. 4:21). Yet, Rom. 14:23 says that he who *doubts* is damned- and Abraham didn't *stagger* [s.w. Rom. 4:20). Thus ultimately, he must be our example, even if some in the ecclesia will take time to rise up to his standard, and unlike him are "weak in faith".

14:4 The first century society was built around the concept of *oikonomia*, household fellowship. The head of the house was the leader, and all the extended family and slaves had to follow his religion and be obedient to him. For slaves, this was on pain of death. However, the call of Christ was to *individuals*; in conscious allusion to the *oikonomia* concept, Paul speaks of how we are the "household-servants" of Christ- not a human master (Rom. 14:4 RVmg.). Individual conversion to a religion was unheard of at the time. Indeed, religion was something for the wealthy to play with, as a hobby.

We mustn't judge our brother, because "to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:4). It may be that Paul's implication is that God is more likely to uphold His failing servant than we would be; therefore, let's not condemn our brother, because God is more generous-spirited than we are in His judgment.

14:6- see on Acts 18:18.

There is no lack of evidence in the NT that the Lord's sacrifice precluded the need to do these things. And yet Paul and the Council of Jerusalem made concessions to the Jewish brethren who couldn't bring themselves to accept the Truth in these areas, in the hope that continued practice of these things within the context of the Christian community would make them see for themselves that they were inappropriate. Paul says that Sabbath keeping is a matter of personal conscience (Rom. 14:1-10), even though elsewhere he argues so forcibly that to do this is to return to the weak and beggarly elements. Here, as with the demons issue, there was a clear concession to some degree of human non-acceptance of Divine truth and the implications arising from it. It seems that although the Law was done away by the cross, by the time of 2 Cor. 3:7,11 it could still be spoken of as "that which is being done away" (RVmg.). There was a changeover period allowed, rather than a bald insistence that acceptance of Christ and the meaning of His death must mean that the old Jewish ways were dropped instantly.

14:8,9 There are some passages which appear to teach [misread] that we go on living after death. It has been observed that Rom. 14:8,9 implies that Jesus is our Lord after death as well as in life: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living". We are the Lord's after death, in the same way as Abraham lives unto Him (Lk. 20:38). We are still with Him. He doesn't forget us when we die, just

as I will remember my mother till the day of my death, regardless of when she dies. But if the Lord doesn't come, I will die, and my memory, my love, my fondness, will perish (for a small moment). But God doesn't die, His memory doesn't fade and distort as ours does; images of us don't come in and out of His mind with greater intensity and insistence at some times than at others; He remembers us constantly and will remember us after our death, right up until when the Lord comes. Because of this, He is the God of Abraham; Abraham is alive in the mind of God, He remembers his faith and his offering of Isaac, just as much as He was aware of it in Abraham's lifetime. The works of the dead follow them, in the sense that once they finish their labours their works are still in the memory of the Father (Rev. 14:13); for what father would not remember his dead child's ways and deeds? This is why Rom. 14:8,9 says that Jesus is our Lord after death just as much as He was and is during our lifetimes. Why? Because we are "the Lord's", because we were "added to the Lord" through baptism (Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 11:24), because we are true brothers-in-Christ. From God's perspective, the dead believers are cheering us on as we run the race to the end; He remembers them as they were, and knows how they would behave if they were alive today, looking down upon us as we run the race (Heb. 12:1). Or in another figure, the blood of the dead believers cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith (Rev. 6:9). To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain (Gen. 4:10). After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given "white robes" and being told to rest a bit longer (Rev. 6:11).

14:9- see on Acts 17:31.

The fact Jesus is Lord has vital practical import for us. In Rom. 14:7-9, Paul speaks of the need not to live unto ourselves, but to rather live in a way which is sensitive to the conscience and needs of others. Why? "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living". Because He is our Lord we therefore don't live for ourselves, but for Christ our Lord and all those in Him. When Paul in 1 Tim. 6 exalts that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, this isn't just some literary flourish. It is embedded within a context of telling the believers to quit materialism, indeed to flee from its snare.

14:10- see on 2 Cor. 11:2.

We read in Jer. 42:2 of a supplication being "accepted", or 'to fall down before' (RVmg.). To fall down before the Lord Jesus is to be accepted of Him. Paul speaks of us all *standing* before the judgment seat of Christ after first of all casting ourselves down; and this in the context of saying that God is able to make the weak brother *stand* in His sight (Rom. 14:4 cp. 10,11). We will all be in the position of the weak brother. Don't "set at nought" your brother- because the judgment seat of Christ is coming for you too (Rom. 14:10). We will *all* be "set at nought" then; that's the implication. We will all have to be made stand by God's grace. We will *all* be made to stand, i.e. be accepted (Eph. 6:11-13; Col. 4:12)- or at least, Paul is saying, that's how you should look at your brethren, as if they too will be accepted. For if we have no right to condemn our brethren; we must surely assume they will be accepted. In passing, note how Paul warns in this context that we can cause our brother to fall down or stumble (Rom. 14:13). Some at the last day will not be 'stood up', they will remain prostrate and then slink away. And why? Because they will have been made to fall by their brethren. Our faith and our community of believers is fragile, more fragile than we may think. In all the pressures of these last days it is so terribly easy to cause each other to stumble, to fall, with the ultimate consequence that they will not be stood up at the judgment. This is the evil of causing offence, stumbling, making another to fall down.

14:11 "Every tongue shall confess to God (in Christ)... every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:11,12). "Account" is the Greek 'logos'- we will 'logos' ourselves in the sense that we will verbally confess ("every tongue") the innermost essence of our spiritual lives. This will lead

us to confess with our tongue that Christ is really our Lord (Phil. 2:11). Confessing our sinfulness will lead us to show our appreciation of His Lordship. That which has been spoken or thought in darkness will then be heard in the light- in that day "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed" (Lk. 12:2,3). He will confess our righteous acts, and we will confess our sins (Is. 45:23-25 cp. Phil. 2:10; Rom. 14:11). For the wicked, it will be the opposite. They confess their righteous acts, He tells them their sins. And in this way the good and bad deeds of all the responsible will come to the light.

Is. 45:23 "Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess" is quoted by Paul in Rom. 14:11,12 as being specifically concerning our position at the judgment seat. It is therefore fitting to read Is. 45:24,25 as being concerning our thoughts then: "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord (Jesus) have I righteousness and strength... and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed (cp. our earlier reconstruction of the rejected initially arguing with the Lord in anger, and then slinking away in shame). In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory". In God's presence (judgment language: Acts 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2:19; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10) no flesh will glory, but will glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:29). The RV makes all this even more personal: "Only in the Lord, shall one say unto me, have I righteousness and strength" (Is. 45:24 RV). The words of grateful realization will be directed specifically by us to the Lord Himself.

14:12 The connection between Rom. 14:12 and Mt. 12:36 suggests that Paul recognized that we all speak idle words which we will have to give account of at judgment. Therefore, because of our rampant tongue, we will stand in deep need of grace. So therefore, Paul says, you'd better be soft on your brother now, in this life.

"Every knee shall bow to me... every tongue shall confess... so then every one *of us* shall give account" (Rom. 14:11,12) is another example of where 'all men', 'every man' means 'every one of us the responsible'. "The dead" will be judged (Rev. 11:18)- not everyone who ever died, but the dead who, God counts responsible. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men" (Tit. 2:11)- certainly not to every human being that has ever lived; but to the "all men" of the new creation. The Lord tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9)- for every one who has a representative part in His sacrifice through baptism.

14:13- see on Mt. 13:22.

14:14 Paul really did meditate on every word of his Lord. Thus he says he was *persuaded* by the Lord Jesus that all foods were clean (Rom. 14:14)- this is how he took the Lord's teaching in Mk. 7:19. Those words *lived* to Paul, they were as the personal persuasion of his Lord, as if Christ was talking to him personally through the Gospel records.

14:17 All the law, every possible type of legislation, is comprehended in the one simple law of loving our neighbour (Rom. 13:9). We aren't free to do, dress or speak just as we like; the law of love binds heavy upon us. The things of God's Kingdom don't revolve so much around laws (e.g. about what we should eat and drink) but around "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). It is attitudes which are important rather than specific acts of obedience.

In Ex.33:8 Moses asks to see God's glory, and in reply he is told God will proclaim His Name before him, which is done in Ex.34:5-7 by the declaration of God's righteous attributes. Solomon building a temple "For the name of the Lord, and an house for His Kingdom" (2 Chron.2:1) suggests that God's Kingdom is another manifestation of His Name, because it will be filled with His attributes. This helps us understand Rom.14:17: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink... but righteousness... joy", i.e. the characteristics of God's Name.

14:19 Lk. 14:32 records the parable of the man with a small army going to meet the General with a far larger army- and then wisely desiring "conditions (lit. 'things') of peace". The man is clearly us, and the General coming with His hosts is evidently the Lord Jesus; we are to come to peace with Him before the final meeting of God and man in judgment. But this Greek phrase 'things of peace'

recurs in Rom. 14:19, where Paul speaks of making every effort to live at peace *with our brethren*, e.g. being sensitive to their scruples about food. Paul clearly understood that our peace with God cannot be unrelated to our peace with our brethren. To make peace with God and His Son as required in Lk. 14:32 must have some practical issue- and practically, it means living at peace with the rest of God's children.

14:20 Our relationship with the Lord God is personal. Each of us is "the work of God", and we should therefore respect each other's spiritual individuality (Rom. 14:20).

14:21- see on Acts 18:18.

We must receive one another, even as the Lord has received us (Rom. 15:7)- and this includes receiving him who is even weak in the faith (Rom. 14:1). We should be looking for every reason to receive and fellowship our brethren, rather than reasons not to. The essence of living this kind of life is the cross of Christ. Paul brings this out in Rom. 14:21-15:3: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak... We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me". The quotation is from a Psalm which refers to the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet Paul applies this to us, in our bearing with the weaknesses of our brethren and seeking not to offend them. For this is the living out of the crucifixion life in ours. This is putting meaning into words, reality into the regular action of taking bread and wine in identity with that sacrifice. Sensitive bearing with our brethren, not doing anything that weakens or offends them, but rather building them up by our patience and tolerance of their scruples and limited perceptions. This is the cross, for us. The more we realize the height of the calling, the more even like our Lord we balk at what we are really being asked to do. It is *so hard* not to offend others and to commit ourselves to only building them up. As hard, in barest essence, as the cross of Calvary, on a day in April, on a Friday afternoon, about 1970 years ago.

14:23- see on Col. 2:18.

15:1- see on Rom. 12:1.

The Lord Jesus didn't sin Himself but He took upon Himself our sins- to the extent that He *felt* a sinner, even though He wasn't. Our response to this utter and saving grace is to likewise take upon ourselves the infirmities and sins of our brethren. If one is offended, we burn too; if one is weak, we are weak; we bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom. 15:1). But in the context of that passage, Paul is quoting from Is. 53:11, about how the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross. We live out the spirit of His cross, not in just bearing with our difficulties in isolation, but in feeling for our weak brethren.

We should be able to say with Paul that we are indeed co-crucified with Him. For most of us, this co-crucifixion isn't in terms of literal pain or violent persecution for His sake. So in what terms, then, are His sufferings articulated in us? Surely, therefore, in our mental suffering with Him. Thus Paul can quote a prophecy of Christ's crucifixion and apply it to our sufferings as a result of bearing with our weak brethren (Rom. 15:1-3).

15:2 The ordinary people must take responsibility. Each of us should build up his neighbour (Rom. 15:2)- and 'neighbour' is usually to be understood in the NT as our neighbour within the ecclesia (Eph. 4:25; James 2:8; 4:12).

15:3 We must soberly 'think of ourselves' as someone who has something to contribute to the rest of the body, even if first of all we are not sure what it is (Rom. 15:3-8). We feel their weaknesses as if they are our own. Self interest must die; their wellbeing becomes all consuming. This is why men like Daniel and Nehemiah could feel that "*we* have sinned..."- not '*they* have sinned'.

The love of Christ in the cross is to have a continual inspiration upon us- endless love, countless moments of re-inspiration, are to come to us daily *because of the cross*. This is how central it is to

daily life. The crucifixion prophecy "The reproaches of them that reproached You fell upon me" is quoted in Rom. 15:3 about Christ's crucifixion; but on this basis Paul appeals to *us* to please not ourselves, but to edify our neighbour; and thus the prophecies about Christ's sufferings for us were written for *our* learning and encouragement (Rom. 15:2,4,5). This works out as being the case insofar as we are to see in His sufferings a direct, personal compulsion to *us* to respond in selfless service of others. The connexion between Him there on that piece of wood and us today, struggling to live life in selfless service, is absolutely live, concrete and powerful.

15:3,4 The Scriptures which were relevant to Christ are actually directly applicable to us too, who are in Christ. Thus Paul reasons: "Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written (he quotes Ps. 69:9), The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning..." (Rom. 15:3,4). So here Paul points out a well known Messianic prophesy, applies it to Christ, and then says that it was written for *us*.

15:8 God's covenant commitment to us is amazing. In Genesis 15, He made a one-sided commitment to Abraham. The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But here in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). Usually both parties passed between the dead animals- but only Yahweh does. It was a one-sided covenant from God to man, exemplifying His one-way grace. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is- that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom. We simply can't be passive to such grace, we have no option but to reach out with grace to others in care and concern- and we have a unique motivation in doing this, which this unbelieving world can never equal. From one viewpoint, the only way we can not be saved is to wilfully refuse to participate in this covenant.

15:8,9 - see on Mt. 28:10.

15:10 "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people" (Dt. 32:43) is quoted in the NT (Rom. 15:10) concerning Gentile response to the Gospel. But they will rejoice and respond *because* of God's terrifying judgment of His enemies outlined in the context (Dt. 32:41-44). In some way, the harder side of God attracts, in that men see in truth that He is God and they but men. His rod and staff of correction are our comforts (Ps. 23:4). Israel will finally realize that God's judgments upon them have brought them to know Him: "They shall know that I am the Lord, in that I caused them to go into captivity" (Ez. 39:28 RV).

15:13 Following through Paul's reasoning in Rom. 15:9-13, he seems to be saying that "hope" (RV) leads to joyful praising, which in turn leads to hope and trust. It's an upward spiral, a positive circle. And each of those fruits of the Spirit become more gripping upon us the more we develop them.

15:14- see on Mk. 4:8.

15:16 Rom. 15:16 speaks of the preacher as offering up his converts upon the altar [note how Acts 11:7 uses the same image of 'offering up' sacrifices to describe preaching]. And this connects with how Paul had earlier spoken in Rom. 12:1 of offering ourselves as living sacrifices in dedication. The aim of the preacher, therefore, is to provoke a sacrificial life in his or her converts, after the pattern of the Master whom they learn of.

When we read of 'ministering' in the NT, we are to generally perceive an allusion to the spirit of priesthood; for it was the OT priests who were understood as "ministers". Paul speaks of preaching God's word, both in the world and to brethren and sisters, as ministering (Col. 1:23,25; 1 Cor. 9:13). He saw himself as a minister of the Gospel "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be

acceptable" (Rom. 15:16). This is priestly language. Paul saw his efforts for others as preparing a sacrifice. He says that we are *all* ministers (cp. priests) of God, stewards of the true Gospel, and should act appropriately (1 Cor. 4:1). Others gave money to poorer brethren, and again this is described as ministering, priest-ing (Rom. 15:27; Heb. 6:10). Reminding brethren of basic doctrines they already know is another kind of ministering (1 Tim. 4:16). Indeed, Peter says that we *each* have something to minister to each other, there is some way in which we can each serve each other (1 Pet. 4:10,11). We must bear one another's burden, as the priesthood bore the burden of Israel's iniquity (Num. 18:1,23). This is the meaning of priesthood.

Paul speaks of his preaching as being like a priest bringing the offerings of the Gentile converts as an acceptable sacrifice to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:16). This is very much the language of the prophets concerning the Messianic Kingdom- as if to imply that the Kingdom is brought about by our successful preaching? Hence it is in keeping with this to think that there would be a burst of conversions to herald in the Kingdom.

Paul speaks of his preaching work as offering up the Gentiles, as if he is a priest (Rom. 15:16)- and in the same figure, Peter is encouraged to preach to Gentiles by killing and eating animals in a peace offering (Acts 11:7). The command that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel is referring back to how the priests had no material inheritance but lived off the sacrifices (Num. 18:11). And for us, the honour and wonder of preaching Christ should mean that we keep a loose hold on the material things of this life. And as we are *all* priests, we are all preachers.

15:17 No flesh may glory before God (1 Cor. 1:29); but Paul, in his spiritual man, as counted righteous before God, could glory (Rom. 15:17).

15:18 Paul seems to have consciously modelled his life upon that of Moses; he evidently saw Moses as his hero. For example, he speaks of how he has been used to bring about God's glory through "signs and wonders" (Rom. 15:18,19), in the very language of Moses bringing "signs and wonders" upon Egypt (Ex. 7:3,9; 11:9,10; Dt. 4:34; 6:22). See on 1 Cor. 14:3.

15:19 That the spirit does not just refer to the naked power of God is evident from Rom. 15:19: "the power of the spirit of God".

Paul speaks of having 'fulfilled' the Gospel by preaching it (Rom. 15:19 Gk.); the Gospel is in itself something which demands to be preached by those having it.

His desire to go to Spain (Rom. 15:24) indicates a commitment to taking the Gospel to the very ends of the world he then knew. He may well have been motivated in this by wishing to fulfil in spirit the Kingdom prophecy of Is. 66:18,19, which describes how Tarshish (which he would have understood as Spain) and other places which "have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory" will be witnessed to by those who *have* seen His glory and have "escaped" from God's just condemnation by grace. Paul sees this as referring to himself. For he speaks in Rom. 15:19 of his ambition to take the Gospel to Spain; and in that same context, of how he will bring the Gentile brethren's offering up to Jerusalem. This is precisely the context of Is. 66- the offerings of the Gentiles are to be brought up to Jerusalem, as a result of how the Lord's glory will be spoken of to all nations. So Paul read Isaiah 66 and did something about his Old Testament Bible study; he dedicated his life to taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, and he encouraged them to send their offerings to Jerusalem. He was no mere theologian, no academic missiologist. His study and exposition of Old Testament Scripture led to a life lived out in practice, to hardship, risk of life, persecution, loneliness, even rejection by his brethren. It is also significant in passing to note that Is. 66:19 speaks of nations which occur in the list of nations we have in Genesis 10, in the context of the effect of Babel. It is as if Paul sees the spreading of the Gospel as an undoing of the curse of Babel and the establishment of the Kingdom conditions described in Is. 66. By his preaching of God's Kingdom and the reign of Christ, he brought about a foretaste of the future Kingdom in the lives of his converts. And we can do likewise. Note how once again, the preacher preaches from his personal experience; Paul takes

the vision of glory which he has beheld to those who have not seen nor heard. Paul speaks of how he had preached the Gospel from Jerusalem "as far round as Illyricum" (Rom. 15:19). This was a Latin-speaking province. Was he not implying that he had preached throughout the Greek speaking world, and now wanted to take it into the Latin-speaking world? He wanted to preach to the regions beyond his previous limits (2 Cor. 10:15); his aim was to spend some time in Rome and then preach in Spain.

Preaching, on whatever scale, involves a certain spirit of spiritual ambition; for example, the hope and faith that a leaflet, a mere piece of paper, might be the means of directing someone on to the Kingdom road. That a scrappy piece of paper, a passing comment at a bus stop should really lead a small mortal towards the eternal glory of God's nature... without spiritual ambition the preacher just wouldn't bother to start. Paul was the supreme model of ambition in preaching: "I have *fully preached* the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I *strived* (been ambitious, RV mg.) to preach the gospel" (Rom. 15:19,20). In his last days (or hours?) Paul's mind returned to these words. His swansong in 2 Tim. 4:17 is a direct allusion to Rom. 15:19: "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the *preaching* might be *fully known*, and that all the Gentiles might hear". Paul's reference here to 'completing the Gospel from Jerusalem and in a circle as far as Illyricum' is a window into his ambition in preaching. He speaks of his ambition to preach in Spain; and so we get the impression of him planning a circle starting in Jerusalem, curving north-west, then further west to Rome, and then south-west to Spain. To complete the circle to Jerusalem would have involved him preaching in North Africa- where there were major Jewish centers, e.g. Alexandria. Perhaps he implies that his ambition was to preach there too, in order to 'complete the circle of the gospel'.

15:20 Paul read the OT prophecies of how "to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see"; and he didn't just see them as descriptions of what would ultimately happen. He realised that the fulfilment of this prophecy depended *to some extent* on our human freewill; and therefore he *strove* (against so many odds) to preach Christ where He had not yet been named (Rom. 15:19,20). And he asks the Romans to *strive together* with him in prayer (15:30)- i.e. to join him in the struggle to witness world-wide, in that they would pray for his success. It was God's prophesied will that the Gospel would go world-wide; but it required the freewill strivings of Paul to enable it, and the strivings with God in prayer by the brethren.

15:21- see on Acts 13:47.

Here Paul appropriates a prophecy of how the news of the crucified Christ would spread to those who had never heard it. He didn't just read those verses as prophecy; he saw in them an imperative to fulfil them. In Rom 15:21, Paul justifies his preaching by quoting from part of the suffering servant prophecy in Is. 52 / 53. That whole passage is set in a context of explaining "how beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings... all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Is. 52:7,10). The preaching of good tidings and the declaration of God's salvation was through the crucifixion. Paul quotes Is. 52:15: "To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand". This was Paul's justification for taking the Gospel to where Christ has not been named. Note in passing how the Lord Jesus sees us as "beautiful" in our witness to Him (as in Song 7:1). Yet further into Is. 53, so much else jumps out at us as appropriate to Paul's preaching: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high [cp. Paul knowing how to be exalted and abased, themes that occur in Is. 53 about Jesus' death]. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man [cp. Paul's thorn in the flesh?], and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for [that] which had not been told them shall they see; and [that] which they had not heard shall they consider". Paul appeared before Agrippa, Festus, and one or two Caesars, with a visage marred by his evangelistic sufferings.

15:23 There can be no doubt that the emphasis in the life of Paul was upon the geographical spread of the Gospel as far as possible. In around ten years, he established ecclesias in the four provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. And then he speaks as if his work was done in that part of the world, he had spread the word from Jerusalem round to Illyricum [i.e. throughout the Eastern half of the Empire], and therefore "I have no more place in these parts" (Rom. 15:19,23). He speaks as if he has fulfilled the "line" or geographical apportion of areas to him, and now he was turning his attention to the Western side of the Roman empire, going to Rome, planning a visit to Spain. In some ways, this is surprising, for his letters indicate that the ecclesias he had already established were weak indeed. All in Asia turned away from him, and he warned the Ephesian elders of this. Ecclesias like Corinth were hopelessly weak in doctrine and practice, and many were turning away, either to the world, or back to Judaism as in the Galatian ecclesias. He could so easily have spent his life running around the Eastern half of the Roman empire, seeking to strengthen what remained. But he seems to have considered his work to have been done, and presses ahead with fresh witness in another part of the world. He wrote letters and made occasional visits to address the problems as they arose, but his stress was repeatedly on pushing forward with the work.

15:24 His ambition for Spain, at a time when most men scarcely travelled 100km. from their birthplace, is just superb (Rom. 15:24,28).

He says that if he "satisfied" by the fruit of the converts in Rome, then he could move on to preach in Spain, if he could seal the spiritual fruit of unity between Jewish and Gentile converts in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:24 RV). This is the spirit of 2 Cor. 10:15, where Paul told the Corinthians that "when your faith is increased", then the measure or extent of his missionary work could be geographically expanded.

15:26 God is believer-centric; to Him, His 'world' is the believers. He speaks of "Macedonia and Achaia" as meaning 'the believers in Macedonia and Achaia' (Rom. 15:26). "Samaria... received the word of God" (Acts 8:14)- not everyone in Samaria, but those who did are counted as "Samaria" to God. The field of the ecclesia is "the world" to God; and note how the Corinth ecclesia were "God's field" (1 Cor. 3:9 Gk.). Often Scripture speaks as if "all men" will be raised. Rom. 2:6-9 speaks of "every man" being judged at the second coming. We know that literally "all men" will not be.

15:27- see on Rom. 15:16.

All nations of the land were to be blessed because of Abraham and his seed, his one special seed [Jesus] and also his natural descendants. His children were intended to be a blessing to the other nations who lived around them, especially in that they were intended to bring them to Abraham's God and Abraham's faith. Now this is not to say that ultimately, Abraham and his seed will not bring blessing on literally the whole planet. Rom. 4:13 interprets the promise of the land of Canaan as meaning 'the whole world'. But this was by later development, and on account of the universal blessing achieved by the sacrifice of Abraham's greatest seed, the Lord Jesus. In the first instance, the blessing was to be upon all the families who lived on the 'earth' / land (12:3). There is a paradox here. For those already living in the land promised to Abraham, their land would be taken from them but they would be blessed. God was telling Abraham: 'You will possess the land and all nations of that land will be blessed'. They were to give up their physical inheritance to receive a spiritual one- this was the ideal. Paul applies this idea to us when he says that if Gentiles have received the spiritual blessings of Abraham's seed, ought they not to give their physical blessings to that same physical seed of Abraham? This is how and why he tells Gentile converts in Rome to send donations to the poor Jewish brethren in Jerusalem: "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things... I shall come in the fullness of the *blessing* of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:27-29).

15:28 Paul says that he wants to "seal" the fruit of good works from his converts (Rom. 15:28), as if he wants to give them the opportunity to do good deeds, knowing they will be considered in some

form at the judgment. The simple fact is that we simply have to believe that the thousand hard and easy choices we make each day all somehow count in the ultimate, final analysis.

15:30- see on Col. 2:1.

Paul read the OT prophecies of how "to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see"; and he didn't just see them as descriptions of what would ultimately happen. He realised that the fulfilment of this prophecy depended *to some extent* on our human freewill; and therefore he *strove* (against so many odds) to preach Christ where He had not yet been named (Rom. 15:19,20). And he asks the Romans to *strive together* with him in prayer (15:30)- i.e. to join him in the struggle to witness world-wide, in that they would pray for his success. It was God's prophesied will that the Gospel would go world-wide; but it required the freewill strivings of Paul to enable it, and the strivings with God in prayer by the brethren.

15:31 After all his spiritual diplomacy in raising the fund, he had to ask the Romans to pray with him that the Jerusalem ecclesia would accept it (Rom. 15:31). Presumably they didn't want to accept help from Gentile converts whom they despised. And if they didn't accept it, then Paul would look as if he had got them to raise the money just to give to him. There must have been times when he thought of quitting the Christian community because of slander in the church. Paul was not a larger than life figure in the eyes of the early church. They didn't see him as we do. The harder he worked, the more he was slandered, and the more painfully.

16:1- see on Rom. 16:23.

16:2- see on Lk. 11:7.

16:4 We read of Priscilla and Aquilla 'risking their necks' for Paul's life (Rom. 16:4). According to Deissmann, this Greek term refers to the possibility of being murdered in the place of someone condemned to death. Likewise 1 Clement 55 speaks of Christians serving prison terms for each other: "We know many among ourselves who have given themselves up to bonds, in order that they might ransom others".

16:7 Junia- maybe Joanna? See on Lk. 8:2.

16:8 Tertius was a "scribe", which was a learned profession; Luke was a doctor. Yet next to these brethren are listed the likes of Ampliatus (Rom. 16:8), which was a common slave name. Romans 16 is an essay in the unity between rich and poor in the early ecclesia.

16:10 Paul writes to them as if there was one church in Rome, and yet he mentions the house groups of Aristobulus and Narcissus (Rom. 16:10,11). Indeed, in Rom. 16:14,15 we have lists of names of brethren, and then the comment "and all the saints which are with them". It could be that the long list of greetings to named individuals was more like a list of greetings to the various house churches which comprised the larger 'ecclesia' in Rome. Robert Banks observes: "Justin in his *First Apology* refers to several distinct house-based meetings in Rome as much as a century after the New Testament".

16:13- see on Mt. 27:32; Rom. 16:23.

16:16- see on Acts 2:46.

There is repetition of the command to *all* ecclesial members to greet *all* the other members with a "holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14). It's hard to translate into our terms the huge meaning of this in the first century world. It would've been unthinkable for a slave to take such initiative to kiss their master, or indeed any free person. This practice of all kissing everyone else in the congregation would've been arresting and startling. Sociologically, it stood no chance of ever being done. And yet these social and inter-personal miracles were what made Christianity stand out so noticeably- and in essence, our overcoming of social and inter-personal barriers ought to do

the same for our community in the present world. But does it? Are we *so* markedly different from others... ? Is our love and unity of such an evidently deep and different quality?

16:17 Those who cause divisions cause “occasions of stumbling” (RV) and should therefore be avoided- because, the implication is, division causes stumbling. It’s as simple as that. People stumble, in Paul’s experience, because of divisive people within the ecclesias.

There are different levels of being out of fellowship with other believers. Any analysis of the NT teaching about ecclesial discipline will make this clear. Some brethren should be simply *avoided*, kept away from, not *necessarily* because they themselves are teaching any false doctrine (Rom. 16:17 Gk.). More seriously, 2 Thess. 3:15 speaks of some cases where we should not count a brother as an “enemy”, ‘an opposing one’, but admonish him as a brother, while *separate* from him; whilst Mt. 18:17 describes other cases where the errant brother should be treated as we would a worldly Gentile (although note: “Let him be unto *thee*” singular; this is talking about personal decisions, not ecclesial withdrawal); and, going a stage further, 1 Cor. 5:11 suggests we should not even keep social company with a brother who is involved in sexual perversion. These different levels of being ‘out of fellowship’ can be applied to the different level of separation there may be in practice between us and a false teacher, and those who perhaps in a misguided view of ‘love’ still tolerate him in fellowship. Even if we insist that Mt. 18:7 should be applied to someone, it must be noted that the Lord’s attitude to tax collectors and Gentiles was to mix with them, even share table fellowship with them, with a burning desire to win them for His cause (Mt. 9:9; 10:3; 11:19; 28:19). It is no accident that all these passages in Matthew have some reference to Matthew the tax collector being called and saved by the Lord. Matthew is effectively saying under inspiration that we should treat the person we decide to relate to as a tax collector and Gentile just as he had been treated by the Lord’s saving, calling grace.

16:18 Those who make divisions don't serve "our Lord Christ" (Rom. 16:17,18 RV); if they saw Christ's Lordship, they wouldn't be divisive, but be humbled into loving co-operation with His brethren.

16:20

Jewish Opposition As Satan

The Jewish system ceased to be a serious adversary or Satan to the Christians in the aftermath of its destruction in A.D. 70, as Paul prophesied: “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20). A closer study of the context reveals more precisely the mentality of the Judaizer Satan. Satan being bruised underfoot alludes back to the seed of the serpent being bruised in Genesis 3:15. The Jews are therefore likened to the Satan-serpent in Genesis (as they are in Jn. 8:44), in their causing “divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned” (Rom. 16:17). Other details in Romans 16 now fall into the Genesis 3:15 context: “they that are such serve... their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (:18). The fair speeches of the Judaizers were like those of the serpent. Instead of ‘Why not eat the fruit?’ it was ‘Why not keep the law?’. Is. 24:6 had earlier made the point that because of the sin of the priesthood “therefore hath the curse devoured the earth / land”; “their poison is like the poison of a serpent” (Ps. 59:4).

The tree of knowledge thus comes to represent the Law – because “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). The fig leaves which Adam and Eve covered themselves with also represented the Law, seeing they were replaced by the slain lamb. Their initially glossy appearance typifies well the apparent covering of sin by the Law, which faded in time. The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. It seems reasonable to speculate that having eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they made their aprons out of its leaves, thus making the tree of knowledge a fig tree. Both the tree and the leaves thus represent the Law and Jewish system; it is therefore fitting if the leaves were from the same tree. It is also noteworthy that when Christ described the Pharisees as appearing “beautiful” outwardly, he

used a word which in the Septuagint was used concerning the tree of knowledge, as if they were somehow connected with it (Mt. 23:27).

It was as if the Judaizers were saying: ‘Yea, hath God said you cannot keep the law? Why then has He put it there? It will do you good, it will give you greater spiritual knowledge’. Colossians 2:3–4 shows this kind of reasoning was going on: “In (Christ) are hid *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words”. Here is another allusion to the serpent. Because all spiritual knowledge is in Christ, Paul says, don’t be beguiled by offers of deeper knowledge. Thus Adam and Eve’s relationship with God in Eden which the serpent envied and broke is parallel to us being “in Christ” with all the spiritual knowledge that is there. Hence Paul warned Corinth: “I fear, lest... as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). The ‘simplicity in Christ’ was therefore the same as man’s relationship with God in Eden. So again we see the Judaist false teachers equated with the Satan-serpent of Genesis. Titus 1:10 and 2 Peter 2:1 – 3 specifically define these men who used an abundance of words and sophistry as “they of the circumcision”, i.e. Jewish false teachers. Those in 2 Peter 2 are described as speaking evil of Angels (:12 cp. Jude 8) – in the same way as the serpent spoke evil of the Angelic commands given in Eden. It’s been pointed out that there’s an Aramaic pun which connects the serpent [*hewya*] with the idea of instruction [*hawa*] and also Eve, the false teacher of Adam [*Hawah*].

Back in Romans 16, the Judaizer Satans/ adversaries are spoken of as serving “their own belly” (:18) like the serpent did. Maybe the serpent liked the look of the fruit and wanted to justify his own eating of it; to do this he persuaded Eve to eat it. Because he served his belly, he had to crawl on it. Similarly the Judaizers wanted to be justified in their own keeping of the Law, and therefore persuaded Eve, the Christian bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:1–3), to do the same. “Yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple (AV mg. “harmless”) concerning evil” (Rom. 16:19) – “be wise as serpents, (primarily referring to the Pharisees?) and harmless as doves”, Jesus had said (Mt. 10:16).

16:23 - see on Lk. 8:3. The list of believers’ names in Romans 16 is there for a purpose: to show how all types had come together in the Rome ecclesia. Women are named and greeted [uncommon in contemporary Jewish letters of the time]; some names are common slave names: Phlegon, Hermes, Philologus; whereas tradition has it that the Narcissus mentioned was a famous and wealthy member of the court of Claudius. Greetings are given from two members at Corinth: “Erastus the treasurer of the city [of Corinth] salutes you, and Quartus, a brother” (Rom. 16:23). There is an intended juxtaposition here: of the wealthy and powerful brother Erastus, and the unknown [slave?] Quartus, who all the same was “a brother”, on the same spiritual standing. Phoebe is described as the *prostotes* of the Cenchrae ecclesia and Paul himself- a word translatable as “patroness” (Rom. 16:1,2). It could be that she funded Paul’s activities at least in part. The same implication may be behind Paul’s description of the mother of Rufus as being his “mother” (Rom. 16:13). This would have continued the example of wealthy women like Joanna supporting the ministry of Jesus (Lk. 8:2). If one goes through the Acts and the New Testament letters and makes a list of all the individuals who are named, we have a list of about 78 people. About 30 of these people have some indication in the narrative as to their social status; and the majority of these are from above average social stations. For example, the way Achaicus, Fortunatus, Tertius and Lucius in Corinth and Clement in Philippi all have Latin names in Roman colonies could well indicate that they were from the original stock of colonists, who tended to be well ahead of the local population. Gaius had a home big enough for the Corinth ecclesia to meet in (Rom. 16:23). The social mix amongst believers must have been startling. Excavations at Ostia near Rome have revealed how the spacious homes of the wealthy stood right next to the *insulae*, the blocks of squalid flats in which the poor lived. There was little differentiation of rich and poor according to which neighbourhoods

they lived in. So when we read that the wealthy believer Gaius was ‘host of the whole church’ (Rom. 16:23), we are to imagine this wealthy man opening his spacious home to the urchins who lived in the neighbouring blocks who had come to Christ. This must have been startling for the surrounding populace. Such was the witness of true Christian unity.

1 CORINTHIANS

Paul and Corinth

In the letters to Corinth we really come to learn something of the mind of Paul; and he asked us to follow him, so that we might follow our Lord the more closely. So we want to analyze the relationship between Paul and Corinth in some detail; for we are all in desperate need of learning how to relate to each other better.

Firstly, let's firmly place in our minds the supreme spirituality of Paul. He saw visions which were unlawful to be uttered, he could look back on a string of ecclesias worldwide which were a result of his work, his writings show that he reached higher into the mysteries of God than most other man have ever gone. Naturally speaking, it must have been so difficult for him to relate to immature or unspiritual brethren and sisters! And yet his sense of identity with his spiritual children comes through all the time. Note how he purposefully mixes his pronouns: "*We* know in part... *I* know in part... *we* see in a mirror... *I* spoke as a child" (1 Cor. 13).

Now consider Corinth. Getting drunk at the breaking of bread, some members openly committing incest and other sexual perversions; and being justified by much of the ecclesia. Some had not the knowledge of God (1 Cor.15:34). The basic truth of Christ's resurrection and the second coming were denied, and Paul was slandered unbelievably. There is fair emphasis on Corinth's willing belief of the vicious denigration of Paul's character, made by some of their elders (1 Cor.2:16; 3:10; 4:11-14; 9:20-27; 14:18). The depths to which that ecclesia sunk are hard to plumb. And yet Paul believed that they abounded in love for him; he asks them to abound in their generosity to others as they abounded in their love for him (2 Cor. 12:7). Truly Paul reflected his own experience of having righteousness imputed to him.

So the relationship between Paul and Corinth is fascinating, but above all it's instructive of not only how we should relate to each other, but how Christ relates to us. There is a strange paradox throughout the letters to Corinth. Paul uses the most exalted and positive language about them, enthusing about the certainty of their salvation, and yet he also accuses them of the most incredible spiritual weaknesses. There's a clear example in the chapter we've just read. In 1 Cor.1:8,9, we read of Paul enthusiastically saying that God would "confirm *you* (note that) unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus". But then in v.12 he accuses every one of them of being guilty of factionism and division: "*Every one of you* (the same 'you' of v.8,9) saith, I am of Paul...(etc.)". Paul really believed what he says in v.4: "I thank my God always on your behalf (implying: 'You ought to be thanking Him, but I'm doing it for you?'), for the grace of God which is given you...". This was the secret of how Paul managed to relate to them so positively; He deeply believed that they were in receipt of God's grace on account of their being in Christ.

The Love Of Paul

So let's just review the positive way in which Paul felt towards his Corinthian brethren. His love for them was "in (his) heart, known and read of all men" (2 Cor.3:2). He boasted to others of their "zeal" to give money to the poor, even though it seems they had just made empty promises (2 Cor. 9:2). And in 2 Cor. 9:13 he goes even further; he speaks as if they had already distributed money to other churches. He saw them as righteous, even though they hadn't performed the acts they vaguely spoke of. Paul was surely reflecting the spirit of the Father and Son here. It may even be that Paul mentioned his devotion to Corinth in his 'front-line' presentation of the Gospel to others: "We preach... Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor.4:5). His great wish was their "perfection" (2 Cor. 13:9). Paul's deep-seated love for Corinth was absolutely evident to all who knew them; it was not an act of the will, which occurred just within Paul's mind. So often our 'love' for difficult members of the ecclesia is no more than a grimly made act of the will. Even in the midst of rebuking them, Paul uses the language of real endearment: "Wherefore, *my dearly beloved*, flee from idolatry" (1 Cor.10:14). The word "brethren" occurs as a refrain throughout the

letters; it appears 19 times in the first letter alone, compared with 9 times in the letter to the Romans (a longer epistle). This is similar to the way in which Jeremiah repeatedly describes the Israel who rejected and betrayed him as “my people” (e.g. Jer. 8:11,19,21,22). Despite all the cruel allegations made by them against Paul, he did not deal with them in the cagey, 'political' manner so common in our circles: “*O ye Corinthians*, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged” (2 Cor. 6:11). It is noteworthy that Paul is here alluding to Ps. 119:32, which speaks of God's word enlarging a man's heart. It was through his application to the word that Paul came to this large-hearted attitude. A smaller man than Paul would have trod mighty carefully with Corinth, making no more than succinct, measured statements. But his deep love for them led Paul to be as open-hearted as can be. Indeed, his pouring forth of his innermost soul to them in the autobiographical sections of 2 Cor. is evidence of how his heart and mouth were truly opened and enlarged unto them. There was no shrugging of the shoulders within Paul at the spiritual plight of Corinth: “Ye are in our hearts, to die and live with you” (2 Cor. 7:3). And it was this basic love which was in Paul's heart which led him to a wonderful spirit of hopefulness; so that even towards the end of his second letter he can speak of his “hope, that as your faith groweth, we shall be magnified in you” (2 Cor. 10:15 RV).

Corinth's Response

This love of Paul found at least some response from Corinth. Titus told Paul of their feelings for him: “He told us your earnest desire (for Paul), your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more” (2 Cor.7:7). Here they were, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and Gentiles of the Gentiles; in a state of spiritual love with each other. The strange paradox of Paul's great love for them, yet also his repugnance at their evil ways, is perhaps explicable in terms of their spiritual ‘in-loveness’. As a spiritual sister (cp. Abigail?) can marry an alcoholic (Nabal?) because she sees the good side in him, whilst not turning a blind eye to his drinking; as a father ever loves wayward children; so Paul felt towards his beloved sons, his attractive young bride (2 Cor.11:2) of Corinth. That there was at least some love for Paul by Corinth is made tragically evident from 2 Cor. 12:15: “The more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved”. This is surely the language of falling out of love. And Paul was the aggrieved party. As with so many a father and young husband, Paul had to go through the pain of sensing that the object of his love was keeping him at arm's length, was being partial in their response to the great love he was showing: “Ye have acknowledged us (our love) *in part*, that we are your rejoicing” (2 Cor.1:14). Yet Paul took great comfort from their albeit partial response: “Now I *praise you* brethren, that ye remember me in all things” (1 Cor.11:2); whilst struggling on to make them realize the intensity of his feelings towards them: “Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears (picture the old boy sobbing as he moved his quill)... *that ye might know the love* which I have *more abundantly* unto you” (2 Cor.2:4). Despite the spiteful way in which they demanded Paul bring letters of recommendation with him (2 Cor.3:1), Paul jumped at their even partial spiritual response: “Great is my glorying of you! I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation” because of their positive spiritual reaction to the visit of Titus (2 Cor.7:4).

Hard Discipline

It is often implied that Paul was perfectly happy to put up with the mess at Corinth, and that therefore we should not be unduly concerned at the state of our latter day ecclesias. This could just not be further from the truth. Perhaps the greatest indication of Paul's love for Corinth is seen in his apparent severity towards them, his desire that they really should abide in Christ. Thus in 1 Cor.4:21 Paul parallels coming to them in love with coming “with a rod”. The sarcasm of 1 Cor.4:8-14 (and many other places), his hard words of 1 Cor.3:1-3, all indicate that he saw Corinth for the apostates which they were; and responded to this. “If I come again, I will not spare...know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:2,5). This was more than the externally strict schoolteacher with a soft heart, more than dad just laying the law down one evening. What Paul was threatening was radical; it may be that he would have used the power of the

Holy Spirit to smite them with literal death. 1 Cor. 11:30 would imply that either Paul or another apostle had done this to them on a previous visit. "I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy" (2 Cor. 11:2) is one of a series of allusions in that chapter to the events of Num. 25, where Phinehas was moved with jealousy to slay those who were "unequally yoked" with the things of Belial (cp. 2 Cor. 6:14). Paul had accused his Corinthians of just that; and he was quite willing to play the role of Phinehas.

"I will bewail many that have sinned... if I come again, I will not spare" (2 Cor. 12:21; 13:2) is actually an allusion to Ez. 8:18: "Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here (in the natural and spiritual temple of Yahweh, cp. 2 Cor. 6:16)?... therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them". God's anger with Israel as expressed at the Babylonian invasion was going to be reflected in Paul's 'coming' to spiritual Israel in Corinth. Yet for all his high powered allusions, Paul mixed them with the most incredible expressions of true love and sympathy for Corinth. In this we see the giant spiritual stature of that man Paul.

No Blind Eye

Paul evidently did not turn a blind eye to his brethren's failures. He spoke of them in one breath as being spiritually complete, whilst in the next he showed that he was truly aware of their failures. There's a glaring example of this in 1 Cor. 5:6,7: "A little leaven (which they had in their bad attitude, and also in the presence of the incestuous brother) leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, *as ye are unleavened*". They had leaven; otherwise Paul would not have told them to purge it out. But then he tells them that they are "unleavened". In other words, he saw them *as if* they were unleavened, but he recognized that they had the bad leaven among and within them. There's another blatant example of this in 1 Cor. 8:1,4,7: "As touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge...(v.4) we know that an idol is nothing in the world... (v.7) howbeit there is not in every man (in the ecclesia) that knowledge". So Paul starts off by saying that they all knew about the correct attitude to meat offered to idols. But then he recognizes that in reality, not all of them did know, or at best, they did not appreciate what they knew. 1 Cor. 11:2 has more of the same: "I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you"; but then Paul goes on to show how they had blatantly disobeyed the ordinance he delivered them concerning the breaking of bread. Again, Paul sees the Corinthians *as if* they were perfect, but then goes on to point out their failures. This is surely a reflection of how the Lord Jesus sees each of us His people. 1 Cor. 3:1,18 shows how the Corinthians thought they were wise, when actually Paul could only address them as carnal babes in Christ; they were not "wise". Yet in 1 Cor. 10:15 Paul concludes a section with the words: "I speak *as* to wise men...". He treated them *as if* they were wise, when he knew that they weren't in reality. He begins by rejoicing that "in every thing ye are enriched by him...in all knowledge" (1 Cor. 1:5), even though this was only potentially true- they had been given the knowledge, but had failed to turn it into true wisdom. Likewise Paul spells it out to them that their behaviour was likely to exclude them from the Kingdom; but in the same context he speaks as if it is taken as read that they will be in the Kingdom: "*The saints* shall judge the world. And if the world shall be judged by *you... we* shall judge Angels" (1 Cor. 6:2,3,9).

It is so significant that Paul did not turn a blind eye to his brethren's faults. In seeking to be positive, we so often do this. But we are asked to relate to each other, as Christ does to us. And he certainly doesn't turn a blind eye to our failures. Yet our problem is that if we don't turn a blind eye, we find it so hard to relate to our brethren. So what is the secret of being able to look at both the good and bad sides of our brethren? I suggest the answer is something along these lines:

At baptism, a new man was born inside us, personified in the New Testament as "the man Christ Jesus", "the Spirit", etc. Yet there is still the devil within us, a personification of our sinfulness. We

identify our *real* selves as our spiritual man (note how Paul refers to that side of him as "I myself" in Rom. 7:25). God looks upon us *as if* we are Christ Jesus, He sees us as justified in Him, He sees us as if we are as perfect as Christ; not that we are in ourselves, of course. This is how He wants us to view our brethren; if we see them as God sees us, we will see them as the spiritual man which they have within them. Yet like God, we will not turn a blind eye to their weaknesses. Paul looked ahead to the day when God would have confirmed Corinth "unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus" (1 Cor.1:8). We too need to try to live the Kingdom life now; we must live *as if* we are in the day of Christ's Kingdom (Rom.13:12,13). So in some ways we must see our brethren as they will be in the Kingdom. Thus in 2 Cor.10:6,15 Paul speaks about the day when Corinth's "obedience is fulfilled... *when* your faith is increased... we shall be enlarged by you... abundantly". "We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, *in the day of the Lord Jesus*. And in *this confidence* I was minded to come unto you..." (2 Cor.1:14). Paul's confidence in them was on account of the rejoicing he looked forward to having concerning them at the day of judgment. Some of his final words to them totally summarize his attitude: "This also we wish, even your perfection" (2 Cor.13:9). He looked earnestly towards the day when they would be spiritually matured. We too must recognize that we are all only children. We must look to what both we and our brethren *will be* one day, in spiritual terms. This certainly takes some spiritual vision. Yet Paul had just this: "...having hope, *when* [not 'if'] your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you" (2 Cor. 10:15). He here recognizes that their faith is now weak, and must increase; but he also had written that they were to remain standing in the faith (1 Cor. 16:13). They were weak in faith; this he recognized. But he recognized their *status* as being 'in the faith'. So concerned was he with them that he says that if they were obedient to what he had asked them, then he would be ready to "revenge *all* disobedience" (2 Cor. 10:6). It's as if he was taking them one step at a time in bringing them to realize their errors; like the Lord, he spoke the word to men as *they* were able to hear it, not as *he was able* to expound it or expose their failures. We are seeking the salvation and betterment of our brethren, not simply to air our perceptions of their inadequacies.

Corinth: Washed And Sanctified

He saw Corinth as truly saved in prospect, by reason of their being in Christ. He quotes the words of Lev. 26:13 "I will dwell in them and walk in them... and they shall be my God" about Corinth (2 Cor. 6:16)- even though those words were said to be describing a status conditional upon Israel's obedience. "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and *shall* present us (not 'hopefully, if you get your act together!') with you" (2 Cor.4:14) sounds as if Paul fully expected the Corinthians to be there, and to be joined at the right hand side of the judgment seat by himself and Titus. 1 Cor.15:51 has the same certainty of their acceptance: "*We shall be changed*". "*We* (Paul and Corinth) know... we have a building of God... eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor.5:1), i.e. the spiritual man Christ Jesus within each man who is in Christ. Truly could Paul write: "Our *hope* of you is steadfast, knowing that, as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so should ye be also of the consolation" (2 Cor.1:7). *They*, woolly Corinth, would judge the world in the Millennium (1 Cor. 6:2). "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, *be with you all* " (2 Cor.13:14) must have taken some writing, even under inspiration. "*Be with you all* "would have included those Judaist-influenced brethren hell-bent on destroying Paul's work and image, those who had sinned grievously, and those whose doctrinal appreciation was starting to slip. Yet this was how Paul saw them; as being in Christ, and abiding in the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit; thanks to their baptism into Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and abiding (at least for that present time) in that blessed relationship. 2 Cor.11:2 even shows Paul likening Corinth ecclesia to the guileless Eve in Eden, not yet having sinned, all innocence and uncorrupted beauty. And yet he saw himself as the Eve who had been deceived and punished by death (Rom. 7:11,13 = Gen. 2:17; 3:13); but he saw them as the Eve who had not yet sinned. This was no literary trick of the tail; he genuinely felt and saw them as better than himself to be- such was the depth of his appreciation of his own failures. Paul saw Corinth as abounding in knowledge

and love (2 Cor. 8:7), even though they had some who lacked the basic knowledge of God (1 Cor. 15:34), and they needed exhortation to confirm their love to the disfellowshipped brother (2 Cor. 2:6-8). Likewise, unfaithful Israel is still addressed as "the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing" (Jer. 18:13); she was seen as a virgin right up until the Babylonian invasion, where she was as it were 'raped' (Jer. 14:17 Heb.). We reflect the same paradox in our efforts to see evidently weak brethren as still sanctified in Christ.

Having spoken of fornicators, idolaters, thieves etc., all of whom were found within the Corinth ecclesia, Paul says: "But such *were* some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God" (1 Cor.6:11). The reference to washing, and the Father, Son and Spirit all points back to baptism for the remission of sins (Mt. 28:19). The fact those people had been baptized meant so much to Paul. The significance of our brethren's baptisms should also make a deep impact on ourselves. By this act they became "in Christ". The Corinthians were committing idolatry, fornication etc. Paul was aware of that. But he was prepared to see them as being sanctified in Christ; he counted them as if this was not happening: *for the time being*. There was coming a time when he would no longer accept that they were in Christ, and when he would not spare them in any way (2 Cor.13:2). The repented of failures of our brethren, however severe they may seem to us, must be overlooked if there is real evidence that they are making effort to abide in Christ. Unrepentant fornication or idolatry is hardly proof of this. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5:20) indicates that Paul did not see them as reconciled to God; yet he looked at the man Christ Jesus within them in order to be able to have all the positive feelings towards them which he did. So clear was Paul's vision of their spiritual man that he could actually boast about their 'good side' to other ecclesias (2 Cor. 7:4,14; 9:2). So enthusiastic was Paul about the great grace of God which Corinth basked in, that he actually made other ecclesias truly affectionate of Corinth: "which long after you for the exceeding grace (Paul knew just how exceeding it was to Corinth!) in you" (2 Cor.9:14).

And Paul showed this same spirit in all his dealings with his brethren. He could say in all honesty that "I am convinced, my brothers, that you are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another" (Rom. 15:14 NIV)- even though there must have been major problems in Rome, not least the Jew: Gentile division. He was so positive about them that he could write that he was sure that Corinth's labour was "not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58)- and yet he knew that labour was in vain if converts fell away (1 Thess. 3:5). Yet he acted towards them, and genuinely felt as if, they would not and had not fallen away. This was quite some psychological and spiritual achievement, given the depths of their apostasy. Corinth hated Paul, slandered him, despised him. And yet he can write that their love for him "abounded" (2 Cor. 8:7). I take this not as sarcasm, but as a deep attempt by him to view them positively. We are challenged by Paul's example to look at our brethren the same way.

"As God... hath forgiven"

We are told to forgive one another, "*as* God for Christ's sake *hath forgiven* you" (Eph.4:32). All our sins were forgiven, in prospect, at baptism. All our irritating habits and attitudes, our secret sins, all these were forgiven then. And we must respond to this by counting our brethren to have received the same grace. Seeing we have received this grace, why do we find it so hard to see our brethren like this? Surely the answer rests in the fact that we don't fully believe or appreciate the degree to which God really does see us personally as being perfect in Christ. Paul was so super-assured of his own salvation, of the fact that God really did see him as a man in Christ, and therefore he found it easier to see his brethren in such a positive way. He was so conscious of how his many sins were just not counted against him. He knew that he was "chief of sinners", he didn't turn a blind eye to himself; because he could realistically face up to his own position before God, he found it easier to do the same for his weak brethren.

The fact that Paul saw the spiritual man in all his brethren means that to some degree he saw them all as equal. He seems to bring this point out in 1 Cor. 4:14,17: "As my beloved sons I warn you (Corinth ecclesia)... for this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son...". Paul calls both Corinth and Timothy his beloved sons. The implication is that to some degree, he felt the same towards dodgy Corinth as he did towards the spiritually strong Timothy. Likewise Christ showed his love for the whole church when he died on the cross. This does not mean, of course, that Paul did not have deeper bonds with some than with others. But the fact is that in spiritual terms, he saw all his brethren as equal, in that they shared the same status of being justified in Christ. Whether one had 2% righteousness and another 5% was irrelevant; they both needed the massive imputation of God's righteousness through Christ. As Paul could call both Timothy and Corinth his "beloved sons", so God calls both Christ and ourselves by the same title (Mt.3:17 cp. Col.3:12; 1 Jn.3:2; 2 Thess.2:13) . The reason? Because "he hath made us accepted (by being) in the beloved (son)" (Eph.1:6).

1:2 1 Cor. 1:2 can be read several ways: "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours". Paul could be saying that Jesus Christ is Lord both of 'us' and also of all the congregations of believers. But he could also mean (and the Greek rather suggests this) that the same Jesus *understood and interpreted somewhat differently amongst the various believers "in every place"* was in fact Lord of them all. For your interpretation of the Lord Jesus and mine will inevitably differ in some points. Now this must of course be balanced against John's clear teaching that those who deny Jesus came in the flesh are in fact antiChrist.

1:2 The Jerusalem pattern of gathering collectively in the temple and yet also having home groups was repeated in Corinth. 1 Corinthians is addressed to the singular church in Corinth, which he parallels with "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2). Those 'places', I submit, referred to the various house churches in the city. He specifically mentions the house churches of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11) and Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15). The exhortation that "you all speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10) would then refer to the need for the various house churches to all "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment". As we know, there was an issue of fellowship in Corinth, concerning a deeply immoral brother. If he avoided church discipline by simply joining another house church, they were not going to be joined together in "the same judgment", and inevitably division would arise amongst those Corinthian house churches. There was to be peace rather than confusion "in all churches" (1 Cor. 14:33)- i.e. all the house churches in Corinth. Paul's complaint that "every one of you saith, I am of Paul... I of Apollos" (1 Cor. 1:12) surely makes more sense if read with reference to each of the house churches, rather than every individual member. Paul speaks there as if the believers 'came together' 'in ekklesia' (1 Cor. 5:4), i.e. the various home groups occasionally met together. Hence he speaks of when "the whole church be come together into one place" (1 Cor. 14:23), i.e. all the house churches gathered together for a special fellowship meeting. He says that when they 'came together', then they should make a collective decision about disfellowshipping the immoral brother. Paul wrote to the Romans from Corinth, and he describes Gaius as the host of the whole church (Rom. 16:23)- implying that he had premises large enough for all the various house churches to gather together in. The abuses which occurred when the whole church 'came together' presumably therefore occurred on his premises.

1:8- see on Gal. 6:4.

1:10- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

"Be perfectly joined together" (1 Cor. 1:10) uses the same Greek word as in Heb. 10:5, where we read of the Lord's one body "prepared", joined together.

1:12- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

1 Cor. 3:22 speaks of three groups in the Corinth ecclesia, following Paul, Peter and Apollos. Yet in 1 Cor. 1:12 someone says "I am of Christ" . This seems to be Paul himself- so Christ-centred was he, that he wanted no part in ecclesial politics nor in the possibility of leading a faction. His Christ-centredness was a phenomenal achievement.

Jude, Peter And Corinth

A case can be made that the letters of Peter and Jude were also written to Corinth. Peter visited Corinth, presumably focusing his preaching on the Jewish community, and perhaps he was writing his letters specifically to the Jewish house churches there (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5). The same concerns are apparent as in Paul's letters to Corinth: The need to distinguish between spiritual and unspiritual persons who despised others (Jude 19 = 1 Cor. 2:6 - 3:4; 8:1-3); those who perverted liberty into licence (Jude 4 = 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23), becoming slaves of sensuality (Jude 8,10,16,23 = 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 12:21); some eating and drinking abusively at the love feast (Jude 12 = 1 Cor. 11:17-33); refusing the authority of their elders (Jude 8,11 = 1 Cor. 4:8-13; 9:1-12); both Peter and Paul warn Corinth of the danger of worldly wisdom. Peter's reminder to them about the authority of Paul is very understandable in this case. However, the point of all this is to observe the tenderness of Peter and Jude in writing to the Corinthians ["my beloved..."], whilst at the same time warning them of the awesome judgment which their behaviour was preparing for them. It was the same passionate love for Christ's weak brethren which Paul showed them.

1:13 There are times when Paul uses the word "Christ" when we'd have expected him to use the word "church"- e.g. "Is Christ divided?... as the body is one... so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 1:13; 12:12). This synecdoche serves to demonstrate the intense unity between Christ and His people- we really are Him to this world.

Think through the reasoning of 1 Cor. 1:13: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?". The fact Jesus was crucified for us means that we should be baptized into that Name, and also be undivided.

"Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 1:13) is probably hyperbole (i.e. grossly exaggerated language to make a point). The command to preach and baptize as given in the great preaching commission was just one command; preaching-and-baptizing went together. It seems to me that Paul *did* baptize; but using the figure of hyperbole, he's saying: 'My emphasis is on getting on with the work of preaching the Gospel, the fact I've held the shoulders of many men and women as I pushed them under the water is irrelevant; Christ didn't send me to just do this, but more importantly to preach the Gospel'. And may this be our attitude too.

Christ being undivided is placed parallel with the fact Paul was not crucified for us, but Christ was (1 Cor. 1:13). The implication is surely that because Christ was crucified for us, therefore those He died to redeem are undivided. We have one Saviour, through one salvation act, and therefore we must be one. The atonement and fellowship are so linked.

Christ is not divided, and therefore, Paul reasons, divisions amongst brethren are a nonsense. *Christ is not divided, and therefore neither should we be* (1 Cor. 1:13; 3:3). Let's remember this powerful logic, in all our thinking about this issue. Paul even goes so far as to suggest that if we do not discern the body at the breaking of bread, if we wilfully exclude certain members of the body, then we eat and drink condemnation to ourselves. This is how serious division is. The devil's house is divided (Mt. 12:25,26); Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13 s.w.). We were called to the Gospel *so that* we might share in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ- i.e. fellowship with Him and His Father, and with all the others within His body (1 Cor. 1:9,10). If we accept that brethren and sisters are validly baptized into and remain within His body, then we simply *must* fellowship with them. Should we refuse to do this, we are working against the essential purpose of God- to build up the body of His Son now, so that we might exist in that state eternally.

1:14 Gaius had a home big enough for the Corinth ecclesia to meet in (Rom. 16:23). Crispus was the leader of the Corinth synagogue and yet he and Gaius were the first people Paul converted there (1 Cor. 1:14). Thus in this case the initial response was from the socially well to do, although the later converts were generally poor. By all means compare with how wealthy Lydia was the first convert in Philippi. Anyone who was a household leader or with a home large enough to accommodate the ecclesia was clearly of a higher social level. Thus the Philippian jailer, Stephanas and Chloe had a "household" (1 Cor. 1:11; 16:15), as did Philemon; and even Aquilla and Priscilla although artisans were wealthy enough to have room to host an ecclesia (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3-5). Titus Justus [whose name implies he was a Roman citizen] had a house adjacent to the synagogue in Corinth. Mark's mother had a home in Jerusalem that could accommodate a meeting (Acts 12:12); Baranbas owned a farm (Acts 4:36); Jason was wealthy enough to stand bail for Paul and entertain his visitors (Acts 17:5-9). An Areopagite was converted in Athens (Acts 17:34). Apollos and Phoebe were able to travel independently. Remember that most people at the time lived in cramped tiny rooms, so unbearable that most of their lives were lived outdoors as far as possible.

1:17 - see on Mt. 3:8; Gal. 6:14.

Paul had been reconciled, as have all men, by the cross. But he still needed to be converted, and this depended upon the freewill obedience of the likes of Ananias. It really is so, for Paul warned that preaching the Gospel with wisdom of words would make "the cross of Christ... of none effect" (1 Cor. 1:17). The effect of the cross, the power of it to save, is limited in its extent by our manner of preaching of it. And we can make "Christ", i.e. His cross, of "none effect" by trusting to our works rather than accepting the gracious salvation which He achieved (Gal. 5:4).

Paul declared unto Corinth "the testimony of God", i.e. "Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1,2). This message was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power", "the wisdom of God", "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:17,23,24; 2:4,5). Indeed, "the cross of Christ" is put for 'the preaching of His cross' (1:17). All these things are parallel. The cross is in itself the testimony and witness of God. This is why, Paul reasons, the power of the cross itself means that it doesn't matter how poorly that message is presented in human words; indeed, such is its excellence and power that we even *shouldn't seek* to present it with a layer of human 'culture' and verbiage shrouding it.

Sometimes we need to read into the text the idea of "not so much *this*, as *that*". Thus "Christ sent me not [so much as] to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17). Paul of course *did* baptize people, as he goes on to say in that very context (1 Cor. 1:14). Or take Jer. 7:22,23: "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them... concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God". God *did* command sacrifices; but He *not so much* commanded them *as* required Israel's spirit of obedience and acceptance of Him.

1:18- see on Rom. 1:18.

The most serious problem in the Corinth ecclesia, Paul said, was that they were divided (1 Cor. 1:18 Gk; and notice how he begins his letter by addressing this problem, not the incest, the drunkenness at the breaking of bread, the false doctrine...). See on Gal. 2:2.

Because we are in Christ, therefore we witness Him; and we witness as He witnessed. *His* witness is in fact ours. But there is a sober theme in Scripture: that the essential witness of Christ was in His time of dying. "The preaching ['the word'] of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18) refers to the way in which the cross itself was and is a witness, rather than speaking of preaching *about* the cross.

Do we feel ashamed that we just don't witness as we ought to? There is no doubt that the cross and baptism into that death was central to the preaching message of the early brethren. Knowing it, believing it, meant that it just had to be preached. The completeness and reality of the redemption achieved is expressed in Hebrews with a sense of finality, and we ought not to let that slip from our presentation of the Gospel either. There in the cross, the justice and mercy of God are brought

together in the ultimate way. There in the cross is the appeal. Paul spoke of “the preaching of the cross”, the word / message which *is* the cross (1 Cor. 1:18). Some of the early missionaries reported how they could never get any response to their message until they explained the cross; and so, with our true doctrinal understanding of it, it is my belief that the cross is what has the power of conversion. A man cannot face it and not have a deep impression of the absoluteness of the issues involved in faith and unbelief, in choosing to accept or reject the work of the struggling, sweating, gasping Man who hung on the stake. It truly is a question of believe or perish. Baptism into that death and resurrection is essential for salvation. Of course we must not bully or intimidate people into faith, but on the other hand, a preaching of the cross cannot help but have something compulsive and urgent and passionate about it. For we appeal to men on God’s behalf to accept the work of the cross as efficacious for them. I submit that much of our preaching somehow fails in urgency and entreaty. We seem to be in places too expository, or too attractive with the peripherals, seeking to please men... or be offering good advice, very good advice indeed, background Bible knowledge, how to read the Bible effectively... all of which may be all well and good, but we should be preaching good news, not good advice. The message of the cross is of a grace and real salvation which is almost too good to believe. It isn’t Bible background or archaeology or Russia invading Israel. It is the Man who had our nature hanging there perfect, full of love, a light in this dark world... and as far as we perceive the wonder of it all, as far as this breaks in upon us, so far we will hold it forth to this world. The Lord wasn’t preaching good *ideas*; He was preaching good *news*. The cross means that we have a faith to live by all our days; not just a faith to die by, a comfort in our time of dying, as we face the endgame.

1:19- see on Job 5:12,13.

Paul alludes to some parts of the Gospels more than to others. The record of John the Baptist, the sermon on the mount, the parables and the record of Christ in Gethsemane are all referred to far more than average. This surely would not be the case if the connections between Paul’s writings and the Gospels were *only* the result of the Spirit irresistibly carrying Paul along. We have suggested that Paul’s enthusiasm for the record of John the Baptist was because he had probably first heard the Gospel from John; i.e. there was a reason personal to Paul as to why he alludes to much to that particular part of the Gospels. And so with his sustained allusions to Gethsemane, far more than we would expect statistically. Presumably the picture of the Lord Jesus struggling against His own nature, driven to the brink of eternal failure, was an image which echoed in Paul’s mind. Likewise the parables were intended to be memorized and meditated upon; Paul did just this, and that’s why he alludes to them more than average. This sort of pattern is just what we too experience; there are parts of Scripture which stick in our minds, often for personal reasons. And so it was with Paul. Mt. 11:25 was a verse which was perhaps very much in his mind as he wrote to Corinth; it is alluded to in 1 Cor. 1:19; 2:8; 14:20- and nowhere else.

1:20 Truly Paul despised all worldly advantage and insisted upon the radical principles of the Lord- that true greatness is in humility, wealth is in poverty, worldly learning is the very opposite of Divine wisdom, etc. He mocks, even, such things when he writes to the Corinthians: "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?" (1 Cor. 1:20). Every one of these terms would have been true of Saul the Pharisee, Paul the powerful user of rhetoric, Paul of the razor sharp mind. And he knew his worldly advantage, and despised it.

1:21 1 Cor. 1:21,25 speak of the Gospel as “the foolishness of the thing preached” (RV) – not that it *is* foolish, but it is perceived that way.

1:23 The cross was foolishness to the Gentiles and an offence to the Jews. In Roman thought, the cross was something shocking; the very word ‘cross’ was repugnant to them. It was something only for slaves. Consider the following writings from the period.

- Cicero wrote: "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but... the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man... your honours [i.e. Roman citizenship] protect a man from... the *terror of the cross*".

- Seneca the Elder in the *Controversiae* records where a master's daughter marries a slave, and she is described as having become related to *cruciarum*, 'the crucified'. Thus 'the crucified' was used by metonymy for slaves. The father of the girl is taunted: "If you want to find your son-in-law's relatives, **go to the cross**". It is hard for us to appreciate how slaves were seen as less than human in that society. There was a stigma and revulsion attached to the cross. This was the offence of the cross.

- Juvenal in his *6th Satire* records how a wife ordered her husband: "Crucify this slave". "But what crime worthy of death has he committed?" asks the husband, "no delay can be too long when a man's life is at stake". She replies: "What a fool you are! Do you call a slave a man?"

The sense of shame and offence attached to the cross was also there in Jewish perception of it. Whoever was hung on a tree was seen as having been cursed by God (Dt. 21:23). Justin Martyr, in *Dialogue with Trypho*, records Trypho (who was a Jew) objecting to Christianity: "We are aware that the Christ must suffer...but that he had to be *crucified*, that he had to die a death of such shame and dishonour- a death cursed by the Law- prove this to us, for we are totally unable to receive it". Justin Martyr in his *Apology* further records: "They say that our madness consists in the fact that we place a *crucified* man in second place after the eternal God". The Romans also mocked the idea of following a crucified man. There is a caricature which shows a crucified person with an ass's head. The ass was a symbol of servitude [note how the Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass]. The caption sarcastically says: "Alexamenos worships God". This was typical of the offence of the cross.

1:23,24 It has been pointed out that if some NT passages are translated into Aramaic, the common language of the day in first century Israel, there would have been ample encouragement for memorization. Thus: We preach Christ crucified (*mishkal*), unto the Jews a stumblingblock (*mikshol*), and unto the Greeks foolishness (*sekel*), but unto them that are called...the power (*hishkeel*) of God and the wisdom (*sekel*) of God" (1 Cor. 1:23,24).

1:24 Paul saw the cross of Christ as parallel with "the things of the Spirit of God", the wisdom of God, what eye has not seen nor ear heard, but what is revealed unto the believer and not to the world (1 Cor. 1:18,23,24; 2:7-13). The cross of Christ was the supreme expression of the Spirit of God, and its true meaning is incomprehensible to the world. In the cross, according to Paul's allusion back to Isaiah, God bowed the Heavens and came down. He did wonderful things which we looked not for. The thick darkness there is to be associated with a theophany presence of God Himself. See on Jn. 19:19.

1:25 That Almighty all-wise God could inspire 1 Cor. 1:25 is another example of God's humility: "The foolishness of God... the weakness of God". In Jer. 14:21 we find something wonderful: "Do not abhor *us*... do not disgrace the throne of thy glory". We, weak humans, are paralleled with the throne of God's glory.

1:26-28 The Lord Himself had implied that it was to the poor that the Gospel was more successfully preached. And Paul observed that in Corinth, not many mighty had been called, but most of them were poor (1 Cor. 1:26-28). "Christianity in its beginnings was without doubt a movement of impoverished classes... the Christian congregation originally embraced proletariat elements almost exclusively and was a proletarian organization". It has also been observed that the New Testament generally is written in very rough Greek, of a low cultural level when compared with other Greek literature of the period. The way he exhorts the Thessalonians to work with their own hands so that

the world couldn't criticize them implies the readership of Thessalonians were mainly manual workers (1 Thess. 4:11). Likewise Eph. 4:28. Paul wrote as if the "abysmal poverty" of the Macedonian ecclesias was well known (2 Cor. 8:1,2); and yet he goes on to reason that they had "abundance" in comparison with the "lack" of the Jerusalem Christians (8:14). The Jewish Christians called themselves "Ebionites", based on the Hebrew word for 'the poor'- "it was probably a conscious reminiscence of a very early term which attested by Paul's letters as an almost technical name for the Christians in Jerusalem and Judaea". Even if not all these poor converts were slaves, they were all subservient to their employers / sources of income. Craftsmen would have had to belong to a pagan trade guild, normally involving idol worship which a Christian had to refuse, and slaves of course had no 'right' to their own religion if it differed from that of their household.

1:28 *Base things*- Gk. *a-genes*, 'without family'. In the 1st century Mediterranean world, family was everything, it was by this that you were defined, rather than you having much meaning by yourself. To be without family meant you were absolutely nothing. And yet this is the kind of person God choses to create a new family in Christ. This was how the Lord Jesus would've been considered- *a-genes*, without family, seeing that His mother would've insisted that He wasn't really the son of Joseph, and claimed that Jesus was the son of no man, therefore from no family.

Despised- The same Greek word is used about the despising of Christ on the cross (Lk. 23:11; Acts 4:11). It was Christ who was the supremely 'chosen one'. Note that the Corinthians 'despised' Paul (s.w. 2 Cor. 10:10). Paul obviously knew this, and he may be alluding to their attitude to him in order to prove his legitimacy.

2:1- see on Jn. 1:14.

2:2 *Among you*- Gk. 'in you'. The implication is that Paul tried to know the Christ person within the otherwise aggressive Corinthians, he saw them for their status in Christ. He tried to perceive the Christ in these weak brethren. Hence "*we* have the mind of Christ" (2:16).

The letters to Corinth must have been very difficult to write. Paul was walking an absolute minefield. Therefore he says that his attitude to Corinth was that he wanted to know nothing among them, saving Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2); he wanted to keep his mind fixed upon the Lord Jesus and the intensity of His passion, rather than get sidetracked by personality issues and ecclesial politics. And his letters reveal this. They contain many unconscious allusions to the suffering and death of Christ. Paul refers to Christ as "Lord" throughout all his letters about once every 26 verses on average. And yet in Corinthians he does so once every 10 verses on average. The Lordship and suffering of Jesus were therefore very much in Paul's mind as he wrote. His Christ and cross-centred perspective is a real example to us, living as we do at a time when the body of Christ increasingly distracts us from the central object of our devotion: the Son of God who died for us, and was raised again for our justification.

When Paul faced Corinth, the ecclesia whom he had loved and brought into being with great labour pains, yet now riven with carnality, fabricating the most malicious rumours against him, bitter at his spirituality... he determined to know nothing among them, saving Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). The antidote to ecclesial problems and selfishness is reflection upon the cross. By insisting on our rights, Paul says, we will make the weak brother stumble, "for whom Christ died". 'Think of His cross and sacrifice', Paul is saying, 'and the sacrifice of self restraint *you* are asked to make is nothing at all'.

Despite "the offence of the cross", Paul preached it. "I determined not to know [an idiom for 'teach the knowledge of'] any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul didn't accommodate his message to the ears of his hearers. There are times when God's revelation *is* accommodated to us, but not when it comes to the basic message of Christ and the demands which His cross makes upon us.

2:3 - see on 1 Cor. 8:9; 2 Cor. 12:7.

Paul explains his own attitude to preaching in 1 Cor. 2:3: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling". It could be that this is a reference to his physical weakness at the time he preached to the Corinthians. But William Barclay understands the Greek words to more imply "the trembling anxiety to perform a duty", and I tend to run with this. The words are a reflection of the heart that bled within Paul. The man who has no fear, no hesitancy, no nervousness, no tension in the task of preaching... may give an efficient and competent performance from a platform. But it is the man who has this trembling anxiety, that intensity which comes from a heart that bleeds for ones hearers, who will produce an effect which artistry alone can never achieve. He is the man who will convert another. It has truly been said that "the need is the call". To perceive the needs of others is what calls us and compels us to witness, coupled with our own disappointment with ourselves, our race, our nature.

For Paul, his glory was not in heroic "deeds of the body" [see on Gal. 1:10] but rather in the fact that when he first preached to the Corinthians, he was suffering from "weakness... much fear and trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3)- a reference to anything from agitated nervous breakdown to malaria. We have Gal. 4:13 in the same vein: "You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at the first".

2:3-5- see on Jn. 15:26.

2:4 The Corinthians were converted "not [so much] through words of wisdom, but through the demonstration of the spirit" (1 Cor. 2:4). The essence of all this is the same today as it was then- the revelation of the person of Jesus isn't solely through Bible reading and getting the interpretation right; it's through a living community, His body. It is there that we will see His Spirit / personality in action. I don't refer to miraculous gifts- but to the spirit / mind / disposition / essence of the Lord, man and saviour Jesus.

2:6-9 1 Cor. 2:6-9 stresses how they possessed a truth which nobody else apart from them could know. Whilst this feature of true Christianity led into the arrogance and pride which eventually doomed the early church, when and whilst used properly, it bound them even closer together. Nikolaus Walter observes that the first century generally "did not experience religion as a binding force that was capable of determining everyday reality by offering support, setting norms, and forming community". And yet the Truth enabled just such things to occur. In this, as today, the example of the community is the ultimate proof that the doctrines we teach are indeed the Truth and of themselves demand conversion.

2:8- see on 1 Cor. 1:19.

2:9 The things which God has prepared for those who love Him, things which the natural eye has not seen but which are revealed unto us by the Spirit, relate to our redemption in Christ, rather than the wonders of the future political Kingdom (because Mt. 13:11; 16:17 = 1 Cor. 2:9,10). The context of 1 Cor. 2 and the allusions to Isaiah there demand the same interpretation.

2:9,10 The true believers are those in whom God is revealed in a limited sense in this life. However, in the Kingdom, they will be 'mighty ones' in whom the LORD will be fully manifested. This is all beautifully shown by a comparison of Is. 64:4 and 1 Cor. 2:9. "Men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what He has prepared for him that waits for him". Paul quotes this in 1 Cor. 2:9,10: "It is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto *us* by His Spirit". The passage in Is. 64 says that no one except God can understand the things He has prepared for the believers. However 1 Cor. 2:10 says that those things have been revealed to *us*.

2:10 The intense degree to which God's Name really is called upon us is brought out in Is. 64:4. There we are told that no man has perceived "O God, *beside Thee*" what has been prepared for the saints. These words are quoted in 1 Cor. 2:9,10 concerning us, with the wondrous statement that

God has revealed these things to us by His Spirit. Yet Is. 64:4 says that *only God alone* knows these things. But Paul says that they are also known by us, through God's Spirit. So through our association with the one Spirit, the one Name of Yahweh, what is true of God Himself on a personal level becomes true of us. Such is the wonder of the way in which His *fullness* dwells in us. God's Name *alone* is Yahweh (Ps. 83:18), yet this Name is now called upon us.

2:14 The things of the spirit of God are spiritually "discerned" says Paul in 1 Cor. 2:14. But the Greek word means literally to question; asking questions as we read God's word is therefore an appropriate thing for us to be doing.

2:15- see on 1 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 2:17.

In the final analysis, we will meet Jesus alone. There will by God's grace be a moment when we will even see the face of Almighty God- alone. This was the light at the end of Job's tunnel- he would see his redeemer for himself "and not another". Paul possibly expresses the same idea of an unenterable relationship in 1 Cor. 2:15: "He that is spiritual discerneth all things (about God), yet he himself is discerned of no man". Our real spiritual being is a "hidden man" (1 Pet. 3:4). The Spirit describes our final redemption as our "soul" and "spirit" being "saved" ; our innermost being, our essential spiritual personality, who we *really* are in spiritual terms, will as it were be immortalized (1 Pet. 1:9; 1 Cor. 5:5).

Notice that Paul styles the spiritual man "he himself" (1 Cor. 2:15); as if the real, fundamental self of the true believer is the spiritual man, notwithstanding the existence of the man of the flesh within him. Likewise Paul calls his spiritual man "I myself" in Rom. 7:25. He now felt that when he sinned, it was no longer "I", his real, personal self, who was doing so (Rom. 7:17).

2:16 - see on Job 21:22.

3:1 We perhaps tend to assume that "the Holy Spirit" refers to miraculous gifts far more often than it does. The Corinthians possessed the gifts, but were in a more fundamental sense Spirit-less (1 Cor. 3:1). "John did no miracle", but was filled with the Spirit from his birth. Even the Comforter, which does refer to the miraculous gifts in its primary context, was, in perhaps another sense, to be unseen by the world, and to be *within* the believers (Jn. 14:17). It could well be that the Lord's discourse with Nicodemus concerning the need to be born both of water and Spirit must be read in the context of John's baptism; his was a birth of water, but Christian baptism is being described with an almost technical term: birth of the Spirit, in that baptism into the Spirit of Jesus brings the believer into the realm of the operation of God's Spirit. Consider the following selection of passages:

3:2 "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14) surely alludes to Jn. 16:12, although it doesn't verbally quote it: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now".

3:5 We're all preachers; it's not something that can be delegated to just some brethren. Paul reasons that as he and Apollos were ordained as ministers of the Gospel, so the Lord had also in principle given such a ministry "to every man" (1 Cor. 3:5).

3:6 Paul explains how that in his preaching he laid the foundation of the Gospel of Christ, but other brethren were building on it, as in his earlier parable he spoke of his planting the seed of the Gospel and Apollos watering it. He warned these 'builder' brethren to "take heed how he buildeth thereupon", because "every man's work (cp. "ye are my work in the Lord", 1 Cor. 9:1) shall be made manifest: for the day (of judgment) shall declare it... the fire [of judgment] shall try every man's work, of what sort it is... gold, silver... wood, hay, stubble... if any man's work abide which he hath built... he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:6-15). This clearly teaches that successful building up of brethren will have its specific reward at the judgment; and that to some degree their rejection will be a result of our lack of zeal, and we will thus lose the extra reward which we could

have had for the work of upbuilding. No doubt if the brethren we have laboured hard with to help, are with us in the Kingdom, this will greatly increase our joy- as compared to the brother who has not had such intense fellowship with his brethren during this life, and whose close friends in the ecclesia have been rejected, he himself only barely passing through the fire of judgment himself ("Yet so as by fire").

3:9- see on Rom. 15:26.

We are co-workers with Him in the building up of His house (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1). He could save men directly; but instead He has delegated that work to us, and thereby limited His power to save insofar as it depends upon our extension of it. Only through our preaching can the work of the cross be made complete- and that thought is frightening. God is building up His house, His ecclesia. But because we manifest God, we too are "labourers together with Him", not just puppets in His hand; we too are the builders of His house (1 Cor. 3:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:1).

3:10 Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 3:10-12 is likewise that "every man" will make a convert, and he should ensure they are firm in the faith, lest he lose them at judgement day. These assumptions of Paul reflect his positive way of thought, in a brotherhood that abounded in weakness and failure to live up to its potential. Likewise he writes of marriage as if marriage within the faith was and is the only model of marriage which he knows, even though there must have been many failures to live up to this ideal, as there are today.

3:10-15 Paul seems to have assumed that all of us would preach and make converts (not leave it to just some of our community): he speaks of how "every man" in the ecclesia builds upon the foundation of Christ, but how he builds will be judged by fire. If what he has built is burnt up at the judgment, he himself will be saved, but not what he has built (1 Cor. 3:10-15). I would suggest that the 'building' refers to our converts and work with other believers. If they fail of the Kingdom, we ourselves will be saved, but our work will have been in vain. This parable also suggests that the salvation of others, their passing through the fire at the judgment, is dependent upon how we build. This may be hyperbole to make a point, but it is a powerful encouragement that we are *all* elders and preachers, and we *all* have a deep effect on others' spirituality. We have responsibilities to those who respond to our preaching.

3:12-15- see on Josh. 6:24.

3:13 At the point of conversion, the secrets of our hearts are in a sense made manifest (1 Cor. 14:25); but secrets are made manifest in the last day (Mt. 6:4,6,18; 1 Cor. 3:13). The present judgments of God about us will be revealed at the judgment (Rom. 2:5). Our actions "treasure up" wrath or acceptance (Rom. 2:5). The materialistic believer heaps up treasure for judgment at the last day (James 5:3). See on Lk. 11:23.

3:14 Our reward in the Kingdom will in some way be related to the work of upbuilding we have done with our brethren and sisters in this life. The "reward" which 1 Cor. 3:14 speaks of is the "work" we have built in God's ecclesia in this life. In agreement with this, Paul describes those he had laboured for as the reward he would receive in the Kingdom (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19).

3:15 There is the implication in the New Testament that whoever lives the life of Christ will convert others to the Way. 1 Cor. 3 speaks of the converts a man builds on the foundation of Christ. They, like himself, must go through the fire of judgment, and if they are lost, then he himself will still be saved (if he has remained faithful). The implication is that all of us build up others, and our work is tried in the end.

The accepted will be saved "yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). The fire of condemnation will as it were burn at them and remove all their surface spirituality. And as through death comes life, so through condemnation of the flesh comes salvation of the spirit.

3:18,19- see on Job 5:13.

3:18,19 Job was the greatest of the men of the east (Job 1:3), people who were renowned in the ancient world for their wisdom (cp. Mt. 2:1; 1 Kings 4:30). Thus Job as the Jews would have been full of worldly wisdom, and this is maybe behind Paul's words of 1 Cor.3:18,19: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written (quoting Job 5:13, which is Eliphaz speaking about Job), He taketh the wise in their own craftiness". Thus again Job is equated with the false wisdom of the Judaizers, who were using "excellency of speech... wisdom... enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:1,4), to corrupt the believers from the "simplicity that is in Christ", "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" (2 Cor. 11:3).

3:19 The view that every single word we read in our translations of the Bible is 'true' can lead us into the problems evident in many Bible fundamentalists. Take the words of Eliphaz against Job (Job 5:13). They were wrong words (Job 42:7). Yet they are quoted in 1 Cor. 3:19. Wrong statements can still be recorded under inspiration and even quoted. Take the mocking of Sennacherib. It's recorded under inspiration, blasphemous as it was.

3:23 If we believe that all in Christ, all who are 'Christian', will be in the Kingdom...then, we will act joyfully and positively toward our community, abounding in hope. We have to assume that our brethren are likewise going to be there; for we cannot condemn them. Therefore we must assume they too will be saved along with us. Consider how Paul repeatedly has this attitude when dealing with his apostate Corinthians: "For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23). See too 1 Cor. 6:3,11; 10:17; 13:12; 15:22,57; 2 Cor. 1:7; 3:18; 5:1.

4:2- see on Heb. 3:5.

4:3 Paul could say to his critics within the brotherhood that it mattered *so* little to him how he was judged by them, for he had *only* One who would judge him (1 Cor. 4:3). Indeed, Paul's thought here is building on what he had earlier reasoned in 1 Cor. 2:15, that the spiritual man "himself is judged of no man". There was only One judge, and the believer is now not condemned if he is in Christ (Rom. 8:1). He that truly believes in Christ is not condemned, but has passed from death to life (Jn. 3:18; 5:24). So however men may claim to judge and condemn us, the ultimate truth is that no man *can* judge / condemn us, and we who are spiritual should live life like that, not fearing the pathetic judgments of men, knowing that effectively we are *not* being judged by them. How radically different is Paul's attitude to so many of us. The fear of criticism and human judgment leads us to respond as animals do to fear- the instinct of self-defence and self-preservation is aroused. We defend ourselves as we would against hunger or impending death. Yet here the radical implications of grace burst through. *We* are not our best defence. We have an advocate who is also the judge, the almighty Lord Jesus; we have a preserver and saviour, the same omnipotent Lord, so that we need not and must not trust in ourselves. By not trusting in this grace of salvation, we end up desperately trusting ourselves for justification and preservation and salvation, becoming ever more guilty at our abysmal and pathetic failures to save and defend ourselves.

4:3-5 The message of imputed righteousness was powerfully challenging. For the whole message of Romans is that our only acceptability is through *God* counting us righteous although we are not... and it is *His* judgment which matters, not that of the million watching eyes of society around us. 1 Cor. 4:3-5 teach that the judgment of others is a "very small thing", an irrelevancy, compared with Christ's judgment of us. The fact that we have only one judge means that whatever others think or judge of us is irrelevant. That may be easy enough to accept as a theory, but the reality for those living in collective societies was far-reaching. Appreciating the ultimate importance of our standing before *God* means that we have a conscience towards *Him*, and a rightful sense of shame before Him for our sins.

4:4- see on Gal. 6:4.

Paul says that although he does not feel he has done anything wrong, this does not of itself mean that he is justified in God's sight (1 Cor. 4:4). We cannot, therefore, place too much importance on living according to our natural sense of right and wrong. This is the very error which has led gay 'Christians' to interpret the Bible in the light of their own desires, rather than allowing themselves to be taught by God's word. "It's OK in my conscience" is their only justification. They and many others give more credibility to what they perceive to be guidance coming from within them, than to God's word of Truth. The words of the Lord Jesus in Lk. 11:35 seem especially relevant: "Take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. "It's OK in my conscience" is indeed dark light. Our conscience is not going to jump out of us and stand and judge us at the day of judgment. There is one thing that will judge us, the word of the Lord (Jn. 12:48), not how far we have lived according to our conscience.

"He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:4) = "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord" (Is. 49:4). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

1 Cor. 4:3-5 appeals to the reality of *God's* future judgment as a basis for not paying too much attention to how *man* judges us. If it is *God's* judgment that means everything to us, what men say or think about us, or what we perceive they do, will not weigh so heavily with us. The ultimate reality of our lives is the sense of God's future judgment, not the awareness of man's present judgment. If we really grasp the simple fact that God alone is judge, that there is only One who *can* judge us, that Christ will come, then we will say with Paul from our hearts: "He that is spiritual... himself is judged of no man" (1 Cor. 2:15). Of course, men *do* judge us; and it hurts. But we are to act and feel according to the fact that ultimately, they can *not* judge us. For there is only One judge, to whom we shall all soon give account.

Paul, misrepresented and slandered more than most brethren, came to conclude: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me [right now] is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:3-4). The judge is the justifier, according to this argument. Paul is not justified by himself or by other men, because they are not his judge. The fact that God alone is judge through Christ [another first principle] means that nobody can ultimately justify us or condemn us. "Many seek the favour of the ruler ['judge']; but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord" (Prov. 29:26). The false claims of others can do nothing to ultimately damage us, and our own efforts at self-justification are in effect a denial of the fact that the Lord is the judge, not us, and therefore He alone can and will justify.

4:5 He will reveal the hidden things of darkness (the human heart), and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts (1 Cor. 4:5). Of course He knows these anyway; but He will make them manifest *to us*. The judgment seat is for our benefit, not God's- He knows our lives and spiritual position already. The day of judgment is to purify us (Mal. 3:2)- not ultimately, for that has been done by the Lord's blood and our lives of faithful acceptance of this. But the fire of judgment reveals the dross of our lives *to us* and in this sense purges us of those sins. Without the judgment, we would drift into the Kingdom with no real appreciation of our own sinfulness or the height of God's grace. The judgment will declare God's glory, His triumph over every secret sin of His people. The heathen will be judged "that the nations may know themselves to be but men" (Ps. 9:20)- self knowledge is the aim, not extraction of information so that God can make a decision. And it was the same with Israel: "Judge the bloody city... (i.e.) shew her all her abominations" (Ez. 22:2).

At judgment God "shall bring forth thy righteousness (good deeds) as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day" (Ps. 37:6). The sins of the rejected and the good deeds of the righteous will be publicly declared at the judgment, even if they are concealed from men in this life (1 Tim. 5:24,25). This is how men will receive "praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:7; Rom. 2:29). The wicked will

see the generous deeds of the righteous rehearsed before them; and will gnash their teeth and melt away into condemnation (Ps. 112:9,10).

Whilst we ourselves will feel the need to "confess to God" (Rom. 14:11,12) our failures and unworthiness, we have shown earlier how our Lord will not mention these to us, but instead joyfully catalogue to us those things which have so pleased him in our lives. This will be to our genuine amazement: "Lord, when..?". Keeping a subconscious inventory of our own good works now will surely prevent us from being in this category. 1 Cor. 4:5 speaks of us as receiving "praise of God" at the judgment, presumably in the form of praise for the good works which we are not aware of, as outlined in the parable (cp. Ps. 134:3). "Praise" suggests that our Lord will show quite some enthusiasm in this. Not he that commends himself will be approved [cp. The listing of good deeds by the rejected], "but whom the Lord commendeth" in as it were listing the good deeds of the accepted (2 Cor. 10:18).

There are some instructive parallels here:

"Bring to light"	"Make manifest"
"The hidden things of"	"The counsels of"
"Darkness"	"The hearts"

The hidden man is therefore "the counsels" of the heart. How we speak and reason to ourselves in our self-talk, this is the indicator of the hidden man. This will be 'made manifest' to the owners of those hearts, the Greek implies. "All things are naked and opened" unto God anyway; the second coming will reveal nothing to Him. The making manifest of our hidden man will be to ourselves and to others. The purpose of the judgment seat is therefore more for our benefit than God's; it will be the ultimate self-revelation of ourselves. Then we will know ourselves, just as God knows us (1 Cor. 13:12). Through a glass, darkly, we can now see the outline of our spiritual self (1 Cor. 13:11,12), although all too often we see this picture in the spiritual mirror of self-examination, and then promptly forget about it (James 1:23,24).

4:6 For Paul, the fact that he had only *one* judge meant that he could genuinely feel that it mattered very little to him how others judged him (1 Cor. 4:4-6). The idea of worrying only about God's judgment of us rather than man's lies behind Prov. 29:26: "Many seek the ruler's favourable judgment; but a man's judgment [i.e. the ultimate judgment, the only one worth having] comes from the Lord". But this takes quite some faith to believe- for in this age of constant communication between people about other people, we all tend to get worried by others' judgments and opinions of us. But ultimately there is only *one* judge- God, and not the guys at work, your kid sister, your older brother, the woman in apartment 35. The idea of the court of Heaven is a great comfort to us in the pain of being misjudged by men. It's a case of seeing what isn't visible to the human eye.

1 Corinthians contains many warnings against being "puffed up" (1 Cor. 4:6,8,19; 5:2,6; 13:4). These warnings often come in the context of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Passover lamb. The fact He died as He did means that we must live Passover lives without the leaven of pride and being puffed up about leading brethren etc. Perceiving *His* greatness will mean that we will not seek to follow men.

4:9- see on Ex. 7:4; Rom. 3:19; 1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 23:6.

1 Cor. 4:9 seems to make a difference between "the world" and "men", as if Paul is using "the world" here as meaning 'the world of believers'.

There is a sense in which the Angels have limited knowledge about our spiritual capacities; "We are made a spectacle... to Angels" (1 Cor. 4:9) implies that the Angels look on at the sufferings God has brought on us through our guardian Angel, and intensely scrutinize how we are acting as if

earnestly watching a theatre play (so the word "spectacle" implies). Thus they are anxiously looking for the outcome of their trials on us, not knowing the final result. The fact that only at the judgement will the names of the worthy be confessed to the Angels by Jesus (Rev. 3:5) makes it appear that the ultimate outcome of our probations is not known to our guardians, hence their eagerness in our lives to see how we react. It is not until the harvest that they are sent out to root out of the Kingdom all things that offend (Mt. 13:41).

4:9,10 "We are despised" (1 Cor. 4:9,10; 2 Cor. 4:9,10) = "Him whom man despiseth" (Is. 49:7). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

4:13 Paul described himself as the offscouring of all things- using the very language of condemned Israel (Lam. 3:45). He so wanted to see their salvation that he identified with them to this extent. By doing so he was reflecting in essence the way the Lord Jesus so identified Himself with us sinners, as our representative, "made sin" [whatever precisely this means] for the sake of saving us from that sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

4:14 It is significant that when dealing with Corinth's belief of those who sought to totally black Paul's character, he writes: "I write not these things (his answer to their allegations) to shame you..." (1 Cor.4:14). Yet when dealing with their doctrinal apostasy, Paul does seek to shame them: "Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor. 15:34).

4:15 *Instructors*- The leaders of the Corinth ecclesia were no more than a *paidagogos* (1 Cor. 4:15,16), a slave who had to take the little children to school, where they would be taught by the teacher (cp. Jesus).

4:15,16 Paul constantly sets himself up as an example to his converts; and whenever he bids them 'follow me', it is in the context of his example as a preacher (Phil. 3:15-17; 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 1 Cor. 4:16; 10:31-11:1; Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 3:7-9). This perhaps accounts for the otherwise surprising lack of specific encouragement to his converts to preach which we observe in Paul's writings. He understood his role to be initiatory- he speaks of his preaching as planting (1 Cor. 3:6-9; 9:7,10,11), laying foundations (Rom. 15:20; 1 Cor. 3:10), giving birth (1 Cor. 4:15; Philemon 10) and betrothing (2 Cor. 11:2). His aim was for his converts to also preach and develop self-sustaining ecclesias. "Paul's method of shaping a community was to gather converts around himself and by his own behaviour to demonstrate what he taught", following a pattern practiced by the contemporary moral philosophers.

4:16 Paul is set before us as "a Christ-appointed model" of the ideal believer. He himself seems to have sensed this happening when he so often invites us to follow his example (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Gal. 4:12; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:10; 2 Thess. 3:7,9). He does this quite self-consciously, for example: "I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved... let no man seek his own, but another's [profit]" (1 Cor. 10:33,24). He even says that he doesn't do things which he could legitimately allow himself, *because* he knew he was being framed as their example (2 Thess. 3:7,9).

4:17- see on Acts 2:46.

4:20 The Gospel demands a response. The Greek word *euangelia* actually implies this, although the English translation 'good news' may mask it. There is an inscription from Priene in Asia Minor which reads: "The birthday of the god [=Augustus] was for the world the beginning of *good news* [euangelia] owing to him". The Gospel is not therefore just a proclamation of good news, e.g. an emperor's birthday. *Euangelia* meant the response to the good news; the good news and the response one must make to it are all bound up within the one word. "For the [Gospel of the] Kingdom of God is not [so much] in *word*, but in *power*" - the Gospel isn't so much words and ideas, as a life lived. For in the previous verse Paul has argued: "I will know, not the *word* of them which are puffed up, but the *power*", i.e. what their lives show of the things they profess (1 Cor.

4:19,20 RV). And we must ask ourselves whether our personal Christianity is mere words, or the power of a life living out those words.

5:1 Note how Paul deals with ecclesial problems in places like Corinth. He doesn't write to the elders and tell them to sort it out and clean up the ecclesia. He writes to every member of the ecclesia. He confronts the whole ecclesia with his concerns over pastoral issues- not just the pastors. He tells the whole ecclesia of his concern about how they have not dealt with flagrant sin amongst them (1 Cor. 5; 6:1-11). The Lord's teaching in Mt. 18:15-18 doesn't ask us to refer our concerns about others' behaviour in the ecclesia to the elders. He asks us to personally take the matter up with the individual. His church was to be built on individuals who followed Him personally and closely.

5:2 Any such separations are brought forth from much sorrow; Corinth ecclesia were told that they should have mourned as they withdrew from one who had left the faith (1 Cor. 5:2). "The whole house of Israel" were commanded to "mourn" the necessary destruction of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:6). Samuel mourned and God repented when Saul was finally rejected (1 Sam. 15:35). Paul wept when he wrote about some in the ecclesia who had fallen away (Phil. 3:17-19). It must be said that 'block disfellowship'- the cutting off of hundreds of brethren and sisters because theoretically they fellowship a weak brother- hardly enables 'mourning' and pleading with each of those who are disfellowshipped.

5:4- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

The principles of Mt. 18:16,17 concerning dealing with personal offences are applied by Paul to dealing with moral and doctrinal problems at Corinth (= 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Cor. 5:4,5,9; 6:1-6).

We are all priests, a community of them. This is why Paul writes to whole ecclesias rather than just the elders. 1 Cor. 5:4,5,11 make it clear that discipline was the responsibility of *all*, "the many" as Paul put it in 2 Cor., not just the elders. Even in Philippians, where bishops and deacons are specifically mentioned, Paul writes to "all the saints".

5:5 Who the Lord Jesus was is who He will be in the future; in the same way as who *we* are now, is who we will eternally be. For our spirit, our essential personality, will be *saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5). "Flesh and blood" will not inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50); and yet the risen, glorified Lord Jesus was "flesh and bones" (Lk. 24:39). We will be who we essentially are today, but with Spirit instead of blood energizing us. It's a challenging thought, as we consider the state of our "spirit", the essential 'me' which will be preserved, having been stored in Heaven in the Father's memory until the day when it is united with the new body which we will be given at resurrection. For in all things the Lord is our pattern; and we will in that day be given a body like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:21)- which is still describable as "flesh and bones" in appearance (Lk. 24:39).

5:5

Delivering Unto Satan

Comments

1. The purpose of this delivering was in order "that the spirit may be saved". If Satan is intent on making people sin and alienated from God, why should what he does to them result in them being saved? It is by the experiences of life that God controls, that we are spiritually developed (Heb.12:5-11).
2. How could the church at Corinth deliver the fallen brother to Satan if no one knows where to locate him?
3. "Destruction" can also imply "punishment" (e.g. 2 Thess.1:9). Are we to think that God would work in cooperation with an angel who is rebelling against Him?

4. Notice that Satan is not described as eagerly entering the man, as we would expect if Satan is constantly trying to influence all men to sin and to turn believers away from God. The church (v. 4) is told to deliver the man to Satan.

Suggested Explanations

1. One of the big “Satan” – adversaries – to the early church was the Roman authority of the time, who, as the first century progressed, became increasingly opposed to Christianity. The Greek phrase “to deliver” is used elsewhere, very often in a legal sense, of delivering someone to a civil authority, e.g.:

- Someone can “deliver you to the judge” (Mt. 5:25).
- “They will deliver you up to the councils” (Mt. 10:17).
- The Jews “shall deliver (Jesus) to the Gentiles” (Mt. 20:19)
- “The Jews will... deliver (Paul) into the hands of the Gentiles” (Acts 21:11).
- “Yet was I delivered prisoner” (Acts 28:17).

So is Paul advising them to hand over the sinful brother to the Roman authorities for punishment? The sin he had committed was incest, and this was punishable under the Roman law. Remember that “destruction” also implies “punishment”. Leander Keck demonstrates that the behaviour of the incestuous man was “contrary to both Jewish and Roman law”, rendering him liable to punishment by those authorities ⁽¹⁾.

2. “Satan” here may simply refer to the man’s evil desires. He had given way to them in committing the sin of incest, and Paul is perhaps suggesting that if the church separates from the man and leaves him to live a fleshly life for a time, maybe eventually he will come round to repentance so that ultimately his spirit would be saved at the judgment. This is exactly what happened to the prodigal son (Luke 15); living a life away from his spiritual family and totally following Satan – his evil desires – resulted in him eventually repenting. Jeremiah 2:19 sums this up: “Your own wickedness shall correct you and your backslidings shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter” (that they had done).

3. “The flesh” does not necessarily mean “the body”. It may also refer to a way of life controlled by our evil desires, i.e. Satan. Believers “are not in the flesh, but in the spirit” (Rom. 8:9). This does not mean that they are without physical bodies, but that they are not living a fleshly life. Before conversion “we were in the flesh” (Rom. 7:5). Galatians 5:19 mentions sexual perversion, which the offender at Corinth was guilty of, as a “work of the flesh”. 1 John 3:5 (cp. v. 8), defines sins as the “works of the Devil”, thus equating the flesh and the Devil. Thus 1 Corinthians 5:5 could be understood as ‘Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of Satan/the Devil’, so that we have Satan destroying Satan. It is impossible to understand this if we hold to the popular belief regarding Satan. But if the first Satan is understood as the Roman authority and the second one as the flesh, or sinful expressions of our evil desires, then there is no problem.

4. We have seen in our notes on Luke 10:18 that Satan is sometimes used in the context of reminding us that physical illness is ultimately a result of our sin. It may be that the spirit – gifted apostles in the first century had the power of afflicting sinful believers with physical illness or death – e.g. Peter could order Ananias and Sapphira’s death (Acts 5); some at Corinth were physically “weak and sickly” as a punishment for abusing the communion service (1 Cor. 11:30); Jesus could threaten the false teachers within the church at Thyatira with instant death unless they repented (Rev. 2:22–23) and James 5:14–16 implies that serious illness of some members of the church was due to their sins, and would be lifted if there was repentance. If the sickness mentioned here was an ordinary illness, it does not follow that if a Christian repents of sin he will automatically be healed, e.g. Job was afflicted with illness as a trial from God, not because he sinned. It was for the help and

healing of repentant believers who had been smitten in this way, that “the gift of healing” was probably mainly used in the early church (1 Cor. 12:9). Thus Paul’s delivering the incestuous brother to Satan and also delivering “Hymaenaeus and Alexander... unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20), may have involved him smiting them with physical sickness due to their following of Satan – their evil desires. Some time later Paul noted how Alexander still “greatly withstood our words” (2 Tim. 4:14,15). The extent of his withstanding Paul’s preaching is made apparent if we understand that Alexander had been struck ill by Paul before he wrote the first letter to Timothy, but had still refused to learn his lesson by the time Paul wrote to Timothy again. Again, notice that Satan would try and teach Alexander “not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20). If Satan is an evil person who is a liar and blasphemer of God’s word, how can he teach a man not to blaspheme God?

5. The same verb for ‘delivering over’ occurs in the LXX of Job 2:6, where God ‘hands over’ Job to Satan, with the comment [in LXX]: “you are to protect his *psyche*, his spirit”. The connection between the passages would suggest to me that Job was in need of spiritual improvement, even though he was imputed as being righteous (Job 1:1). Whatever, the point surely is that God handed a person over to an adversary, for that person’s spiritual salvation. The orthodox idea of God and Satan being pitted in conflict just doesn’t cut it here. Biblically, God is portrayed as in charge of any ‘Satan’ / adversary, and using ‘satans’ at His will for the spiritual improvement of people, rather than their destruction. The story of Job is a classic example. Are we to really understand that there is a personal being called Satan who’s disobedient to God, out of His control, and bent on leading people to their spiritual destruction? No way, Jose. Not yet, Josette. 1 Cor. 5:5 and the record of Job teach the very dead opposite. And by all means bring on board here 2 Tim. 2:26, which speaks of people being caught in the Devil’s trap at God’s will / desire ⁽²⁾.

Notes

(1) Leander Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) p. 106.

(2) This is the translation offered by H.A. Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2006) p. 119.

5:7 As a man or woman seriously contemplates the cross, they are inevitably led to a self-knowledge and self-examination which shakes them to the bone. We are to “purge out” the old leaven from us at the memorial meeting (1 Cor. 5:7). But the same Greek word for “purge” is found in passages which speak of how the blood of Christ purges us: Jn. 15:2; Heb. 10:2. We purge ourselves because Christ has purged us. This is the connection between His death for us, and our self-examination.

5:8 "Therefore let us keep the feast (the breaking of bread, the new Passover), not with old leaven... of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor.5:8). Paul's selfless relationship with Corinth was inspired by that of Moses with Israel. This is echoing Moses' command to keep the Passover feast without leaven (Ex. 12:15; Dt. 16:3). Paul saw himself as Moses in trying to save a generally unresponsive and ungrateful Israel.

In Dt. 16:3 the unleavened bread is called the "bread of affliction", whilst in 1 Cor. 5:8 it is called the "unleavened bread of sincerity and Truth", as if being sincere and true and not having malice and bitterness in our hearts is a result of much mental affliction and exercising of the mind. So to keep the feast we have to search our houses, our lives, for anything like leaven- anything that puffs us up, that distorts us from the true smallness and humility we should have, that corrupts our sincerity. By nature we have so much pride in us, so much that puffs us up. We should always find some leaven in us every time we examine ourselves. The Jews used to search their houses with candles, looking for any sign of leaven. So we too must look into every corner of our lives with the candle of the word. Similarly before the great Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah there was a searching for idols which were then thrown down.

Paul calls on the Corinthians to keep the feast “with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” which he contrasts with “malice and evil” (1 Cor. 5:8). Truth is set up against evil- not against wrong interpretations of Bible passages.

5:9-13 In 1 Cor. 5:9-13 Paul says that he doesn’t intend the converts “to get out of the world” but rather to mix with the greedy, robbers and idolaters who are in the world. We know from later in this epistle that Christians in Corinth were free to use the pagan meat markets, and to accept invitations for meals in pagan homes. The Corinthians seemed to think that because they were self-consciously separate from the world, therefore it didn’t matter how they lived within the community. It seems they had misunderstood Paul’s previous letter about separation from sinful people as meaning they must be separate from the world. But Paul is saying that no, one must mix with the world, but separate from sin within our own lives. However, by the end of the 1st century, ‘going out of the world’ became the main preoccupation with some Christians, even though they themselves often developed low moral standards as a result of this. It was these ascetic groups who so over analysed some aspects of doctrine- for they had nothing better to do with their time- that they ended up with false doctrine. They converted only from within their groups, so the world was not witnessed to, the fire of love and compassion for humanity that was the hallmark of true Christianity was lost, and thus by the 2nd century the Truth both doctrinally and in practice had been lost.

6:2 "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world" (1 Cor. 6:2) is referring back to Mt. 19:28, which promises all those who have followed Christ that they will sit on thrones of judgment. That this promise was not just to the disciples is evident from Lk. 22:30; 1:33 cp. Rev. 3:21. It's as if Paul is saying: 'Now come on, you ought to know this, it's in the Gospels'. He expected other believers to share his familiarity with the words of Christ.

6:3- see on Heb. 11:7.

We have to assume our brethren will be in the Kingdom. Paul did this even with Corinth; he wrote of how “*we* shall judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:3) when we are all accepted in the Kingdom. And his way of writing to the Thessalonians about the resurrection and judgment assumes that all of his readers would be accepted (“so shall *we* ever be with the Lord... ye are *all* the children of light”). We too can do nothing else but see each other like that. The impact of this is colossal. We’d rather shy away from it. But meditate awhile upon it.

If the Angels did not receive their final forgiveness and justification until some time after their 'probations'- i. e. at the time of Christ- it may be that the sinful ones will not receive their final punishment until later- hence we "shall judge Angels" (1 Cor. 6:3- the idea of judging ecclesial elders at the last day seems a bit far fetched!). "The Angels which kept not their first estate... He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day" (Jude 6)- clearly the judgement at the second coming. See on Jude 6; Heb. 9:23; Lk. 11:32.

Under the Law, there was a referral system up to Moses, smaller cases being dealt with by the 70 elders and family heads. These 'elohim' must surely point forward to us, the King-priests of the future age. It may well be that some of the cases tax even our spirit nature to resolve, and they are referred up to other saints with greater Spiritual endowments than we, and finally to Christ. "We shall judge angels" (1 Cor.6:3) may refer to each believer being in the position to pass judgment on a messenger or representative of, e.g., a town or village. This mention of angel-messengers implies that we will be geographically located in one place in a region, to where cases must be brought by a messenger.

6:3,5 It may be that 1 Cor. 6:3,5 refers to this idea of different levels amongst the Angels. We are to “judge” our brethren, not in condemning them but in discerning between them, in the same way as we will “judge Angels” in the future. Then, we will not condemn them, but perceive / discern the differences between them.

6:4 It was usual for the head of the household to automatically be the leader of the religion which his household practised. But for the true Christians, this was not necessarily so to be; for the Lord had taught that it was the servant who was to lead, and the least esteemed in the ecclesia were to judge matters (1 Cor. 6:4). Elders of the household fellowships had to be chosen on the basis of their spiritual qualification, Paul taught. The radical nature of these teachings is so easily lost on us.

Sometimes, what appears to be hyperbole may in fact be irony. Thus when Paul says that the least respected member should settle disputes, he was not necessarily saying that this in fact was what he was advocating (the NT teaching about eldership would contradict this); he was surely using irony. Likewise in his teaching about head coverings, Paul is surely using irony: 'If you throw away your head covering, you may as well throw away your hair!' is how I read 1 Cor. 11:5. "...Seeing ye yourselves are wise" is one of several more evident uses of irony in Corinthians.

6:7 Paul taught his hopeless Corinthians that they ought not to be taking each other to court in the world, but rather should get brethren to settle disputes between brethren. But then he offers the higher level: don't even do this, but "rather take wrong... rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded" (1 Cor. 6:7).

6:9 Paul's reasoning about not going to law against those whom we consider to be in the wrong is based upon his reasoning that there will be a future judgment, and thieves, covetous persons, extortioners etc.- the very ones we might be tempted to take to law- will not inherit the Kingdom. If we take these types to law, Paul reasons, it's as if we don't know this basic first principle- that they will not be in the Kingdom (1 Cor. 6:1-10). And this is surely judgment enough. They don't need our judgment now. Rather should we receive motivation to preach to others from the thought of judgment to come.

Paul warns the Corinthians not to be deceived by the idea that homosexuals would enter the Kingdom of God; the implication was that there were homosexuals being wrongly tolerated within the Corinthian church, who were justifying their behaviour as being worthy of God's Kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

In appealing to the Corinthians not to take each other to court, Paul reasons: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom?" (1 Cor. 6:9). He uses the "know ye not?" rubric several times in his writings (e.g. 6:19 in this context) to point the new converts back to the implications of the basic doctrines they had recently converted to. If we believe that there will be a righteous judgment, and those responsible who have sinned will suffer the awful experience of rejection... then why seek to judge them yourself, in this life? Why worry about the prosperity of the wicked within the ecclesia if you really believe that the wicked will not be in the Kingdom? That is such an awful thing that one need not worry about trying to judge them ourselves in this life. Take comfort in the fact that judgment is coming... that's Paul's message, built as it is on the implications of basic doctrines.

Paul lists sins which will exclude from God's Kingdom; he includes adulterers and thieves, as well as homosexuals. It is evident that he does not mean those who have committed one act of theft or adultery (for this would, e.g., exclude David from God's Kingdom). He is evidently referring to those who continue in this way of life, justifying it as spiritually acceptable. The church is in embryo the Kingdom of God (Col. 1:13), and therefore what will evidently be excluded from God's future political Kingdom must be excluded from the church now. It is sometimes argued that Paul is only condemning homosexual prostitution, and much argument has revolved around the exact meaning of the word rendered "homosexual" in the modern versions. It must be realized that in New Testament times, there was no Greek word that exactly corresponds with the present English term "homosexual". "Virtually every Greek lexicon has understood these words (*malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*) to be referring to homosexuality... we also find these terms in classical Greek literature (e.g. Lucian and Aristotle) *sometimes applied to obviously gay persons*" - not just

homosexual prostitutes, as some gay 'Christians' claim. The linguistic evidence that *arsenokoitai* refers to any form of homosexuality could be multiplied many times over. Harold Greenlee concludes: "It is clear that an *arsenkoites* in the New Testament is a man who goes to bed with a male for sexual purposes. This has been its accepted meaning ever since the time of ancient Greek literature". The claim that the word is in the plural and therefore should be seen as an intensive plural, referring to homosexual prostitutes, is desperate. Paul talks about groups of individuals, in the plural, throughout the passage. Some have even gone so far as to claim that these words have no sexual connotation, but the context is clearly sexual (v.9). Again, this demonstrates the intellectual desperation of the gay 'Christian' position.

6:10 Drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom; so say 1 Cor. 6:10 and Gal. 5:21. Does this mean that no alcoholic who can't quit will be there? No. On what basis, then, will they be there? Because they are repentant. They have a state of mind that turns back time and again from what they have done. It's easy to point the finger at alcoholics. Theirs is a sin that is open and goes before them to judgment. But we are all, sadly, habitual sinners. We sin, repent, and do the same again.

6:11 Having warned that unrepentant fornicators and drunkards will not be in the Kingdom of God, Paul goes on: "And such were some of you: but you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). References to washing, the name, Jesus, the Spirit, God... all inevitably make this an allusion to our baptism into the Name. Because they had been justified, counted as sinless due to their baptism into Christ, therefore they should:

- a) recognize their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit, and therefore to glorify God in spirit and body
- b) realize that they are not their own, to live their lives just as they wish
- c) act as if they are indeed joined to Christ
- d) let the power of Christ's resurrection and new life work in them

Clearly enough, the Corinthians were *still* fornicating and getting drunk. Yet, Paul says that this is how they used to be. Evidently he means that they have changed status- and they should live that out in practice. But Paul delves deeper into the psychology of sin's self-justification. They were saying that "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats". In other words, we have basic human desires and there are ways to satisfy them. Paul's response is basically that if we are in Christ, then we have vowed to put to death those desires, and to fulfil them is to act as if they are still alive and well. Further, in baptism we are counted to have died to them; and we seek to live the new life, empowered by the resurrection life which is now in the Lord, whose body we belong to. The comfort and challenge comes to Christian alcoholics today: You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified, counted as righteous. Think back to your baptism. That's what happened then. Now, try to live out that life. Act, or at least try to act, how God perceives you. The alcoholic needs to remember, as the Romans also needed to, the colossal significance of the fact they have been baptized. They have a responsibility and also tremendous, boundless possibility because of this. Remind them of it. Leave some photos or reminders of their early days in the Lord around the house. Talk about it...

6:11 Is it going too far to think that when Paul writes about believers being sanctified and justified, in that order (1 Cor. 6:11), he reflects his absorption of how his Lord had referred to the Father as firstly sanctified and then justified in Jn. 17:11,25?

Isaiah 30:1 condemns the Jews for seeking forgiveness their own way rather than by the gift of God's Spirit: they "cover with a covering (atonement), but not of my Spirit, that they may add (rather than subtract) sin to sin". Is.44:3 describes the latter day forgiveness of Israel in similar terms: "I will pour... floods upon the dry ground (spiritually barren-Is.53:2): I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring". The blessing of Abraham's seed is in their

forgiveness through Christ (Acts 3:25,26)- which is here paralleled with the pouring out of the Spirit upon the Jews. This is clearly the language of Joel 2 and Acts 2. Gal.3:14 puts all this in so many words: "That the blessing of Abraham (forgiveness) might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit". Thus 1 Cor.6:11 speaks of being washed from our sins "by the spirit of our God". There is a parallelism in Romans between us receiving "grace... the atonement... the Spirit" (1:5; 5:11; 8:15), showing the connection between the gift ("grace") of the Spirit and the forgiveness which leads to the atonement. It is hard to overstate how much the New Testament builds on the language and concepts of the Old Testament, especially in view of the large primarily Jewish readership the epistles would have had. Time and again in the Pentateuch and Joshua God promises to give the land to His people- "the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it" is a common phrase. The counterpart of the land under the new covenant is salvation; that is therefore the gift of God now in prospect, with its associated forgiveness of sins.

6:12 It makes an interesting study to analyze the areas of Paul's writing where he makes most intense use of the title "Lord" for Jesus. One such passage is in 1 Cor. 6:12- 7:40, where Paul addresses issues relating to sexual self-control. Here the density of usage of the title "Lord" is higher than anywhere else in his writings. And he wasn't merely playing with words- the idea clearly is that the Lordship of Jesus is to have a gripping practical effect upon our lives.

6:13 The message and demand of Christ in moral terms would have stood out starkly and attractively, despite all the first century objections to Christianity; and so it should be with us, living in identical circumstances. In the Graeco-Roman world, sexual immorality was just the done thing. The feeling was that the body is essentially evil, therefore what was done with the body wasn't that great a deal. The call of the Gospel was that the body is for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13)- something totally unheard of. And Paul places sexual sins at the beginning of his list of works of the flesh in Gal. 5, labouing the point to the Corinthians that sin involving the body was in fact especially bad. This was radical stuff in a culture where prostitution and sexual immorality were seen as an almost necessary part of religion. Yet the Christian teaching of chastity was actually attractive to people precisely because of its radical difference. And yet we can be sure that this was also a barrier to the general mass of humanity at the time. This is just one of many examples where Christianity consciously broke through deeply held boundaries and worldviews. The self-consciousness of how the Gospel did this was bound to make it obnoxious to the majority.

It seems that there were some in the first century who reasoned: "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats", implying that satisfying our sexual needs was just the same as satisfying our physical hunger. Hence Paul's response: "[No...] the body is not for fornication" (1 Cor. 6:13).

6:14 Therefore, Paul says, smashing through all Corinth's rationalizations of their sin, "know ye not" (isn't it obvious to you?) that we should not become one body with a prostitute (1 Cor. 6:15). This isn't just because *we* belong to the body of Christ and manifest Him; it is also because we are representative of us all who are in that body, and we wouldn't wish to bring His body, i.e. all the other believers, into such an inappropriate position. What you do, we all do. And the Lord Jesus has delegated His reputation in the eyes of this world to us, who are His body to them. The wonder of being baptized into His Name, entering the body of Christ (1 Cor. 6:14 matches our resurrection with that of the Lord) means that like our early brethren, we will rejoice to suffer shame for the sake of carrying that Name (Mt. 10:24,25). It will be "enough" for us that we know something of our Lord's sufferings. The more we reflectively read the Gospels, the more we will know the nature and extent of His sufferings, and the more we will see in our own something of His.

Pause for a moment to reflect that the Lord's resurrection is a pattern for our own. This is the whole meaning of baptism. "God has both raised the Lord and will raise us up through his power" (1 Cor. 6:13,14). Yet there were evident continuities between the Jesus who lived mortal life, and the Jesus who rose again. His mannerisms, body language, turns of phrase, were so human- even after His resurrection. And so who we are now, as persons, is who we will eternally be. Because of the

resurrection, our personalities in the sum of all their relationships and nuances, *have an eternal future*. But from whence do we acquire those nuances, body languages, etc? They arise partly from our parents, from our inter-relations with others etc; we are the sum of our relationships. And this is in fact a tremendous encouragement to us in our efforts for others; for the result of our parenting, our patient effort and grace towards others, will have an eternal effect upon others. Who we help them become is, in part, who they will eternally be. Job reflected that if a tree is cut down, it sprouts (Heb. *yaliph*) again as the same tree; and he believed that after his death he would likewise sprout again (*yaliph*) at the resurrection (Job 14:7-9,14,15). There will be a continuity between who we were in mortal life, and who we will eternally be- just as there is between the pruned tree and the new tree which grows again out of its stump.

Because He rose, *therefore* we stop committing sin (1 Cor. 6:14). We can't willfully sin if we believe in the forgiveness His resurrection has enabled. Men should repent not only because judgment day is coming, but because God has commended repentance to us, He has offered / inspired faith in His forgiveness *by the resurrection of Christ* (Acts 17:30,31 AV mg.). The empty tomb and all the Lord's glorification means for us should therefore inspire personal repentance; as well as of itself being an imperative to go and share this good news with a sinful world, appealing for them to repent and be baptized so that they too might share in the forgiveness enabled for them by the resurrection. Because the Lord was our representative, in His resurrection we see our own. We are therefore born again unto a living and abounding hope, by our identification with the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3). The Ethiopian eunuch read of his representative Saviour as also being childless, and being as he was, in the midst of a wilderness; and realizing this, he desired to be baptized into Him. Grasping the representational nature of the Lord's death inspires response in baptism, and yet the motivational power of this fact continues afterwards.

6:15 Paul wrote to his wayward Corinthians that he did not seek to shame them (1 Cor. 4:14); and yet he writes in other places to them "in order to shame them" (1 Cor. 6:15; 15:34). The sinner needs to be allowed to feel the shame of their sin, they need to be ashamed of it, and yet not in a harmful way; they need to realize that we are not seeking to shame them, although we recognize and realize their shame.

6:16 The act of intercourse makes husband and wife "one flesh". In the same way as there is "one body... one flesh" at this point, so "he that is joined unto the Lord is one *spirit*" (1 Cor. 6:16,17). Highlight, or underline, those phrases "one body" and "one flesh" in v.16, and also "one spirit" in v.17. Don't miss the point. We must "stand fast in *one spirit*, with one mind striving together..." (Phil. 1:27). We have seen that we are to be one spirit with the Lord, as a man is one body and spirit with his wife (1 Cor. 6:16,17). But that same intense union is to be seen within the ecclesia

6:17- see on Acts 18:18.

We become one spirit with the Lord Jesus by baptism (1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13); thus what we feel deep inside us in our spirit, in the spirit-man created within us, is automatically, instantly the feeling of the Lord Jesus. And because He is one with the Father in Spirit, He can therefore relay our spirit to Him. Rom. 8 is teaching that this is really what prayer is all about, and what we request verbally, not knowing what to pray for as we ought, is not really the essence of prayer.

6:19 To willingly describe oneself as a slave of Christ was totally against the grain of first century social norms- for to be a slave in any form took away a person's credibility and value. And yet Paul especially in the context of describing his witness, speaks of himself as a slave of Jesus. He urges the converts to see themselves as "not your own" because they have been bought as slaves by the blood of the cross (1 Cor. 6:19,20). People were trained to take their place amongst fixed categories within society- the whole idea of transformation, of taking ones' place amidst the ecclesia of Christ, of being a saint, a called-out one, of being made free from how others' see us... was all so radical that even those who converted to Christianity likely never grasped the full extent of the ideas.

Slaves in the first century were seen as mere bodies owned by their masters or mistresses. Hence Rev. 18:13 describes slaves as *somata*, bodies. They were seen as both the economic and sexual property of those who owned them. It seems Paul had this in mind when he spoke of how we have one master, Christ, and our bodies are indeed not our own- but they are His, to be used according to His wishes. For many slaves, this would've meant running the risk of death or flogging. And yet despite this radical demand, Christianity spread rapidly amongst the huge slave population of the first century world.

The importance (the *eternal* importance) which attaches to our attitude to materialism is certainly stressed. All that we have is not our own. It's not '*my* money', it's not '*your* car', it's not even '*my* toe' which *you* accidentally trod on. Yet we all cling on to what little we have; we get offended and upset if we 'lose' it, or if we feel it is demanded of us. But not only is our material possession not 'ours'; "*ye* are not *your* own. For ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19,20). This is said in the context of warning against abuse of our sexuality; it's not *our* body, so follow God's teaching concerning it. We ourselves, the very essential me, and you, have been bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus. If I don't own even myself, I certainly don't own anything material. *Now*, I am not my own. I am a slave, bought by the Lord Jesus. The fact He is Lord *of all* means He is owner of absolutely everything to do with us (Acts 10:36). At the judgment, this fact will be brought home. The Lord will ask for "my money... mine own"; we will be asked what we have done with our Lord's money (Mt. 20:15; 25:27). All we have is God's; it is not our own. Therefore if we hold back in our giving, we are *robbing God*. Israel thought it was absurd to put it like this: But yes, God insisted through Malachi (3:8-12), you are *robbing me* if you don't give back, or even if you don't give your heart to Him in faith. *And will a man rob God?* Will a man...? We must give God what has His image stamped on it: and we, our bodies, are made in His image (Mt. 22:21); therefore we have a duty to give ourselves to Him. We are not our own: how much less is 'our' money or time our own! Like David, we need to realize now, *in this life*, before the judgment, that all our giving is only a giving back to God of what we have been given by Him: "Of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron. 19:14). The danger of materialism is the assumption that we are ultimate owners of what we 'have'. See on Lk. 16:12.

6:20- see on Mt. 13:46.

7:1

The Bible which we have bears the marks of the fact that it was written for a primary readership (as well as for us), and the language used is proof of that. Take a read through 1 Corinthians 7 to see what I mean. It is clear that Paul is answering some highly specific questions which the Corinthian believers had written to him. He begins his paragraphs: "*Now concerning* the things whereof ye wrote unto me... *now concerning* virgins... *now as touching* things offered unto idols..." (1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1). We can almost imagine him sitting there with their letter in front of him, answering the questions point by point. But we don't know what their questions were, and this fact makes the interpretation of Paul's words here difficult; although of course the study of them is beneficial to us. The fact is, some parts of the Bible which we have were written for its primary readership, and the language used reflects this (Dt. 3:9,11).

Singleness In 1 Corinthians 7: Some Suggestions

I have to say in preface to this section that what follows is how I understand this passage in all intellectual and expository honesty. I as a married man can make no pretension to being able to live up to the high standard which Paul seems to be suggesting. As with much in this commentary, I offer the following exposition more to stimulate Bible-minded and prayerful meditation, rather than as a prescriptive statement of how a believer must live.

The power of Paul's teaching about singleness is backed up by his personal situation. As a member of the Council who condemned Stephen, he would have had to be married. An unmarried Orthodox Jew would have been a contradiction in terms at that time. And yet he is evidently single in his Christian ministry. It seems fairly certain that his wife either died or left him at the time of his conversion, probably taking the children with her. If this is so, it gives extra poignancy to his comment that he had suffered the loss of all things for the sake of his conversion (Phil. 3:8). The chances are that he thought and wrote that with a difficult glance back to that Jerusalem girl, the toddlers he'd never seen again, the life and infinite possibilities of what might have been... And it gives another angle on his description of his converts as his children.

The Corinthians had written letters to Paul asking about questions such as singleness. His reply, in 1 Corinthians 7, is as relevant to us as any of his letters to any other ecclesia. It's true that he says that his advice is prompted by "the present distress" and the fact that "the time is short", reference to the 'last days' in the run up to AD70. We have shown above that our last days are the real, major fulfilment of the "distress" prophesied in Lk. 21, and that for those living just prior to the second coming, "the time is short".

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence [in sexual matters]: and likewise also the wife...the wife hath not power of her own body... defraud ye not one the other [sexually], except it be with consent, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer: and come together again [sexually] that Satan tempt you not for your [abstinence]. But I speak this by permission, not of commandment" (1 Corinthians 7:1-6).

The second verse tends to be taken out of context, as if Paul is saying 'To stop you using the temple prostitutes, you really should get married, because our sexual urges are just so strong'. But that would be at variance with Paul's repeated emphasis that it is "better" to be single, and that single believers should try not to marry (1 Corinthians 7: 7,8,27-29, 32-35, 38-40). The context of those first six verses seems to be a question concerning whether it was good for a believing couple to permanently stop sexual relationships, especially if only one of them wanted to do so. Paul seems to be saying: 'Ideally, yes. But the chances are you won't keep it up, one of you will succumb to fornication. So every baptized husband should have (sexually) his wife. Neither of them should refuse sex to their partner, on whatever ground, spiritual or otherwise. However, in such cases why not agree to abstinence for limited periods?'. "I speak this by permission, not of commandment" must be linked with 1 Corinthians 7 v.12: "Now to the rest speak I, not the Lord (Jesus)". The implication is that verses 1-6 were not a repetition of Christ's teaching, neither were vv. 12 ff. But therefore we should read verses 7-11 as being 'the Lord Jesus speaking', i.e. Paul is repeating the spirit of Christ's teaching. The content of v. 7-11 concerns being single and not divorcing; it is significant that Paul says that what he said about marriage was him speaking "by permission", but what he says about singleness is from the Lord Jesus Himself. Once this is grasped, it becomes irrelevant to suggest that Paul is only telling some in Corinth to remain single at one point in time. He is repeating the Lord's timeless message:

"For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good that they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn [in lust]" (1 Corinthians 7 v. 7-9).

Adam alone was "not good". Adam and Eve together are described as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Paul seems to have this in mind when he says three times that "it is good" to be single (1 Corinthians 7:1,8,26). But what's the point of this paradox? Perhaps Paul's point is: 'In the old, natural creation, it wasn't good that a man should be alone. But now, in the new creation, it's good that a man does try to live a single life, because as Adam married Eve, so we are now married to Christ'. Or it may be that attention is being drawn to the fact that God's provision of Eve was the first of God's

countless concessions to human need. It was God's intention, ideally, that Adam be single, therefore he was potentially "good" in his single state. But he couldn't handle it, therefore God made him a partner. And therefore Paul says that to live the single life is "good". But in the same way as God made a concession to Adam, so He does to believers now; "but if they cannot contain, let them marry". Whether we agree this makes marriage a concession to human need or not, the fact is that surely single believers should at least *consider* the single life. Likewise Paul's invitation to follow his example of being single in order to devote himself to his Lord must be taken as seriously as his other invitations to follow his example (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:33; 11:1). He knew that he was (in the words of Robert Roberts) "a Christ-appointed model"; the record of his life is framed to give the picture of the ideal believer.

The triple description of the single life as "good" (1 Corinthians 7:1,8,26) uses a Greek word which means 'beautiful'. Yet many a lonely, longing sister might not see anything 'beautiful' about her singleness; neither would she go along with 1 Corinthians 7:34, which says that the unmarried woman has the advantage that she can single-mindedly give herself to the things of the Lord Jesus. It may seem to her that she would serve the Lord much better if she were married. And probably so. This raises the fundamental point that by "the unmarried" Paul doesn't mean 'the single ones in the ecclesia'. He is referring to those who had consciously decided to be single, and to channel their emotional energies into the Lord Jesus. Likewise "the widows" doesn't mean 'all those sisters in the ecclesias who have lost husbands'. It surely means those widows who had devoted themselves to the Lord Jesus rather than seeking another partner, after the pattern of widows devoting themselves to the temple (cp. Lk. 2:37). The fact he recommends some younger widows to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14) is proof enough that "widows" doesn't mean 'all widows'. It may be that single and widowed brethren and sisters made open statements of their decision to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus. 1 Tim. 5:9 suggests there was a specific "number" of widows in the Ephesus ecclesia who were financially supported by the ecclesia. This, then, is the beginning of the answer to the dilemma we are in: to devote ourselves to the Lord Jesus, and so become "unmarried" in the sense Paul uses the idea in 1 Corinthians 7.

"The gifts and calling of God..."

This particular sub-section I find very difficult to both understand and write about. Paul seems to be setting a standard which for me personally seems too high. But again, in all honesty, one has no right to interpret Scripture according to one's own level of comfortable spirituality. I openly admit that I find the standard Paul sets almost discouraging. I would rather understand it in another way, but in all honesty I cannot. So I resign myself to salvation by grace, and doing the best I can in response to that grace.

"But every man hath his proper (Gk. *idios*, his very personal) gift of God..." is often used as the get-out by many eager to justify marriage. They read it as if it means 'Well, if this is what you want, OK, but if you're cut out for the single life, well OK'. But again, this would be at variance with Paul's statement that "it is good" for all single believers to remain as himself, and that they should only marry if they can't contain. Remember that Paul repeatedly urges that the single life "is better". This would be irrelevant if somehow we are each predestined to be either single or married. There is an element of choice implied throughout 1 Corinthians 7. This cannot be reconciled with the idea that God has given singleness to some people, as a kind of gift of spiritual strength regardless of their own effort.

But what does it mean, to have our own personal gift from God which affects whether we are married or single? It must be connected with v.17, which is in the context of remaining in the marital position we were in at conversion: "As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk". The gifts are distributed at our calling. The ideas are again linked in Rom. 11:29: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance". This idea of us each being given a gift at the time of our conversion goes back to the parable of Lk. 19:13, where each of us,

Christ's servants, are given a gift to work with. The goods of the Father are divided between the sons, for them to use as they think best (Lk. 15:12). "The Kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who *called* his own servants, and *delivered* unto them his goods" (Mt. 25:14). Note how the *calling* of the servants and the giving them the gifts / goods are connected (1). The idea of called servants is alluded to in 1 Corinthians 7:22. We have each been given "gifts" at our conversion. Our 'calling' is related to our situation at the time of our conversion. There is a parallel between God distributing gifts to each of us, and Him calling us (1 Corinthians 7:17). This is to be expected from the allusion back to the parables; the gifts are given to each of us at our conversion or 'calling'.

"Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" is in the context of answering questions about whether a believing couple should abstain from sexual relations and effectively live the single life. Paul is saying 'If at your conversion / calling you were single, then you should continue to be single. But if you were married, you should continue a normal married life, including sexual relations. God knows what He is doing. If He had intended you to be single, He would have called you as single'. And the context of 7:17,19 is similar; the question was concerning whether someone who was called to the Truth married to an unbeliever should leave them. The answer was 'No, if it's possible to live reasonably with them'. The reason was because: "As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk... let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called". In other words: 'If you were called in this position, well this is what the Lord gave you, marriage to an unbeliever was the gift, the talent, he gave you to work with; so better stay with the unbeliever and try to convert him. Then you will have some more talents to show to your Lord when he returns'. Our marital status at the time of conversion is being spoken of as our calling, as what we were given, one of the talents given to us, in the language of the parable. This thought alone should make whatever situation we are in seem less of a burden; it's part of the gifts, the talents, we were given at baptism. It's for us to work with it. And the same applies, Paul reasons, if you were called to the Truth as a slave. Don't fret about it, it's one of those precious talents of the parable; although naturally in that context, "if thou mayest be made free, *use it*" (7:21)- note the allusion to *using* the talents in the parable.

The idea of abiding in the same calling in which we were called is a major theme in 1 Corinthians 7 (vv. 7, 17-20, 24,27). Paul ordained this to be accepted in all ecclesias (1 Corinthians 7:17). Yet if we are honest, this is something we have completely overlooked as a community. Don't forget that Paul isn't saying 'If you're called single, well you shouldn't get married'. He's saying 'If you're called single, then it seems God intends you to give your life to the Lord, dedicate yourself to Him. Singleness is one of the talents you've been given; so use it as God intended. But I'm not insisting on this'.

Eunuchs For The Kingdom

We have made the point that Paul's teaching concerning singleness here is repeating that of the Lord. But where did Christ specifically speak about singleness? Surely it was when He spoke about men making themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom's sake (Mt. 19:12). The surrounding verses concerning divorce are alluded to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10,11. The disciples' comment "It is not good (for single people) to marry" is picked up by Paul when he says it is "good" to be single unto the Lord. The Lord's response to "It is not good to marry" was to say that yes they were right, His single converts were intended to be eunuchs for the sake of the Gospel they had believed, but the world couldn't understand what He was saying. "All men cannot receive this saying, saving they to whom it is given" shouldn't be read as meaning that not all believers can accept singleness, only those who God has strengthened. It should be connected with Mt. 13:11: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them (the world) it is not given". The believers have been *given* the Gospel of the Kingdom (Jn. 17:8,14), the grace (gift) of God had been given to the Corinthians in the form of the Gospel, "the testimony of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:4,6). So "they

to whom it is given" are all the believers; the world can't understand Christ's teaching here, but they (us) to whom it is given, will receive it. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" hardly sounds like Christ saying that if His followers wanted to be serious about what He was saying, they were welcome, but if not, not to worry. It is parallel to "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (e.g. Mt. 11:15; 13:9,43). This is hardly giving His followers the option to take Him seriously or not. Those who heard were His disciples (Mk. 4:24); those who didn't hear were the outside world. "There be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of heaven's sake" doesn't sound like Christ was referring to OT examples; "there *be* eunuchs...". He was commenting on the statement that because of the likelihood that marriage wouldn't work, it was better not to marry. He is effectively saying: the world can't understand this, but you can: those who have heard the Gospel of the Kingdom and respond to it will be willing to make themselves eunuchs, i.e. not to marry. Paul is alluding to this, although he makes a concession, in saying that although this is the "commandment of the Lord" Jesus, he had permission to allow single converts to marry.

This is more radical for us, probably, than it was for the first century church. As we have said, people married young, often for reasons other than love, and there were very few single marriageable people. Once a man or woman was an adult, they got married; hence the lack of words to differentiate a man from a husband; every man was married. The majority of converts in the early church were adults, rather than children of believers. The majority of our early brethren were therefore married.

But Today...

But today things are quite different. The majority of our converts are called single. We have shown earlier that single people have a huge drive latent within them, which simply has to find expression. I believe the interpretation offered above is correct. It is God's intention that those converted single make a special commitment to devote themselves to the Lord. Therefore it was potentially possible that a huge amount could have been achieved, both in Biblical research and preaching, by the many single converts produced by the many converts from Christian families. But it seems we've missed our way here. We failed to read Mt. 19 and 1 Corinthians 7 correctly. And we pushed our single converts into family life without trying to fan their flame into yet wider and greater heights of devotion. And perhaps now the Lord is pushing us, through the increasing failure (relatively) of Christian family life, to re-think all this. If only a handful of single converts could seriously accept all this, the energy that would be unleashed into our preaching would be phenomenal. We would turn the world upside down by our preaching, as the early church did (on the admission of their bitter enemies). We would push back the frontiers of our Bible research. How many *more* things have we been blind to down the years, which are just waiting for some serious student to discover, uninhibited by family ties, able to give him (or her)self without distraction to deep study?

The context in 1 Corinthians 7 v.7-9 is of discussing the question of whether married believers should abstain from sexual relations. Paul is saying 'No, because you should remain in the position you were in when you were called'. He then seems to add a parenthesis in v. 8,9: "I say therefore (i.e. I will therefore later be telling) the unmarried and widows" that it is better to remain single, because of this same reason- they too should stay in the marital position they were in when they were called. This explains why when Paul starts to talk about virgins, he writes as if he is addressing the case of single converts for the first time.

"Now concerning virgins [i.e. single converts]... I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress... it is good for a man so to be... art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you" (1 Corinthians 7 v.25-28)

"Such shall have trouble in the flesh" is proof enough that if single converts get married, married life won't be a bed of roses. They were called single because that was how ideally they can serve

God. It was His plan that they should take the special step of devotion to the Lord. If we go against God's plan because we seek an easier way, He allows this; but we will have trouble in the flesh. This is a principle true not only of marriage. It may be that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7) was a "trouble in the flesh" as a result of realizing what God wanted through special revelations, but failing to fully do it.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they that have wives be as though they have none [alluding to Abraham and Isaac in time of persecution]; and they that weep [i.e. lamenting their singleness], as though they wept not; and they that rejoice [at finding a partner] as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy [paying the dowry], as though they possessed not; and they that use this world / age / present time [this is what making use of the concession for single believers to marry in the last days is] as not abusing it [the concession re. marriage]... I would have you without carefulness [alluding to the Lord's commands not to take 'care' about the things of this life; 'I want you to be obedient to the spirit of the sermon on the mount']. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord [not every single brother does this; this proves again that the "unmarried" refer to those who have consciously chosen to devote themselves to the Lord]... there is a difference also between a wife and a virgin ["difference" is the same word translated "distributed" in v.17; at the time of their calling, God gives the gift/ talent of being married to some of His daughters, and the gift of singleness to others]... she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband [this sounds as if Paul had in mind those whose 'distribution' at conversion had been to be married to an unbeliever in the world]. And this I speak for your profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely [Gk. 'beautiful'- the beauty of a life devoted to the Lord], and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction" (1 Corinthians 7 v. 29-35).

Attending upon (Gk. 'being a servant at table of') the Lord Jesus brings to mind Martha. Caring for the things that belong to the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 7:32) alludes to Mary. And "without distraction" uses a word which occurs elsewhere only in Lk. 10:40, concerning how Martha was "cumbered" with her serving. The point of all this is to show that the married believer will tend towards the Martha position, which was a position rebuked by the Lord, in favour of that of Mary. Paul is putting before single believers the real possibility of serving the Lord practically, like Martha, but with the undistracted devotion of Mary. The fact some sisters are called to this single life indicates that because they have the physical anatomy necessary to produce children doesn't necessarily mean that this is therefore God's intention for them. All too often one hears it said that we are built to have sex and procreate, and therefore God must therefore intend marriage. But not so in every case, says the Spirit in Paul!

"Without distraction"

There is a repeated theme throughout this discourse that the life of devoted singleness to the Lord is "happier", "better", more 'profitable' and 'beautiful' than the married life, and that Paul's enthusiasm for this is not a snare; trying to live this kind of life isn't a trap that will strangle you. These descriptions will not be found true by anyone who half-heartedly thinks 'Well, I'll keep single and be quite enthusiastic about the Truth, but as and when a likely candidate comes along, well...' - not that I would (indeed, I *couldn't*!) despise any who think like this. But what Paul is speaking about is a single convert who accepts their singleness is a talent to be worked with, not handed back to the Lord in exchange for another one (i.e. marriage). Having made this recognition, they no longer care for the things of the world, and devote themselves to pleasing Christ. There is, Paul is saying, a freedom in this level of commitment. We have seen that Paul's teaching concerning singleness is alluding to Christ's comment that those who were in a position to marry would be willing to make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom. The idea of self-castration, obviously intended to be taken figuratively by the Lord, was that once the decision was taken, there was no desire to go back. There wasn't a problem with expressing sexual urges. Paul describes it as "standing steadfast

in (the) heart, having no necessity, but having power over his own will, and hath so *decreed* in his heart" (1 Corinthians 7:37). The Greek for "decreed" is normally translated to judge, to divide between, as if the two options (marriage and deliberate singleness) have been weighed up, and a choice consciously made. Again, those who live the single life in the hope that one day they'll marry will not experience the blessings of the "unmarried" state which Paul speaks of. Sadly, many go through much agony because of being in this interim state between singleness and marriage. If one makes a judgment one way or the other, at least some of the agony is taken away; although if we were called single, and have followed the argument so far, the choice ought to be clear.

We've seen above that there has to be expression of sexual energy. Paul seems to be saying that this can be dissipated in the consciously chosen life of devotion to the Lord. We are pushing out into uncharted waters here. The option of being a eunuch for the Kingdom offers, according to Paul, a beauty, a personal profit, a great happiness, a lack of anxious care about the things of this life. *And no-one can deny this unless they have tried it!* Paul is our great example in all this, one who finished his course with joy, who could say with confidence that he had counted all as dung so that he might win Christ his Lord.

A Little Of Both...?

But there were those who 'became eunuchs', who took this decision in their hearts, who still found that they needed support from the opposite sex. 1 Corinthians 7:36-38 are hard to interpret, but my suggestion is that they refer to some brethren who had become "eunuchs" but had what we might call girlfriends within the ecclesia, although they did not have intercourse with them:

"If any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely [lit. not beautifully, s.w. v.35 concerning the comely beauty of the devoted single life; it the beauty of the devoted single life is marred by your relationship with your girlfriend..] toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age and so require, let him do what he will... let them marry [if he feels bad about the fact that he has kept her waiting so long that now she is too old to get married to anyone else, remembering that women normally got married very young, then the brother should marry her]. Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin [the Greek suggests keeping a person in a state, rather than the brother keeping his own virginity], doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better".

Notice that the emphasis is on the brother; the decision to marry or not was totally his. God speaks from the perspective of the day- the woman had no say. The man is commended, it seems, if he suppressed his own 'soft' feelings for the sister concerned, and decided to keep on with his devotion to the Lord. "Having no *necessity*" uses the same word as in 1 Corinthians 7:26 concerning the present "distress" of the last days (Lk. 21:23). There seems to be a word play here: 'You may feel a *necessity* to marry, but in the *necessity* of the last days it's almost a *necessity* not to marry'. It seems that the brethren in question had had long term relationships with these sisters but without intercourse, and, predictably, pressures were arising- not least from the brother feeling that he had rather 'used' the sister concerned. It may be that the same scenario is implied in 1 Corinthians 7:9: "If they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn". This suggests that the people concerned had partners in mind, and they were trying to be eunuchs for the Kingdom whilst also having a close relationship with the opposite sex. Paul doesn't condemn this out of hand, but says that it's better to remain pledged to the single life, and only change if your feelings towards your 'friend' get so out of hand it will lead you into sin.

It may be that Timothy was another brother who remained single for the sake of the Gospel, but found it hard to carry it through. Paul exhorts him to flee the (sexual) lusts of youth (2 Tim. 2:22), even in middle age; and in the same context he warns him to endure hardship so that he will please Christ (2 Tim. 2:4). The only other time this idea of pleasing Christ occurs is in 1 Corinthians 7:32,

where the eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom is said to concentrate on pleasing Christ. The Soncino Commentary on Ex. 33:11 likewise suggests that Joshua being described as a "young man" devoted to the service of the tabernacle implies in Hebrew that he was an unmarried man, devoted to the things of the Kingdom. However, it would seem that later he married. We will see that Hezekiah was another in this category.

Great Expectations

There is evidence that "the single life was highly honoured and respected in the early church, sometimes even going beyond the teaching of Paul" (2). Yet for us, marriage is given more respect than singleness. The single believer is seen as somehow incomplete; there is a sense that the married home owner in a stable job is somehow spiritually strong too. Of course, there are many unstable single believers; but let's not judge the status of singleness by them. The experience of the next generation may well shatter the perception that marriage is obviously the best way for any single believer, whether or not the Biblical exposition above is accepted. I am suggesting that the Lord and Paul are asking a very high level of commitment from us. It's so high that it seems strange to us. The reason, I suggest, is that 21st Century Christianity and first century Christianity are very different- in terms of commitment, not doctrine. Consider the sort of thing that was accepted as common-place in the early church, and yet which today would be frowned upon as spiritual fanaticism:

- Converts joyfully selling all their lands and property, pooling the money, and dividing it among the poorer members. Yet we can scarcely raise the money to pay for poorer brethren to attend a Bible School.
- Husbands and wives regularly abstaining from sex so they could the more intensely pray and fast for a period of several days. Surveys of Christian prayer habits reveal that on average we spend around 10 minutes / day praying. And scarcely any fast.
- Elders who spent so much time in prayer that they had to ask others to do some practical work for them so they could continue to give the same amount of time to prayer (Acts 6:2-4).
- Young brethren, "the messenger of the churches", who spent their lives full time running errands in dangerous situations throughout the known world.
- Over zealous brethren (in Thessalonica) who packed up their jobs because they were so sure the second coming was imminent.
- The expectation that the Gospel of Mark (at least) was to be memorized by all converts. Most Christians can scarcely quote more than 50 Bible verses- after generations of Bible study in our community.
- The assumption that all believers would make converts (1 Cor. 3:10-15).
- Widows were expected to remain single; if they remarried, this was acceptable (1 Cor. 7:39,40), but Paul describes it as 'waxing wanton against Christ' (1 Tim. 5:11) because it was a stepping down from the higher standard, which he defines as remaining single (1 Corinthians 7:40). This seems a harsh attitude to us. But this is what the Spirit taught.
- Believers were regularly persecuted, tortured, imprisoned and forced to migrate long distances unless they made what some today would consider only a tokenistic denial of their faith.

We have somehow hived off the first century church in our mind, as if to say to ourselves: 'Well, that was them, but we're in a totally different spiritual environment'. The same mind-set occurs when we consider the zeal of earlier believers. There is no doubt that the more we read the New Testament, the more we will see that the level of commitment required was high indeed. The fact many failed to rise up to it doesn't affect this. That single converts were expected to remain single would not therefore have appeared so strange, once the spiritual context of the New Testament church is perceived.

Notes

(1) The first century church saw the manifestation of this in terms of the Spirit gifts being given (cp. 1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 4:16; 1 Pet. 4:10); but there is a non-miraculous application too, now that the gifts have been withdrawn.

(2) A. Cornes, *Divorce And Remarriage* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), pp. 119, 125, 126.

7:5- see on Mt. 23:25; Rom. 5:12.

Give yourselves to prayer and fasting with the passion and intensity required to perform a miracle (Mt. 17:21 = 1 Cor. 7:5). Paul assumes that prayer will be such a major component in the lives of married believers that they may well choose to temporarily abstain from sexual relationships in order to find a greater intensity in prayer (1 Cor. 7:5). This speaks of quite some emphasis on prayer; not just a few minutes at the end of each day saying often the same words.

7:9 There is a purposeful ambiguity in Paul's comment that it is better to marry than to burn due to unlawful passions (1 Cor. 7:9). Is he referring to the burning 'fire' of judgment (e.g. Mt. 13:40), or of burning in lust (cp. Rom. 1:27)? Surely he intends reference to both, in that burning in lust is effectively condemning yourself, kindling the fire of condemnation yourself. David burnt in lust, and was then smitten with a disease which he describes as his loins being filled with burning (Ps. 38:7 RV). Or consider the Jonah type. He was disobedient and left the presence of the Lord of his own volition, and was therefore cast forth from the ship to the dark waters- in this little type of judgment, he condemned himself. The rejected are told to depart, and yet in another sense they are cast away (Mt. 25:30,41).

7:10- see on 1 Cor. 9:14; 15:10.

Gal. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 15:10 show Paul using the phrase "yet not I but..." to differentiate between his natural and spiritual self. Perhaps he does the same in the only other occurrence of the phrase, in 1 Cor 7:10: "And unto the married I command, *yet not I* [the natural Paul], but the Lord [the man Christ Jesus in the spiritual Paul], Let not the wife depart from her husband". See on Acts 23:6.

7:11 Although God joins together man and wife, He allows His work to be undone in that He concedes to separation, even when there has been no adultery (1 Cor. 7:11). Prov. 21:9; 25:24 almost seem to encourage it, by saying that it is better for a spiritual man to dwell in a corner of the housetop than to share a house in common (LKK *koinos*) with his contentious wife. The same word occurs in Mal. 2:14 LXX in describing a man's wife as his "companion" (*koinonos*).

Throughout the Spirit's teaching concerning marriage in 1 Cor. 7, there is constantly this feature of setting an ideal standard, but accepting a lower one. This is demonstrated by the several occurrences of the word "But..." in the passage:

- It is better not to marry: "*But and if* thou marry, thou hast not sinned" (v.28).
- The same "but and if" occurs in vv. 10,11: "Let not the wife depart from her husband: *but and if* she depart...". Separation is, therefore, tolerated by God as a concession to human weakness, even though it is a way of life which inevitably involves an ongoing breach of commandments.
- It is better for widows not to remarry; but if they do, this is acceptable (1 Cor. 7:39,40; 1 Tim. 5:11)
- This same 'two standards' principle is seen elsewhere within 1 Cor. Meat offered to idols was just ordinary meat, but Paul, like God, makes concessions for those with a weak conscience concerning this (1 Cor. 8). See on 1 Cor. 9:12; 14:28; 12:31.

7:12 There are several indications that Paul expected his readers to understand that the majority of what he was saying was basically a reflection of the words of the Lord Jesus. He tells Corinth that "to the rest speak I, not the Lord" Jesus (1 Cor. 7:12). He hasn't earlier said: Now I'm going to remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus'. He takes it as understood that as usual, his reasoning

has been a reflection of the words of Jesus (in the context, 1 Cor. 7:11 = Mt. 5:32; Mk. 10:9; "put asunder" is s.w. "depart"). But now he says that he is going to go beyond Christ's words (as in 1 Cor. 7:25). This doesn't mean he wasn't inspired; it means that he is drawing their attention to the fact that he is doing something unusual for him, i.e. to give teaching which is not an allusion or repetition of that of the Lord Jesus. My point is that the implication of this is that he expected his readers to take as read that he normally was only repeating the thinking of Christ. Likewise in 2 Cor. 11:17: "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord" (i.e. as I normally would). Every few verses, even according to our limited analysis, he was making a noticeable allusion to the Gospels. When he says that he is speaking to the Thessalonians "by (in) the word of the Lord" Jesus (1 Thess. 4:15), this doesn't mean that what he was about to say was more inspired than anything else. What he meant was that he was specifically repeating the teaching of Christ (which he does through a series of extended allusions to Mt. 24 and 25).

7:13 The stress of Christianity on *individual* conversion and responsibility meant that as Jesus had predicted, families were divided when one accepted Him. 1 Cor. 7 shows that there were times when a wife accepted Christianity but her husband didn't. Yet society expected her to treat him as her head in all religious matters. Plutarch taught that "it is becoming for a wife to worship and know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tightly upon all queer rituals and superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour". These comments were very relevant to the many sisters who must have discreetly broken bread alone or in small groups. One can imagine all the social and domestic conflicts that Christianity created. This is why the movement was so slandered.

7:14 Those who come to the Faith already married have their marriage "sanctified" by God- if God did not do this, their children would be "unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). The implication is that God does not see marriage in the world in the same way as He sees marriage between His children. The implication of 1 Cor. 7:14 seems to be that if a believer has a relationship with an unbeliever, the resulting children are "unclean", illegitimate, even if they are married in the eyes of the world. However, if the believer was married to the partner at the time of baptism, God sanctifies the relationship, and the children are therefore "holy". If this is correct interpretation, it follows that those who deny their covenant with God by marrying an unbeliever do not have a marriage which is "sanctified" by God

7:17 Understanding Corinth ecclesia as a series of house churches explains Paul's comment to the Corinthians that he ordained his guidelines to be practiced in all the ecclesias (1 Cor. 7:17)- i.e. the house churches that comprised the body of Christ in Corinth. He gives some guidelines for behaviour that appear to contradict each other until we perceive the difference between the commands to house groups, and commands about the 'gathering together' for special breaking of bread services. The role of women is a classic example. 1 Cor. 14:34 says that women should keep silent 'in ecclesia' [AV "churches" is a mistranslation]- i.e. a sister shouldn't teach at those special breaking of bread meetings when the house churches 'came together' (1 Cor. 11:17,18,20). And yet within the house groups, it's apparent from other New Testament accounts and from what Paul himself writes, that sisters did teach there (1 Cor. 11:5). Thus in the house church of Philip, there were four women who 'prophesied', i.e. spoke forth the word of God to others (Acts 21:8,9). This to me is the only way to make sense of Corinthians- otherwise Paul appears to be contradicting himself.

7:21 Whatever we do, doing all to the glory / praise of God, working for human masters as if we are serving the Lord Christ. But a word of caution must be sounded here. "If thou canst become free, use it rather" (1 Cor. 7:21 RV), Paul wrote to slaves. We are inevitably tied down with the things of this life; but if we can be made free, to serve God directly, as usefully as possible, then surely we should seek to do this. Take early retirement. You can chose to remain at work, and of course, you can glorify God. But you can devote your life and free time to the work of the Gospel, and bring

dozens to the knowledge of Christ who wouldn't otherwise have had it. I'd say, and I interpret Paul to say likewise: "If you may be made free, then use it rather".

Paul wrote that slaves should abide in the callings they had when called, and not unduly seek freedom. This has huge implications when we consider the plight of female slaves, amongst whom the Gospel spread so significantly in the first century. They were the sexual property of their owners, who would personally use them and sub-let them as he wished. This was all part and parcel of being a female slave. For those women / sisters, the moral demands of the New Testament were even harder to follow than they are now. Yet nowhere do we read of Paul insisting that those women refuse their 'duties'; he teaches that they should abide in that position, and try as best they can to live by Christian principles. That appears to me to be a concession to weakness and to the huge difficulty those women faced. If God has so repeatedly made concessions to human weakness, allowing us to live below the Biblical ideal of marriage, then we must in some way respond to this in our dealings with our brethren. Somehow we must do this without infringing the need to uphold the Truth of God's commandments.

7:21-23 We can imagine a group of believing women eagerly listening to Paul's latest letter being read out in the house church. They heard of how they had been bought with the price of Christ's blood, that now they were slaves of the Father and Son, that their bodies were truly not their own but *His*. And in 1 Cor. 7:21-23 they would've heard how Paul advised them not to be like other slaves, always dreaming of somehow getting free, but to be content with their situation in which they had been called, to live for the daily joy of being Christ's slave. They were no longer part of the 'household' of their master.

7:22 Although the majority of Corinth ecclesia were poor, there were still some in good standing enough to be invited out to banquets in the course of their business obligations (1 Cor. 8:10; 10:27). The slave at conversion becomes "the Lord's freedman" and "the free person Christ's slave" (1 Cor. 7:22). Thus this extraordinary unity between social classes was made possible through being "in Christ".

It is unfortunate that most English (and other) translations mask the real force of the Greek words translated 'servant'; for they really mean 'bond-slave', a slave totally owned by his master, totally obedient, totally dedicated to his service. This is the logic brought out in Rom. 6: that before baptism, we were slaves of sin and self. After baptism, we changed masters. We didn't become free, but we became slaves of the Lord Jesus. "He that is called, being free, is the Lord's servant / bond slave" (1 Cor. 7:22). We cannot serve two masters; we are solely His. We are not only slaves, we are slaves whom the Master has come to know as His friends (Jn. 15:15,20). It is a great NT theme that we are the bond slaves of the Lord Jesus.

7:23 Are we just caught up in our daily work, slave to the corporations who employ us? 1 Cor. 7:23 begs us not to become the slaves of men, because Christ bought us with His blood. Young people especially need to be influenced by this as they chose their career path and employers. Through the cross of Christ, the world is crucified to us (Gal. 6:14 RV).

7:25- see on 1 Cor. 7:11.

Paul frequently remembered that his own spiritual strength was not just of himself, but a result of God's mercy in magnifying his own efforts; he had "obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (1 Cor. 7:25); "as (i.e. because) we have received mercy, we (spiritually) faint not" (2 Cor. 4:1). Even in his decision to stay single, doubtless after enormous heartsearching, emotional tension and conscious bruising of his very soul, Paul recognized that to some degree the strength to do this was a spiritual gift from God: "I would that all men were even as I myself (single). But every man hath his proper *gift* of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7).

7:26 It's clear from 1 Cor. 7 that in the *very* last days, the believers will be "happier" if they remain single, because "the time is short" (1 Cor. 7:29). The problem is, deciding whether we are actually

in that very last period. There is good reason to think that in some ways we are; and yet there are also some prophecies which as I write these words just don't seem to have had the scale of fulfilment which their contexts suggest. "The time is short". This can't really be argued with. "It is good for the present *distress*" (1 Cor. 7:26) uses the same word as in Lk. 21:23 concerning the distress of the last days. Some of us have no hesitation in proclaiming that the time of "distress" of Lk. 21 is upon us. But if it is, then we need to adjust our marriage attitudes accordingly. The above statistical analysis seems proof enough that the last days are truly coming upon us; no longer is marriage and family life working as it once did.

7:29 The Olivet prophecy spoke of the time being shortened for the elect's sake. And it seems this happened- for 1 Cor. 7:29 RV says that "the time is shortened". Perhaps this is why it was intended that there be 40 years from AD33 [the crucifixion] to the destruction of the temple; but this period was "shortened" by at least 3 years "for the elect's sake". And the situation in the 1st century is evidently typical of ours today in these last days. They were to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath or in the Winter, i.e. that the abomination that made desolate would not be set up at those times (Mt. 24:20). Clearly prayer affected the exact chronology of events and thereby the fulfilment of prophecy.

In the context of writing about the approaching end of the age, Paul commented that because "the form of this world is passing away", therefore those who buy anything should "be as though they had no goods, and those who deal with this world as though they had no dealings with it" (1 Cor. 7:29). Of course, this was taught millennia ago by the Mosaic law of Jubilee- that whatever land you bought wasn't really yours, because the land is God's. And again, we are not to be "anxious", because "the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5). And there's nothing like managing our "wealth", however small it may be, to make us "anxious". Paul's not saying we shouldn't buy, sell or 'deal with this world'. He's saying we should do so *as if* we're not really doing so, as if this is all an act, a sleepwalk, something we do but our heart isn't in it. See on James 5:3.

7:30 We should consider what we buy as not really being possessed by us (1 Cor. 7:30). Paul practised what he preached: although he evidently had some financial resources (Acts 24:26), he acted and felt as if he possessed absolutely nothing (2 Cor. 6:10).

7:31- see on 1 Cor. 9:18.

7:32 Lk. 10:41 = 1 Cor. 7:32. Be aware that married life will tempt you to be more like Martha than Mary. And Mary was the more commendable.

He encourages unmarried women to stay single so that they can devote themselves to spiritual matters (1 Cor. 7:32,34). In the surrounding Jewish culture, the unmarried woman was seen as a reproach. In the local Greco-Roman culture, the unmarried woman would have been perceived as an immoral woman, or one morally disgraced. Yet Paul does not imply that once those cultural perceptions had changed, then his advice about choosing the single life should be followed. Regardless of the surrounding perceptions, Paul spoke forth the Spirit's guidance.

7:39 Paul's teaching that remarriage could only take place after the death of the first partner (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:1-8) actually elevated the status of women compared to what it was in the local culture. He can hardly be accused of being a woman hater, in the light of this; nor is he giving commandments regarding the place of women which only fitted in with the local culture. Immorality, particularly in terms of temple prostitution, was so widespread that it is hard for us to appreciate the radicalness of Paul's insistence on absolute faithfulness to one's partner.

The command for widows to marry "whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39) is alluding back to the command to Zelophehad's daughters to marry "whom they think best", but *only* "in" their tribe, otherwise they would lose the inheritance (Num. 36:6,7). The implication is that those who do

not marry "in the Lord" will likewise lose their promised inheritance. And this rather strange allusion indicates one more thing: the extent of the seriousness of marriage out of the Faith is only evident to those who search Scripture deeply. As man and woman within Israel were joint heirs of the inheritance, so man and wife are joint heirs of the inheritance of the Kingdom (1 Pet. 3:7).

8:1 Paul's whole position about meat offered to idols reflects the fact that he recognised that there would be some believers who still could not escape the sense that the idol is really something to be feared, that in some sense it is alive and accepting the sacrifice offered to it, even though the believer in the other half of his brain knew full well that idols are nothing and there is only one true God. We *all know this*, Paul reasons, and yet some still can't escape their sense that the idol is there, and that if they eat meat offered to it they are fellowshiping with it, even though it doesn't exist. Our tendency would be to be hard on such a person, insisting that they cannot worship the true God and yet also have this sense of the idol. And yet Paul knew that there is a dualism within each of us; we can still have a sense of the false even whilst we believe the true. One of the most spiritual and doctrinally conservative sisters I ever knew once admitted to me that for many years after her baptism, she had retained the belief that her unbelieving mother was in heaven as a departed soul, even though she knew and taught the very opposite. And yet the Lord is more gracious than many of us seem to be to this feature of our nature.

It is hard to piece together what was really going on in the politics of the early church, because Paul seems to have submitted to their wishes apart from where essential principle was concerned. Luke and Galatians 2 make the record sound so positive- as if the conference in Jerusalem solved all the problems, even though it is clear that it didn't, and the Gentile believers were still classed as second rate. Note too how Paul later wrote: "As touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (1 Cor. 8:1). This sounds like an allusion to the agreements hammered out at Jerusalem- 'we all know what was agreed', Paul seems to be saying. There was nothing wrong in itself with the compromises agreed. But it was love that edifies, not a legalistic use of those decrees as 'knowledge'. It all sounds as if there was joy at the conversion of the Gentiles, even though there was "much disputing" about it. And yet it is observable that the whole Acts record doesn't reflect the spirit of controversy and struggle against apostasy which the epistles so insistently reflect. Paul didn't protest being told not to teach Jews by his brethren- but he got on and did so.

8:2 "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Cor. 8:2) sounds like another of the allusions to Job in the New Testament- particularly once it is realized that 1 Corinthians has several other Job allusions.

8:3 As a caveat to our rightful emphasis upon the need to correctly know doctrine about God, let's remember 1 Cor. 8:2,3: "If one thinks he knows, he has not yet known anything as he ought to know; but if one loves God, one is known by Him". In other words, we will never know God to perfection in this life; but what we can be sure of and rejoice in is that *He knows us*. Paul almost implies that we can easily forget this wondrous fact, because of our obsession with wanting to fully know about *Him*.

8:4-6 The denarius of Tiberius which Jesus used bore the words: *Tiberius CAESAR DIVI AUGUSTI Filius AUGUSTUS Pontifex Maximus*. Caesar was to be seen as the Son of God. The Lord Jesus was the *only, and begotten* Son of God. The implication is that no other 'son of God' was *begotten* as Jesus was- He was the *real* Son of God, the one and only (Jn. 1:14,18; 3:16,18). Caesar was to be worshipped as God (see L.R. Taylor, *The Divinity Of The Roman Emperor*). Julius Caesar was known as Divus Julius after his death; indeed, many of the Caesars were held to have 'resurrected' to heaven and been granted Divine status. "To us [and this is the emphasis] there is only one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:4-6) takes on a vital radicality in the light of this. As does NT teaching about His resurrection and subsequent Divine glorification.

8:9 1 Cor. 8:9 is one of several passages which warn us not to make the weak to stumble. But none of those passages actually says that we can know *who* is weak. What they are saying is that in God's eyes, there are weak members amongst every group of believers, and therefore we should watch our behaviour, because it will have an effect upon whoever is weak. But this doesn't mean that *we* actually know who the weak ones are. Because we don't know who is especially weak we must always be careful in our behaviour, *whoever* we are with. Indeed, as we'll see, we have to adopt the perspective that in a sense we are *all* weak. To understand 1 Cor. 8:9, we must understand what it means to be weak. The Greek word translated "weak" here usually means one of two things: physical illness, or spiritual weakness. Sometimes these two senses are combined (e.g. when James speaks of praying for the "sick" brother, or when Jesus talks of how pleased he was that brethren had visited the "sick" brother in Mt. 25:36). Paul often uses the word in his letters to Corinth. He says that we are *all* weak because of our natures (1 Cor. 15:43), and that Christ died on account of the fact that we are weak (2 Cor. 13:4 Gk.). Because of this, Paul reasons, we're all weak, because Christ died for every one of us. He therefore says that to sin against a weak brother is to sin against Christ; because Christ has associated himself with our spiritual weakness, in order to save us from it (1 Cor. 8:12). Thus he says that when we visit a weak brother (spiritually? it's the same word), we visit *him*. He so closely associates himself with the weak brother. Christ on the cross carried the sins of "the weak" (i.e. all of us), and thereby left us an example of how we should behave towards the "weak". In this context, Paul says that we should likewise love our neighbour (in the ecclesia; Rom. 15:1-4). What he seems to be saying is that we should understand that we are *all* weak, and therefore try to help each other, in the same spirit as Christ died for the weakness of each of us. If we recognize that we are *all* weak, we'll avoid two common mistakes: 1) Thinking that some brethren aren't weak and should therefore be followed blindly; and 2) Thinking that some believers are "weak" whilst the rest of us are "strong". Paul didn't want the Corinth ecclesia to think he was wagging the finger at them and implying: 'You lot are so weak, but I'm strong'. Several times he speaks of his own weakness, and he glories in the fact that although he is so (spiritually) weak, God works through him so mightily; indeed, he comes to the conclusion that God's strength is perfectly expressed through his spiritual weaknesses (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5,9,10). He says that he preached to Corinth in the first place in (spiritual) "weakness" (1 Cor. 2:3)- because it seems that when he first got to Corinth, he wasn't spiritually strong enough to grasp the nettle of witnessing to the city as he should have done (Acts 18:9,10). Having admitted to Corinth that he himself was weak, he can say that whenever one of them is weak, he feels weak too; in other words he's saying that he can totally empathize (not just sympathize) with a weak brother's feelings (2 Cor. 11:29).

8:10- see on 1 Cor. 11:3.

Our example- and let's not forget, we all set an example of one sort or another- will either edify others towards righteousness, or edify [AV "embolden"] our weaker brother to sin (1 Cor. 8:1,10). We 'edify' others in only one of two directions; this is the point behind Paul using the same Greek word in both verses.

8:10- see on 1 Cor. 7:22.

8:12- see on 1 Cor. 8:9.

The idea of the materialistic steward of the house smiting the fellowservant (Mt. 24:49) is referred to by Paul (in the Greek text) in 1 Cor. 8:12, concerning *wounding* the conscience of weak brethren. Paul's vision of the latter day ecclesia was therefore that materialistic elders would act with no thought as to their effect on the consciences of the flock, and thereby many would stumble.

8:13 while the world standeth- Paul generally respected no man's person in standing up for what he believed was Biblical. But in the matter of meat he bent over backwards, despite arguing that Christ had freed us from such legal restraints, "while the (Jewish) world standeth"- i. e. until the Law,

which was intrinsically part of the Jewish world, was fully done away with in AD70. Col. 2:22 says that the using of the (Mosaic) laws "are to perish" - in the future, i. e. AD70.

He could have taken payment from his converts, in fact Christ had *ordained* that this was possible, but Paul rejected this (1 Cor. 9:4-16); likewise he chose to be a vegetarian for the sake of not offending others, although he himself knew that God had created animals to be eaten and enjoyed (1 Cor. 8:13). Although he himself chose the higher levels, it is a mark of his spirituality that he was able to tolerate others who took lower levels, and (especially in Corinthians) he even makes the offer of lower levels of attainment. He speaks as if he sometimes writes to his brethren in very human terms, because this is the only level they are yet up to (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:32 AVmg.). He addressed them as still on the level of milk, when they ought to have been on an altogether higher level for their time in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

9:5 It is perhaps significant, given the theme of 'following' in the records of Peter, that he became well known for 'leading about' his wife (1 Cor. 9:5), as if she followed him everywhere. Peter translated the principles of following Christ into domestic life. There was a time when he may well have 'forsaken' his wife in order to follow Christ (Mt. 19:27-29). But further down that path of following he came to see that as he was to follow his Lord to the end, so he was to be as the self-crucifying Christ to her, and lead her in her following of him that she might follow Christ.

9:9 the law- see on Dt. 25:4.

9:10 Study of the word isn't easy, and doesn't always yield immediate results. Paul likens it to the ox treading out the corn, tramping monotonously up and down (cp. in a concordance or between passages), only slowly producing the bread of life (1 Cor. 9:10 cp. 1 Tim. 5:18). We will not see flashing lights all the time, wonderful things don't just come jumping out of every page. To the onlooker upon our Bible study, the whole procedure can look boring and pointless. But what do we expect as mortals, seeking to understand the infinite God, searching the pages of His word to do so? Of course there will be some dead ends, whole passages will remain closed to us. But we are oxen, trampling out the corn. And slowly, it comes.

9:12 To 'hinder the Gospel' is the same as hindering the spiritual growth of others in 1 Cor. 9:12; "the Gospel" is put by a figure for 'the spirituality which the doctrines of the Gospel brings forth, so close is the link between the Gospel and the inculcation of spirituality. We must walk worthy of that pure doctrine, in the abstract sense of doctrine, which we have received (Eph. 4:4-6). The purpose of keeping our understanding of the basic principles clear is that this will lead to true love and faith (1 Tim. 1:3-5).

Paul says he could have asked Corinth ecclesia to support him financially, but he chose not to. Thus he chose the higher of two options. See on 1 Cor. 7:11.

9:13 The New Testament is very insistent that the true temple of God is the body of Christian believers (1 Cor. 9:13; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 10:21; 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 3:12; 11:1,2; 1 Tim.3:15). This string of passages is quite some emphasis. Yet Christ was the temple; he spoke of the temple of his body (Jn. 2:19-21; Rev. 21:22). For this reason, the Gospels seem to stress the connection between Christ and the temple (Mk.11:11,15,16,27; 12:35; 13:1,3; 14:49; Lk. 2:46; 21:38). Christ's body was the temple of God. By being in Christ, we too are the temple (1 Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:21), *our* body is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19).

1 Cor. 9:13 states that necessity or compulsion is laid upon us to preach the Gospel. This is the same word translated "compel" in Lk. 14:23. The compulsion is laid upon us by the tragedy of human rejection of the places Christ prepared for them, and the wonderful, so easy possibility to be there. Significantly, this same Greek word is used elsewhere about the 'necessities' which are part of our ministry of the Gospel (2 Cor. 6:4; 12:10). The urgency of our task will lead us into many an urgent situation, with all the compelling needs which accompany them.

9:14 Paul's almost rabbinic respect for every word of his Lord indicates how deeply he had them in his heart as the law of his life. He speaks of how "The Lord [Jesus] *commanded* that those who preach the Gospel should get their living by the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14 RSV). The Lord Jesus didn't command this in so many words- but it's the implication of His teaching in Lk. 9:1-5; 10:1-12, especially of Lk. 10:4 "The workman deserves his food / keep" (Gk.). But those words of the Lord to the disciples were understood by Paul as a *command*- so clearly did he appreciate that those men following Jesus around Galilee are really *us*, and every word of the Lord to them is in some form a command to us. Another example would be the way Paul states that the Lord 'commanded' that the wife is not to separate from her husband (1 Cor. 7:10). The Lord didn't actually state that in so many words- but He implied it quite clearly. And so that for Paul was a command. He didn't reduce the teachings of Jesus to a set of yes / no statements; rather he saw, as we should, even every *implication* of the words of Jesus as a command to us. You will notice that in both these examples from 1 Corinthians, Paul doesn't explicitly quote the Lord Jesus in the format in which we expect a citation- e.g. 'I'm saying this, because it is known and written that Jesus said, XYZ'. I submit that this wasn't simply because the Gospels weren't in wide circulation when Paul was writing. Rather I think that the indirectness of Paul's allusions and quotations from the words of Jesus reflect how his mind was *so* full of the Lord's words that he doesn't quote from them in a formal sense, as one usually would quote from literature or the known words of a respected person. Rather did Jesus so *live* within Paul's consciousness, His words were so widely and deeply within the texture of his thinking, that the allusions and quotations are made less self-consciously. 9:16,17- see on Acts 18:4,5.

Paul understood there to be a command from the Lord Jesus that those who preach the Gospel should be supported financially by their converts (1 Cor. 9:14 RSV). But Paul chose to disobey what he calls a 'command' from the Lord- because he figured that the purposes of the Gospel would be served better long term if he in his case didn't obey that command. Not only does this give an insight into the nature of a man's relationship with his Lord when he knows Christ well enough; but it indicates the huge priority placed by Paul upon the spreading of the Gospel. He would even relegate a 'command' from the Lord Jesus beneath the overall aim of spreading the Gospel. This is a line of reasoning which is of course dangerous for *us* to adopt; but it indicates the priority given to preaching. Actually one sees other examples of this in Paul- he observed Torah amongst the Jews, but broke it amongst the Gentiles; he thus relativized obedience to Divine law for the sake of the spreading of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:22). In fact all Paul's decisions in controversial matters seem to have been made based around the ultimate question: 'What would be best for spreading the Gospel?'. Perhaps the Lord was making the same point when He told His preachers to stay in their converts' homes and eat whatever was set before them (Lk. 10:8), i.e. without insisting on eating kosher food. For the Pharisees insisted that an observant Jew could *not* do what the Lord said- i.e. eat 'whatever' was set before them. But the Lord waived that commandment- for the sake of spreading the Gospel. And we do well to get into his spirit as we face the many calls we do in church life.

9:16- see on Acts 20:26.

"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). It may be that in these words Paul is alluding to how the High Priest had to have bells so that "his sound may be heard... that he die not" (Ex. 28:35; this idea of the sound being heard is picked up in Ps. 19 concerning the spread of the Gospel). Whatever the predestined and foreknown purpose of God with Paul as a preacher may have been, the fact still stands that the record emphasises the quite natural spirit of compulsion to preach which arose within him.

Paul himself admits a tendency not to preach, to hold back from giving his all to fulfil that commission he had received to testify of the Gospel of God's grace (1 Cor. 9:16). He asks his

brethren to pray that he would be able to “make it manifest” more than he did (Col. 4:4 cp. Eph. 6:20).

9:17 The fact that true preaching is a carrying of the cross explains why Paul felt that the fact that to preach what he did went right against his natural grain, was the proof that indeed a “dispensation of the Gospel” had been given to him. Likewise Jeremiah complained that the visions which he had to preach, about violence and judgment, were quite against the grain of his sensitive soul (Jer. 46:5 RV; 47:6). There is therefore no such person as a natural preacher in the ultimate sense.

Paul says that the proof that he had been given a command to preach the Gospel was in the fact that he preached against his own will; he says that if he did it willingly, i.e. because it coincided with his own will, then he had his reward in this life (this is a paraphrase of 1 Cor. 9:17 and context). It seems strange to think that Paul had to *make* himself preach, that he did it against his natural will. But remember his poor eyesight, ugly physical appearance, his embarrassing early life spent persecuting and torturing Christians - no wonder public preaching of Christ was something he had to make himself do. It may be that the reason he went to the wilderness of Arabia after his conversion was that he was running away from the command to preach publicly (Gal. 1:17,18). Several times he speaks of how he fears he will lose his nerve to preach, and thereby lose his salvation; he even asks others to pray for him that he will preach more boldly. It also needs to be remembered that Paul was a passionate Jew; he loved his people. It seems that he “preached circumcision” (Gal. 5:11) in the sense of being involved in actively trying to proselytize Gentiles. But it was Paul the Hebrew of the Hebrews who was called to be the apostle *to the Gentiles*. It might have sounded more appropriate if preaching to the Jews was his specialism, and fisherman Peter from half-Gentile Galilee went to the Gentiles. But no. Each man was sent against his grain. And more than this. It seems that the Lord set up Peter, James and John as some kind of replacement to the Scribes and rabbis. And let’s not forget Amos, too. He defended his prophetic ministry, as Paul defended his, by saying that it was something he had been called to quite against his nature. He was not a prophet nor a prophet’s son, and yet he was taking from following his flock of sheep to be a prophet to Israel- quite against his will and inclination (Am. 7:14,15).

9:18 Paul’s decision not to take money from Corinth (1 Cor. 9:18) was due to his deep, deep meditation on the principle contained in Mt. 10:8; although there were other passages in the Gospels which he knew implied that it was Christ’s will that the missionary should be paid (1 Cor. 9:14 = Mt. 10:10). This issue of payment shows how Paul based his life decisions on his understanding of the principles of the Gospels. He did far more than learn those Gospels parrot-fashion. They were in his heart, and influenced the direction of his life.

Paul could have taken wages from the Corinthians for his service. But on that occasion he chose “not to use to the full my right in the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:18 RV); and he uses the same word in 1 Cor. 7:31, in teaching that although we have to ‘use this world’ we are to ‘use it to the full’ (RVmg.). As God operates with us on different levels, accepting non-ideal situations, so we are to deal with each other. Paul could have used his power in the Gospel more sharply than he actually did with the Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:10)- and note how he earlier uses those two words “power” and “use” in saying that he could have demanded financial support from them, but he chose not to use that power / authority which he had (1 Cor. 9:12).

9:19- see on Mt. 20:27.

Christ’s words about winning men Paul applied to winning ecclesial members round to a more spiritual and committed way of life (Mt. 18:15 = 1 Cor. 9:19-22).

When Paul speaks of how he has “made myself a servant unto all” in his preaching (1 Cor. 9:19), there is an evident connection with his reasoning in Phil. 2:7 about how on the cross, the Lord Jesus likewise *made* Himself a servant to all. For Paul, preaching was and is to be a sharing in the cross of Christ. In his preaching of the Gospel, Paul could say that “I made myself servant unto all, that I

might gain the more" (1 Cor. 9:19). Yet elsewhere, Paul uses the idea of the "servant unto all" as descriptive of Christ's attitude upon the cross (Phil. 2:7). The connection of thought reflects how Paul understood that in seeking to gain others for Christ, we make ourselves their servants, and in this sense our witness to them is a living out of the principles of the cross. Being such a "servant unto all" hardly squares well with the image of arrogant platform preachers dazzling their audiences. That isn't the preaching which truly 'gains' people for Christ.

If we can at least grasp the spirit of taking up Christ's cross, there will be a deep sense of fellowship with others who have reached the same realization; and a deep joy and calmness in confidence of sharing His resurrection. *The cross is attainable*. It's not just an awful thing that happened in a few hours of history so long ago, the details of which we flinch from, excusing ourselves that it's just too terrible. Look how Paul alludes to it, and arose to the point where he could truly claim to us that he was living the crucified life. The Lord predicted in Mk. 10:44,45: "and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be **slave of all**. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life a ransom for many**". And Paul alludes to this in 1 Cor. 9:19: "I have made myself **a slave to all**..."; and later in 1 Cor. 10:33: "just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but **the profit of the many, that they may be saved**". Through his sharing in the cross of the Lord Jesus, he, the very human Paul, became an agent in the salvation of all men. He too became a 'slave of all' after the pattern of the Lord in His time of dying. We may make excuses about Jesus not being exactly in our position, because God was His Father etc. Valid or not, those excuses disappear when we are faced with Paul's challenge.

9:20- see on 2 Cor. 11:24.

9:22 Minucius records that opposition to the Christian faith was because the believers so closely identified themselves with the crucified Christ that His death and shame were seen as theirs: "they are said to be a man who was punished with death as a criminal and the fatal wood of his cross, thus providing suitable liturgy for the depraved friends". Thus we see how deep was their appreciation of the doctrine of representation: they saw the Lord in His time of dying as representative of themselves. Time and again the words and actions of Paul show that both consciously and unconsciously he was aware that he was experiencing in himself the experiences of his Lord. In his preaching he *made himself a slave of all, weak* that he might gain the weak (1 Cor. 9:19,22). This is language he elsewhere understands as appropriate to the Lord in His death (2 Cor. 13:4; Phil. 2:7 cp. Mk. 9:35).

9:25- see on Lk. 13:24.

9:25,26 Various images are used in the Bible to bring home to us our sense of purpose. We are to see ourselves as soldiers disciplining ourselves for action, fighting in the only ultimately worthy cause with victory in sight; as slaves of a great Master; as athletes running a race. "Every man that strives in the games is temperate in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I [Paul] therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air" (1 Cor. 9:25,26). Paul saw himself as very much in reality, and not just shadowing boxing. Why does he bother saying this- that he boxes not as one who merely beats the air? Surely because he perceived that many people don't grasp the 'reality' of life. They think it's all some virtual game, online rather than real life. But Paul saw the real issues of eternal life and eternal death very clearly. Those who responded to his preaching and teaching really would live forever; those who rejected it or fell away from it would ultimately remain eternally dead. Paul perceived that we are dealing with the ultimate of all realities: the love of God, His feelings for us, His mission and purpose for us, how every moment the King of the Cosmos is yearning for us, the life eternal, the sense of the future men might miss. And so Paul fought for it all, not uncertainly, and not as one who feels only half in reality. It was his life.

9:27- see on 2 Cor. 12:10.

It was the Jews and their “false brethren” who infiltrated the ecclesias (Gal. 2:4), and who were responsible for the deaths of many of the first century apostles and prophets. This suggests that the circumcision party within the ecclesias was linked with the Roman and Jewish authorities, and therefore ‘satan’ is a term used for them all. It got beyond dirty politics in the church. This would explain why Paul uses legal language in describing his conflicts with the Judaizing element in Corinth: “My defence [*apologia*, a technical legal term] to those [in the ecclesia] who examine me [another legal term, *anakrinein*]...” (1 Cor. 9:27). The false teachers were taking the likes of Paul before the civil authorities- they were hand in glove. Rev. 17 and 18 describes ‘Babylon’ as the system which was responsible for these deaths. Whatever other interpretation we may give these chapters (and I would agree there is a strong similarity with the evils of the Roman Catholic church), it cannot be denied that they are full of reference to Old Testament passages concerning Jerusalem, the Jews, and the temple, which became a spiritual Babylon. I suggest that it was from within the Jerusalem ecclesia, linked up as it was with the temple system and Roman authorities, that there came much of the persecution of the early church. And this is why ‘Babylon’ in its first century application refers to these things.

The threat of Lk. 9:23-25 rung in his mind (in 1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Cor. 7:9; Phil. 3:8): If a man gains the world for Christ but does not take up the cross, or is ashamed of Christ's words and principles in this world, he will be *cast away*. Especially does Paul allude to these words in 1 Cor. 9:27: "Lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway". Paul recognized his temptation: to think that his zeal for preaching excused him from taking up the cross. In essence, we must all see our own likely temptations: to focus on one area of spirituality, with the hope that it will excuse us from the cross.

The real possibility of rejection at judgment day was evidently a motivator in Paul's life (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:27), and he used "the terror" of the coming day of judgment to persuade men in his teaching of the ecclesias (2 Cor. 5:11), and also in his preaching to the world (e.g. Acts 17:31). Paul's exposition of judgment to come caused Felix to tremble (Acts 24:25). I don't suppose he would if he walked into many churches today. The fact is, many will be rejected. The unforgiving believer will be delivered to the tormentors to pay what is due (Mt. 18:34); God is preparing torture instruments for the punishment of the rejected (Ps. 7:13). These are awesome descriptions of the self-inflicted mental agony in which the rejected will writhe. The matchless grace of God and His eagerness for our salvation should not be allowed to blunt the impact of these warnings- of what we can do to ourselves, more than God doing to us. Almost certainly, some of those you know today will go through the terrible rejection process which we are going to explore now. People from all over the world, the living responsible, will see the sign of the Son of man, will know His return is imminent, and wail with the knowledge that they have crucified Him afresh and must now meet Him (Mt. 24:30,31 cp. Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10). Our response to the certain knowledge that His return is imminent will in effect be our judgment.

10:1 Paul told the Corinthians that he didn't want them to be “ignorant” of the powerful implications of the fact that they had been baptized into the Son of God, and were on their way to His Kingdom, being in an exactly analogous situation to Israel as they walked through the wilderness. He uses a word which is the Greek word ‘agnostic’. He didn't want them to be agnostic, to be indifferent, to shrug their shoulders, at the bitingly insistent relevance of the type to them. And that type of Israel in the wilderness is most applicable to us, “upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (:11) than to any other generation. Indifference seems to have been a problem in Corinth as it is for us. By contrast, God is provoked to jealousy by our indifference to Him (1 Cor. 10:22), seeing every self-reliant act as an implicit statement that we are “stronger than he”. He would not have us “ignorant” or agnostic about the implications of the basic doctrines we believe (1 Thess. 4:13; Rom. 1:13; 2:4; 7:1; 11:25; 1 Cor. 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13), nor ‘agnostic’ to the fact we have been baptized and risen with Christ (Rom. 6:3). These are all things that we are almost too familiar with; and yet he urges us, down through the centuries, to never be indifferent and agnostic to these things.

Israel left Egypt, passed through the baptism of the Red Sea, and then walked through the wilderness- all in enacted parable of our spiritual experience (1 Cor. 10:1). They then passed through the Jordan, and set foot in the land of promise (cp. our entry to the Kingdom at the judgment seat). But they had not been circumcised in the wilderness- possibly suggesting that the new Israel will not have cut off the flesh as they should have done in their wilderness walk. It is stressed at least five times in Joshua 5 that Joshua himself personally circumcised each of them, and then they kept the Passover. This would seem to tellingly point forward to our coming to the end of the wilderness walk of this life, and then entering into the Kingdom; to have a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus (cp. Joshua), who performs the intensely personal operation of rolling back and cutting off the flesh, and then we sit down together and keep the Passover, as the Lord clearly intimated we would (Mt. 26:29). This is how personal relationships in the Kingdom of God will be.

Israel crossing the Red Sea is one of the most well-known types of baptism / the new creation (1 Cor. 10:1). They were being chased by the Egyptians, and were trapped against the sea. The only way of escape was for that water to open and allow them to go through it. If any Israelite had refused to go through, there would have been no salvation. Going further, it is evident that the people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea:

Israel	Abib	Jesus
Ate Passover (Ex. 12:6)	14th	Died on the cross as Passover lambs slain
Left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3)	15th	
Journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27)	15th-17th	Jesus three days in the tomb
Came through the Red Sea	17th	Resurrected

As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours. Israel were slaves in Egypt, and then after the Red Sea baptism became slaves of God. Ps. 68:18 pictures them as a train of captives being led out of Egypt, merging into the image of a train of a captivity led into a different captivity. Romans 6 powerfully brings home the point: we were slaves of sin, but now are become slaves of righteousness.

Try to see the historical events which occurred to Israel as relevant to you personally. They were "types of us". Note how 1 Cor. 10:1 speaks of "*our* fathers"- even when Paul is writing to Gentiles. He intended them to see in the Jewish fathers a type of themselves. Israel's keeping of the Passover implied that each subsequent Israelite had personally been redeemed that night. All down the years, they were to treat the stranger fairly: "for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 23:9). The body of believers, the body of Christ, is not only world-wide geographically at this point in time; it stretches back over time as well as distance, to include all those who have truly believed. This is why David found such inspiration from the history of Israel in his own crises (e.g. Ps. 77).

10:2 *In the cloud*- in a sense, Israel's baptism was an ongoing experience, in that the cloud [of water?] continued over them throughout the wilderness wanderings. The ongoing nature of the act of baptism was outlined in baptism's greatest prototype: the passage of Israel through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2). They were baptized into that pillar of cloud (cp. the water of baptism), but in fact the cloud and fire which overshadowed them at their Red Sea baptism continued throughout their wilderness journey to the Kingdom. They went "*through* fire and *through* water" (Ps. 66:12)

throughout their wilderness years, until they entered the promised rest (cp. the Kingdom). Likewise, the great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence *repeated* throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that *bringeth you up* out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16). See on Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:6.

Bullinger comments that "they were all baptized into Moses" can be literally rendered 'they baptized themselves'. The same verb form occurs in Luke 2:5, where Joseph went "to be taxed", literally 'to enrol himself'.

10:4- see on Rom. 5:12.

1 Cor. 10:4 clearly states: "they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them... and that rock was Christ". However, Dt. 32 seems to imply that the rock was an Angel. "I will publish the name of the Lord (a reference to the Angel declaring the name in Ex. 34)... He is the rock... He found (Israel) in a desert land... He led him" (vv. 3,4,10). This is all describing the activities of the Angel. Israel rebelled against the Angel (Is. 63:10), "lightly esteemed the rock... of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful" (Dt. 32:15,18). Another link between the rock and the Angel is in Gen. 49:24: "The mighty God of Jacob (an Angel)... the shepherd (the Angel, Is. 63:9-11)... the stone... of Israel". Note that Jesus is clearly the shepherd, the stone and the rock (of offence). The language of 1 Cor. 10 invites us not to interpret "the rock" just as the physical rock. It can be shown that the Comforter was an Angel representing Christ, in fact the same Angel as in Is. 63 which led Israel through the wilderness. It is therefore fitting that "the rock", the same Angel, should be chosen by Paul in 1 Cor. 10 as a type of Christ. What came from the rock was "spiritual drink"- showing that the Rock Angel spiritually as well as physically fed them. Christ's interpretation of the manna as representing the word in John 6 would support this idea of the Angels spiritually strengthening Israel on their journey. Ex. 29:42 implies this happened daily; the Angel stood at the door of the tabernacle each day to speak with them. Perhaps the same is true today for those who through Angelic help feed daily on the manna of the Word. It is possible that Israel tempting Christ in 1 Cor. 10:9 is meant to refer back to 1 Cor. 10:4 "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ". Tempting Christ was therefore tempting the rock to produce water. The rock was a title of the Angel that was with them, and it was he, representing Christ, whom they tempted. See on Is. 51:9; Rev. 3:22.

The Rock That Followed Them (1 Cor. 10:4)

It should be evident enough that the rock which Moses smote in the desert was simply a rock; it wasn't Christ personally. The Jewish book of Wisdom claimed that "the rock was Wisdom" (Wisdom 11). Paul, as he so often does, is picking up this phrase and saying that more essentially, the rock represented Jesus personally, and not 'Wisdom' in the Jewish misunderstanding of this figure. It "was" Him in the sense that it represented Him. Likewise He said about the communion wine: "This is my blood". It wasn't literally His blood; it was and is His blood only in that it represents His blood. Paul is describing the experience of Israel in the wilderness because he saw in it some similarities with the walk of the Corinthian believers towards God's kingdom. The whole of 1 Cor. 10 is full of such reference. And this is why he should speak about the rock which Moses smote as a symbol of Christ. The Israelites had been baptized into Moses, just as Corinth had been baptized into Christ; and both Israel and Corinth ate "the same spiritual food; and did all drink the

same spiritual drink". "Spiritual food... spiritual drink" shows that Paul saw the manna they ate and the water they drank as spiritually symbolic- just as He saw the rock as symbolic. Paul goes on in 1 Cor. 10:16,17 to write of how Corinth also ate and drank of Christ in the breaking of bread, and in chapter 11 he brings home the point: like Israel, we can eat and drink those symbols, "the same spiritual meat... the same spiritual drink", having been baptized into Christ as they were into Moses, and think that thereby we are justified to do as we like in our private lives. This is the point and power of all this allusion. The picture of their carcasses rotting in the wilderness is exhortation enough. Baptism and observing the 'breaking of bread' weren't enough to save Israel.

Jesus Himself had explained in John 6 how the manna represented His words and His sacrifice. He spoke of how out of Him would come "living water", not still well water, but bubbling water fresh from a fountain (Jn. 4:11; 7:38). And He invites His people to drink of it. It was this kind of water that bubbled out of the smitten rock. Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21 describe it with a variety of words: gushing, bursting, water running down like a high mountain stream, "flowed abundantly".....as if the fountains of deep hidden water had burst to the surface ("as out of the great depths", Ps. 78:15). So the Lord was saying that He was the rock, and we like Israel drinking of what came out of Him. The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called "the running water"(Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: "...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten"(Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God"(Is. 53:4). It was in a sense God who "clave the rock" so that the waters gushed out (Ps. 78:15; Is. 48:21). "Clave" implies that the rock was literally broken open; and in this we see a dim foreshadowing of the gaping hole in the Lord's side after the spear thrust, as well as a more figurative image of how His life and mind were broken apart in His final sacrifice. Yahweh, presumably represented by an Angel, stood upon [or 'above'] the rock when Moses, on Yahweh's behalf, struck the rock. Here we see a glimpse into the nature of the Father's relationship with the Son on the cross. He was both with the Son, identified with Him just as the Angel stood on the rock or hovered above it as Moses struck it... and yet He also was the one who clave that rock, which was Christ. As Abraham with Isaac was a symbol of both the Father and also the slayer, so in our far smaller experience, the Father gives us the trials which He stands squarely with us through. And within the wonder of His self-revelation, Yahweh repeatedly reveals Himself as "the rock"- especially in Deuteronomy. And yet that smitten rock "was [a symbol of] Christ". On the cross, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". There He was the most intensely manifested in His beloved Son. There God was spat upon, His love rejected. There we see the utter humility and self-abnegation of the Father. And we His children must follow the same path, for the salvation of others.

The rock "followed [better, 'accompanied'] them" (1). We must understand this as a metonymy, whereby "the rock" is put for what came out of it, i.e. the fountain of living water. It seems that this stream went with them on their journey. The statement that "they drank" of the rock is in the imperfect tense, denoting continuous action- they *kept on* drinking of that water, it wasn't a one time event, it continued throughout the wilderness journey. A careful reading of Ex. 17:5,6 reveals that at Rephidim, Moses was told to "Go on before the people", to Horeb. There he struck the rock, and yet the people drank the water in Rephidim. The water flowed a long way that day, and there is no reason to think that it didn't flow with them all the time. The records make it clear enough that the miraculous provision of water was in the same context as God's constant provision of food and protection to the people (Dt. 8:15,16). The rock gave water throughout the wilderness journey (Is.

48:21). This would surely necessitate that the giving of water at Horeb was not a one-off solution to a crisis. There is a word play in the Hebrew text of Is. 48:21: "He led them through the Horebs [AV 'desert places']" by making water flow from the rock. The Horeb experience was repeated for 40 years; as if the rock went on being smitten. Somehow the water from that smitten rock went with them, fresh and bubbling as it was the first moment the rock was smitten, right through the wilderness (2). It was living, spring water- not lying around in puddles. The water that came from that one rock tasted as if God had opened up fresh springs and torrents in the desert (Ps. 74:15 NAS). It always tasted as if it was just gushing out of the spring; and this wonder is commented upon by both David and Isaiah (Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21). It was as if the rock had just been struck, and the water was flowing out fresh for the first time. In this miracle, God clave the rock and there came out rivers (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 78:16,20; Is. 43:20). Each part of Israel's encampment had the water as it were brought to their door. And so it is in our experience of Christ, and the blessing enabled by His sacrifice. The blessings that come to us are deeply personal, and directed to us individually. He died once, long ago, and yet the effect of His sacrifice is ever new. In our experience, it's as if He has died and risen for us every time we obtain forgiveness, or any other grace to help in our times of need. We live in newness of life. The cross is in that sense ongoing; He dies and lives again for every one who comes to Him. And yet at the end of their wilderness journey, Moses reflected that Israel had forgotten the rock that had given them birth. The water had become such a regular feature of their lives that they forgot the rock in Horeb that it flowed from. They forgot that 'Horeb' means 'a desolate place', and yet they had thankfully drunk of the water the first time in Rephidim, 'the place of comfort'. We too have done the same, but the length of time we have done so can lead us to forget the smitten rock, back there in the loneliness and desolation of Calvary. Not only did his disciples forsake him and his mother finally go away home, but He even felt that the Father had forsaken Him. As Abraham left alone in the Messianic "horror of great darkness", as Isaac alone with only his Father, leaving the other men behind...so the Lord on the cross was as a single green root grown up out of a parched desert. Let us never forget that 'Horeb'; and let's not let the abundant new life and blessing which there is in Christ become something ordinary. God forbid that we like Corinth, like Israel, should drink of that sparkling water each week in our 'place of comfort' and go forth to do just as we please.

Notes

(1) Marvin Vincent [*Vincent's Word Studies*] comments: "Paul appears to recall a rabbinic tradition that there was a well formed out of the spring in Horeb, which gathered itself up into a rock like a swarm of bees, and followed the people for forty years; sometimes rolling itself, sometimes carried by Miriam, and always addressed by the elders, when they encamped, with the words, "Spring up, O well!" (Num. 21:17)". Whether this is true or not, Paul is alluding to this idea- hence the rather awkward idiom to non-Jewish readers.

(2) There is repeated emphasis in the records that the water came from the [singular] rock. However Ps. 78:16 speaks of God cleaving the rocks. I suggest this is an intensive plural- the sense is 'the one great rock'. The next verses (17,20) go on to speak of how the water came from a singular rock.

10:9- see on 1 Cor. 10:4.

10:10- see on Acts 7:43; Rom. 5:12.

1 Cor. 10:10 speaks of an Angel called "the destroyer" who brought about Israel's punishments in the wilderness. And yet Ps. 78:49 speaks of these as being executed by "A band of Angels of evil" (RVmg.). Likewise Rev. 9:14 has one Angel controlling others, perhaps as our guardian Angel has control over many others to effect his plans for us. The one Angel had control over others, Angels specifically used to bring evil upon those whom God rejects. It may be they will be used again in the judgment of the last day. Or it could be that 'Angels' in Ps. 78:49 is an intensive plural, and the AV reading is correct: "by sending evil angels...". The one great Angel of evil is "the destroyer" of

1 Cor. 10:10. This could imply that some of the references to a “Satan” who brings disaster, as in Job, refer to one specific Angel who does these things, or co-ordinates them.

The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did Israel eat the Passover? My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (*olothreutes*; this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn”.

Paul’s warning in 1 Cor. 10:10 not to “murmur as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (i. e. the destroying Angel) implies that the unworthy among the “Israel of God” will also be destroyed by Angelic means if we make the same mistakes Israel of old made. The fact that the Angels will personally minister the condemnation of the unworthy (Mt. 13:49 “the Angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire”) when in their lives those Angels gave their charges every chance to repent and to grow spiritually, preserving them from physical danger, is surely a heart rending thought; and a motivation to respond acceptably to the trials God brings into our lives through His Angels.

10:11- see on Gal. 1:4.

Paul says that we are now at the “ends” of the “ages” (1 Cor. 10:11). J. Milik argues that Paul’s language here is alluding to Apocryphal Jewish writings, which speak of the “ages” as coming to an end in Satan’s destruction at the last day. Paul’s argument is that Christ’s death has brought about the termination of the “ages” as the Jews understood them. Satan and his hordes – in the way the Jews understood them – are right *now* rendered powerless and non-existent. As ever, Paul’s approach seems to be not to baldly state that a personal Satan doesn’t exist, but rather to show that even if he once did, he is now powerless and dead. The way the Lord Jesus dealt with the demons issue is identical. Once we understand this background, we see Paul’s writings are packed with allusions to the Jewish ideas about the “ages” ending in the Messianic Kingdom and the destruction of Satan. Paul was correcting their interpretations – by saying that the “ages” had ended in Christ’s death, and the things the Jewish writings claimed for the future Messianic Kingdom were in fact already possible for those in Christ. Thus when 1 Enoch 5:7,8 speaks of ‘freedom from sin’ coming then, Paul applies that phrase to the experience of the Christian believer *now* (Rom. 6:18–22; 8:2) [J. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) pp. 248-259. The same phrase occurs with the same meaning in the Testament of Levi 14.1.].

The ecclesia in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) were tempted to commit the same sins in principle as we are tempted to (1 Cor.10:1-10). Twice Paul hammers home the point: “These things were our examples... now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and are written (i.e. the process of inspiration became operative) for our admonition” (v.6,11). Paul seems to read the minds of many Gentile Christians as they quietly reason ‘But that was Israel- we Gentiles have been called because we shall do better’; he warns that such an attitude places us in grave spiritual danger: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man” (v.12,13). This could be paraphrased as follows: “The Jews (“man”) had the same human nature as you; if you think that you can stand up to it better than they, then such spiritual arrogance will lead you to fall’. Such reasoning goes against the grain of what we would naturally like to hear, which is that we will certainly reach salvation just as we are, with no

conditions, and without having to have any conflict with our sinful nature. Paul therefore concludes by saying that only the spiritually wise will grasp his line of argument here: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say" (v.14).

Ensamples- Gk. *tupos*, types. The New Testament writers present things like the crossing of the Red Sea and the events in the wilderness as real historical events which were types of the work of Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4; Hebrews 3 etc.). But by the second century, there was a shift away from reading these events as types, but rather they were seen as allegories- no longer were the events so importantly *real*, rather the characters and events were seen as allegorical. It was against this background of ever increasing abstraction that Christians likewise started to move away from the real Christ. Origen in the third century argued strongly that the historical sections of the Bible were to be taken as allegory and not as literally accurate history. He spoke of there being in the Bible "spiritual truth in historical falsehood", and went on to use this as an excuse to explain why the Lord Jesus is presented as human rather than Divine in the Gospels. And so, as so often, an incorrect base attitude to God's word led to seriously misunderstanding it.

10:13 Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac leaves us all shaking our heads and feeling that we simply wouldn't have risen up to that level of sacrifice. For not only was Isaac the son Abraham had so longed for, but he was the longed for fulfilment of the promises which had been the very core of Abraham's life. Yet 1 Cor. 10:13 appears to allude to God's provision of another sacrifice and thereby a way out of Abraham's temptation / testing- and this passage implies that each one of us are in Abraham's shoes: "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted / tested (=Gen. 22:1) beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also *provide* the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it". No longer can Abraham be seen as a Sunday School figure of faith to be merely admired. For we are in his shoes, and the same God will likewise work with us in *our* weaknesses, both testing and providing the ways of escape.

Cain, in typifying all the rejected, felt that his condemnation was something greater than he could bear (Gen. 4:13). This is alluded to in a telling way in 1 Cor. 10:13: for the righteous, they will never be tested more than they can bear, but a way of escape will always be made possible. But for the rejected, there will be no escape. It will be something too great to bear, and somehow they have to go on existing in that state. Thus the rejected will seek death and not find it (Rev. 9:6), after the pattern of Judas bungling his own suicide after realising his condemnation [thus his bowels gushed, although he was attempting to hang himself]; they will also seek the Lord, all too late, and not find Him either (Prov. 1:28; Jn. 7:34). Israel will seek their lovers / idols and not find them (Hos. 2:7), and then seek the Lord and not find Him either (Hos. 5:6). They will seek death and not find it (Rev. 9:6), seek to their idols, see to the true God- and find none of them. They will exist in unbearable limbo. They will wander seeking the word of the Lord, but not find it (Am. 8:12). Tragically, it was so freely available in their lifetimes (cp. the foolish virgins seeking oil, banging on the door trying to hear their Lord's words and speak with Him).

Put together two Bible passages: Cain felt that his condemnation was greater *than he could bear*, and so God put a mark upon him so he wouldn't be slain (Gen. 4:13,15). Now 1 Cor. 10:13: God will not allow us to be tested *more than we can bear*, but will make a way of escape so we can bear it. I take this as meaning that if God is even sensitive to the feelings of a condemned man like Cain, rather like putting an animal to sleep in a humane way... then we who are saved in Christ can take comfort that even in this life, we will not be asked to bear the unbearable, and yet we have the prospect of eternity in front of us when this life is through. And in a very quiet, sober way, we have to respond with gratitude: 'Wow'.

1 Cor.10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man (e.g. as experienced by the Israelites, in the context)... God... will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it". Escape is not always provided from physical trials- especially in the case of those who were soon to be the Christian martyrs amongst Paul's readership.

But when faced with situations which make us feel that we will be spiritually swamped by the power of our innate evil tendencies, then we can take courage that although the physical conditions causing the trial may not be taken away, there will certainly be an opportunity made for us to resist the spiritual temptation. Notice how a way of *escape* is provided- implying that initially the temptation is truly too heavy for us, and an escape is therefore made for us by God so that He is not in the position of forcing us to sin. Surely all readers of these words know this feeling only too well- sensing that we are in a position where our evil desires are growing stronger and stronger, not wanting to sin, but feeling that humanly, given a few more moments, and it will be inevitable. It is in these moments that we have to desperately cling to this promise- that God *will* make a way of escape, that he will keep us from falling (Jude 24) by His power of righteousness. Hence verse 14 continues "*wherefore... flee from idolatry*"- i.e. from the spiritual temptations.

10:15 When dealing with the problem of fornication, he doesn't appeal to any legal code, not even the ten commandments, nor the agreement at the Council of Jerusalem, because he was appealing for life to be lived according to the spirit rather than any law. Likewise when writing about meat offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8, he could so easily have appealed to the agreements made at the Council as recorded in Acts 15. But he doesn't. For love's sake he appeals. He asks them "judge ye what I say", he seeks for them to live a way of life, rather than obey isolated commandments as a burden to be borne. It is simply so that brethren and sisters, men and women, prefer simple yes / no commandments rather than an appeal to a way of life. In those communities and fellowships where everything is reduced to a mere allowed / not allowed, there tends to be less internal division than if it is taught that life must be lived by principles. Paul was smart enough to know this, especially with his background in legalism. And yet he chose not to lay the law down with Corinth; instead he appealed to a spirit of life, even though he must have foreseen the strife that would come of it.

10:16 Paul expected other believers to share his familiarity with the words of Christ. An example is 1 Cor. 10:16 = Mt. 26:26; hence Paul reasons: "The cup of blessing... *is it not* the communion of the blood of Christ?" - i.e. 'Isn't it? I mean, this is familiar to us from the Gospels, isn't it'.

Paul speaks of "the cup of blessing which we bless" (1 Cor. 10:16), probably using "blessing" in its Biblical sense of 'forgiveness' (e.g. Acts 3:25,26). Whilst there is, therefore, an awareness of our own sins and salvation from them at the memorial meeting, there is not any specific mediation of forgiveness to us through the bread and wine. In prospect, we were saved at baptism, through our Lord's work on the cross. In prospect, all our sins were forgiven then. We must be careful to avoid the Catholic notion that the bread and wine do themselves possess some power of atonement. They are the appointed aids to help us *remember* what has already been achieved. And this is why the early brethren could break bread with joy- not as part of a guilt trip prompted by the worrying remembrance of the standard set for us in Jesus (Acts 2:46).

The declaration that we are in the one body is shown in terms of breaking bread together. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (the sign of sharing in) the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:16-18). All who share in the saving work of the Lord Jesus by true baptism into Him ought to break bread together.

Note how Paul speaks of the breaking of bread in 1 Cor. 10:16-21. He sees the bread and wine as gifts from God to us. It's all about receiving the cup of the Lord, the cup which comes from Him. We should take it with both hands. It seems so inappropriate, given this emphasis, if our focus is rather on worrying about forbidding others in His body from reaching their hands out to partake that same cup and bread. Way back in Gen. 14:18, the gift of bread and wine [which foreshadowed our present memorial meetings] was a sign of God blessing us. Hence it was "the cup of blessing", which Paul says we also bless. There is a mutuality about it- we bless God, He blesses us. No part of this wonderful and comforting arrangement depends upon us not passing that cup to our brethren.

The communion, the fellowship, was brought about by the Saviour's body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16). Indeed, "*the fellowship*" is a common NT phrase (e.g. 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:3). Because this has been created in prospect, from God's perspective we are all united in *the fellowship*, therefore we should seek to be of one mind (Phil. 2:1,2). It broke down, at least potentially, the walls which there naturally are between men, even the most opposed, i.e. Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14). The laying down of the Shepherd's life was so that the flock might be one, in one fold (Jn. 10:15,16). The offering of the blood of Christ was *so that* He might "make in himself... one new man" (Eph. 2:15). Thus the theme of unity dominated the Lord's mind as He prepared for His death (Jn. 17).

10:16,17- see on 1 Cor. 11:29; 1 Cor. 12:15.

To refuse to fellowship a brother is to effectively say that he is not within the Lord's body; for when we break bread, we show that we are one bread and one body (1 Cor. 10:16,17). And as we condemn, so we will be (Mt. 7:1). The purpose of the cross was to gather together in one all God's children (Jn. 11:52), that the love of the Father and Son might be realized between us (Jn. 17:26). If we support division, we are denying the essential aim of the Lord's sacrifice.

Surrounding Roman culture forbade women to drink wine with men, and only permitted them to do so in special cases if they drank different wine from a different cup. But Paul in conscious reference to this emphasizes the one cup shared by all believers, male and female, in memory of the unity and tearing down of barriers between people achieved by the Lord's death.

10:17 "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread (Greek 'loaf'), and one body" - of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16,17). The bread represents the body of Christ; but it is hammered home time and again in the New Testament that the *believers* are the body of Christ. By partaking of Christ's body, we are sharing with each other. Paul drives home this point with an Old Testament allusion: "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18). We are the living sacrifices, offered on the Christ altar (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:10). By being placed upon the altar, the sacrifice was counted as the altar. As Christ hung on the cross, all believers were counted as being in Him; Christ and the believers were, in this sense, indivisible on the cross. And they still are- hence the figure of us being the very *body*, the very *being*, of Christ. To personally share in fellowship with Him therefore *must* involve intense fellowship with other members of Christ's body. We must 'discern' the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29), and also judge (same word as 'discern') ourselves" at the memorial meeting (1 Cor. 11:31). We discern the Lord's body, and thereby discern ourselves too- because we are part of His body. This further shows that our self-examination at the breaking of bread is both of Christ and also of ourselves (both individually *and* collectively, as the body of Christ?).

10:18 The only exclusivity of the Lord's table was that it was not to be turned into a place for worshipping pagan idols. Paul saw the sacrifices of Israel as having some relevance to the Christian communion meal. He comments: "Are those who eat the victims not in communion with the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18); and the altar is clearly the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10). Eating of the communion meal was and is, therefore, fundamentally a statement of our fellowship with the altar, the Lord Jesus, rather than with others who are eating of Him. The bread and wine which we consume thus become antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply personal relationship between Yahweh and the offerer is continued in the breaking of bread; and again, the focus is upon the worshipper's relationship with Yahweh rather than a warning against fellowshiping the errors of fellow worshippers through this action. What is criticized in later Israel is the tendency to worship Yahweh through these offerings at the same time as offering sacrifice to other gods. Is. 66:3 speaks of this dualism in worship:

What was offered to Yahweh

"An ox is sacrificed,
a lamb is slain,
an offering is brought,
incense memorial is made,

What was offered to other gods simultaneously

a man is killed;
a dog is struck down;
swine-flesh is savoured;
idols are kissed"

And the new Israel made just this same blasphemy in the way some in the Corinth ecclesia ate of the Lord's table and also at the table of idols ["demons"]. Paul wasn't slow to bring out the similarities when he wrote to the Corinthians. It is this kind of dualism which is so wrong; to be both Christian and non-Christian at the same time, to mix the two. But differences of interpretation between equally dedicated worshippers of Yahweh, or believers in Christ, were never made the basis of condemnation.

10:21- see on 1 Cor. 11:20.

Paul speaks of us each one partaking of "the table of the Lord" (1 Cor. 10:21), a phrase used in the LXX for the altar (Ez. 44:16; Mal. 1:7,12)- the sacrifices whereof only the priests could eat. This would have been radical thinking to a community used to priests and men delegated to take charge of others' religious affairs. Hebrew 3:13 gets at this idea when we read that *we* are to exhort one another not to turn away, situated as we are on the brink of the promised land, just as Moses exhorted Israel.

The breaking of bread is described as eating at "the table of the Lord" (1 Cor. 10:21). This was Old Testament language for the altar (Ez. 41:22). By eating from it we are partaking of the altar, the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 9:13; 10:18; Heb. 13:10). If we don't partake of it, we declare ourselves to have no part in Him. Yet the very fact we partake of it, is a statement that we have pledged ourselves to separation from this present world; for it is not possible to eat at the Lord's table, and also that of this world (1 Cor. 10:21). The Passover, as the prototype breaking of bread, featured bitter herbs to remind Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt (Ex. 1:14). The breaking of bread should likewise focus our attention on the fact that return to the world is a return to bondage and bitterness, not freedom.

10:22 The very nature of the breaking of bread brings us to the equivalent of the Old Testament trial of jealousy; to a T-junction in our lives. The Corinthians were told that they would "provoke the Lord to jealousy" by breaking bread and yet also worshipping idols (1 Cor. 10:22). This is surely an allusion to the "trial of jealousy" (Num. 5:24). A curse was recited and then the believer drank a cup; if they were unfaithful, they drank to their condemnation. Paul's allusion suggests that each day we break bread and drink the cup, we as the bride of Christ are going through the trial of jealousy. Brutal honesty and self-examination, and not merely of our lives in the last few days, is therefore crucial before drinking the cup.

For the new Israel in the first century, the temptation was to break bread with both the Lord Jesus and the idols (1 Cor. 10:21,22). But there is no lack of evidence that this was actually counted as total idol worship in God's eyes; thus the prophets consistently taught the need for wholehearted devotion to Yahweh, and nothing else. In essence, we have the same temptation; to serve God and mammon, to have a little of both, to be passive Christians; to flunk the challenge of the logic of devotion. As the reality of Christ's crucifixion made Joseph and Nicodemus 'come out' in open, 100% commitment, come on them what may, so serious contemplation of the Saviour's devotion ought to have a like effect on us. It has been well observed: "that air of finality with which Jesus always spoke [meant that] everything he said and did constituted a challenge to men to reach a decisive conclusion".

10:24 Let no man seek his own, but *every man* another's (spiritual) wealth" (1 Cor. 10:24)- no matter how little we feel we have to contribute. What this means in practice is that we should be concerned, *truly* concerned, for the spiritual growth of our brethren. This isn't equivalent to a spirit of nosy observation of others' weaknesses.

10:26 The issue of meat offered to idols gives a valuable window into the extent of Divine tolerance. Paul bases his position upon a Scripture, Ps. 24:1, "the earth and its fullness are the Lord's" (1 Cor. 10:25,26). On that basis, he argues that all food is acceptable to eat. But- and this is the significant bit- he accepts that despite that clear Biblical support for his inspired position, some Christians just can't handle it. And he's prepared to accept that. And it appears that different advice was given to different churches on the matter; for the Lord Jesus Himself condemns eating meat offered to idols in his letters to the churches in Rev. 2:14,15,20-25. But Paul says to other churches that in fact it is OK to eat such meat, if you understand that idols are nothing in the world. The advice doesn't contradict; rather does it reflect a sensitivity to different Christian consciences in different areas. Both the Lord and Paul could've just laid a law down from Scripture; but there is a tolerance of the fact that despite clear Biblical support, not all believers are mature enough to accept it.

10:27 "Eat whatever is set before you" (1 Cor. 10:27 RSV) echoes the Lord's words: "Eat whatever is set before you" (Lk. 10:8 RSV). I see no semantic connection between the two passages; so I conclude this is purely an unconscious allusion to the Lord whose words were ever in Paul's mind.

Paul seems to have foreseen the tendency to leave the work of preaching to a few 'specialists' within the ecclesia. He tells *every and any* believer who is invited out to lunch with a non-believer to eat what is set before them; and yet in this piece of advice Paul is quoting the Lord's command to His seventy preachers (1 Cor. 10:27 cp. Lk. 10:8). Surely Paul's point was: 'You're all preachers, just like those seventy specially commissioned preachers, and in your everyday contact with the world, you too have a special commission to preach as they did'.

1 Cor. 10:25-27 and Rom. 14 certainly do give the impression that Paul either ignored or severely modified the prohibitions agreed upon in Acts 15, especially in relation to eating blood (unless the Acts 15 decrees were only relevant to "Antioch, Syria and Cilicia"). Perhaps with later reflection he realized he had compromised too far; or, more likely, he re-interpreted the decrees and sought to keep the spirit of them, which was that there should be unity between Jewish and Gentile believers.

10:33- see on 1 Cor. 4:16.

In the same way as the Lord Jesus came to seek and to save, so Paul appropriates the same two Greek words regarding *his* seeking and saving of others (Lk. 19:10; 1 Cor. 10:33). In 1 Cor. 10:33; 11:1 he bids us follow his example in that he lived a life dominated by seeking to save others- both in and out of the ecclesia [see context]. This may explain why there is little direct encouragement in Paul's letters to preach; not only was his pattern axiomatically an imperative to live a life devoted to witness, but the following of Christ as he did inevitably issued in a life of witness.

11:1 Paul's relationship with and perception of the Lord Jesus is held up by the Spirit as our example. He himself asks us to copy (Gk. *mimic*) the way in which he followed the Lord Jesus (this is what 1 Cor. 11:1 implies in the Greek). His mind was increasingly *saturated* with the Gospels, and with the surpassing excellency and supremacy of the *Lordship* of the risen Jesus.

The idea of consciously modelling, of having some characters as your heroes, your inspiration towards a closer following of God, was very much in Paul's thinking. Not only does he do it himself, but he encourages others to do it. He doesn't use the word 'modelling'; he uses the word 'mimicking', Greek 'mimicos', normally translated "follow" in the AV. This Greek word is used almost exclusively by Paul:

"Ye became *followers* of us and of the Lord....ye know how ye ought to *follow* us...an ensample unto you to *follow* us" (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9; the implication is that in the gap between 1 and

2 Thessalonians, they stopped following Paul as they initially did straight after his conversion of them).

"Be ye *followers* of me" (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1)

"Whose faith *follow* (i.e. that of your ecclesial elders)" (Heb. 13:7)

Be "*followers* of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises", e.g. Abraham (Heb. 6:12)

"Ye, brethren, became *followers* of the churches... in Judea" (1 Thess. 2:14).

So Paul encourages them to mimic him, to mimic Abraham, to mimic the persecuted ecclesias in Judea, to mimic the faithful elders in the Jerusalem ecclesia (e.g. Peter), *so that* they would be better mimickers of the Father and Son. But the idea of mimicking involves a child-likeness, an intellectual humility, a truly open mind. Why Paul used that word rather than a word which simply meant 'to copy' or 'to follow' was perhaps because he wanted to stress that this kind of conscious modelling of your life on someone else involved a real need for openness of mind to the word, resulting in an unfeigned, uncontrived, child-like mimicking. Paul is really encouraging his readers to get involved in this 'mimicking' of faithful examples, of absorbing their spirit into our own by careful, sustained meditation. Will we rise up to it? Or are we still on the level of whizzing through our Bible reading in 10 minutes / day, giving little thought to what we've read throughout the next 24 hours?

"Give none offence (i.e. cause of spiritual stumbling), neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me (in this), even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; the chapter division is wrong). Paul saw that if he gave offence, he was not seeking their salvation. Like Paul, the Lord Jesus didn't please Himself by being selfishly concerned with His own salvation, but pleased his neighbours for their good unto their eternal edification (Rom. 15:2,3).

11:2 It was expected that the disciples of rabbis memorized their teaching, and there's no reason to doubt that the Lord's disciples, both those who immediately heard Him and those who subsequently became disciples of their invisible Heavenly rabbi, would likewise have memorized the gospel records of His words. This would account for the way they are arranged [Mark especially] as series of 'pericopes', small bite-sized sections which lend themselves to memorization. This would explain how Paul can use technical terms for handing on a tradition (*paradidomi*, 1 Cor. 11:2,23) and receiving it (*paralambano*, 1 Cor. 15:1,3; Gal. 1:19; Col. 2:6; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:6); and of faithfully retaining the tradition (*katecho*, 1 Cor. 11:2; 15:2; *krateo*, 2 Thess. 2:15); matched perhaps by John's insistence in his letters that the converts retain that teaching which they received "from the beginning".

11:3 The head of "every man is Christ" only in the sense that "every [believing] man" has this relationship with Him. "Every man" to God is therefore those in Christ. "All" shall be made alive at the Lord's return- i.e. all "that are Christ's" (1 Cor. 15:22,23). "All things" is a title of the church in Ephesians and Colossians, and "any man" evidently means 'any believer' in 1 Cor. 8:10. "All men... every man" means 'all that believed' in Acts 2:44,45.

11:5- see on 1 Cor. 6:4.

11:7 When we read that humanity is the "image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7), it seems to me that Paul is stating something which is only potentially true- for he elsewhere says that we must be transformed *into* the image of God (2 Cor. 3:18), speaking of a progressive renewal in knowledge until we come to the image of our creator (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18). This kind of approach is common in Paul- he speaks of a state of being which we should rise up to, as if we already have it. He's surely inspiring us to rise up to our potential.

11:10- see on Acts 18:18.

The command for sisters to wear hats at ecclesial meetings was "because of the Angels" (1 Cor. 11:10)- because of the physical presence of the Angels there? It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

11:14- see on Jn. 16:2.

11:16- see on Acts 2:46; 1 Cor. 14:38.

The ideal is for a sister to have long hair; but Paul admits, "we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16), as if to regretfully say: 'This is the ideal, but as you know, there is sadly no tradition of this among the ecclesias'.

In I Cor. 11:15,16, Paul speaks about the appropriacy of sisters in Christ having long hair, but he goes on to say: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God". This is admittedly difficult to understand. My suggestion is that Paul is saying: 'The ideal is for a sister to grow her hair long. But I know that once you start saying this kind of thing, some will start getting contentious (and times don't change!). So, OK, I admit, there isn't such a custom in the ecclesias, although ideally I think there should be, so if it's going to cause such argument, OK drop the issue. But for sisters to have long hair is the highest level'.

11:17- see on 1 Cor. 7:17.

11:18 Corinth ecclesia had cases of gross immorality, even incest; some got drunk at the memorial meeting, and some even denied Christ's resurrection. There can be no question that such belief and practice was not ultimately tolerated either by Paul or God. Yet notice the first thing which the Spirit 'takes up' with Corinth. It wasn't any of these more obvious things. It was the fact there was a spirit of factionism within the ecclesia. Paul repeats this emphasis in 1 Cor. 11:18, where in the context of rebuking them for drunkenness at the memorial meeting, Paul emphasizes that *first of all* (i.e. most importantly, Gk.), there are divisions among them (1 Cor. 11:18). This is also what the epistles conclude with (2 Cor. 13:11); Paul doesn't tell them 'Now don't forget what I said about adultery and having concord with Belial'. Instead: "Finally, brethren... be of one mind, live in peace".

11:19 Causing division within the body is therefore a sin which may exclude us from the Kingdom (1 Cor. 11:19 alludes Mt. 18:7).

11:20 Our breaking of bread is *far far more* than *just* religious ritual, although on one level it is that. But we must rise well above this. Israel kept the Passover (cp. the breaking of bread), and yet to God they never *really* kept it. The Corinthians took the cup of the Lord and that of the idols; they broke bread with both (1 Cor. 10:21). But they were told they *could not* do this. They took the cup of the Lord; but not in the Lord's eyes. They ate the Lord's supper; but they had to be told that they were *not* really eating it (1 Cor. 11:20). They turned *His* supper into their *own* supper. They did it, but for themselves. And so in spiritual terms, they didn't do it (1 Cor. 11:20,21). Just as the "Lord's passover" became by the time of the NT "the feast of the Jews". They turned His Passover into their own. Likewise they turned the house of God into their own house (Mt. 23:38); and the Lord called the law of God through Moses as now "their law" (Jn. 15:25). And so we must just accept the real possibility that we can break bread on the surface, but not break bread. We've probably all done this. Don't let it become the norm. Likewise Israel had to be asked the rhetorical question: "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years?" (Am. 5:25). Because they *also* worshipped Molech, their keeping of the feasts wasn't accepted. So I can ask again: Do you *really* break bread?

The Corinthians went through the motions of the breaking of bread; but they were told that in spiritual reality, they weren't doing it at all: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is

not to eat the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20)- although externally, that was what they were doing. They drank the cup of the Lord and also that of idols (10:21)- but in reality, they didn't drink the Lord's exclusive cup of grace. Israel kept their Passovers throughout the wilderness years, one would assume- but they never remembered the day that God brought them out of Egypt (Ps. 78:42)- although notice how although Israel didn't remember God, yet He remembered them in His grace (Ps. 106:7, 45).

11:22 The combined breaking of bread meeting, in Paul's view, wasn't the time to indulge in a huge party, with all the emphasis upon eating and drinking your own food and wine, rather than focusing upon that which God had provided in Jesus. Hence he comments: "Have you not houses to eat and to drink in?" (1 Cor. 11:22). Given almost every reference to 'house' in Corinthians is to a house church or to the spiritual house of God, it would seem Paul's idea is: 'It's OK to eat and drink and have a collective meal etc. in your house church meetings. But don't do that when you all meet together for the breaking of bread- it's getting divisive, because of the social differences between the house groups which are made apparent by the choice of food and drink'. They were to 'discern the body of the Lord Jesus' at those gatherings- i.e. recognize that all of them gathered there, the various house churches of Corinth, were in fact the collective body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29). If anyone was hungry and therefore in need of material support, the combined breaking of bread meeting wasn't the place to raise the issue- he should "eat at home", i.e. take food and support from his local house church (1 Cor. 11:34). That's surely a more reasonable reading, for at face value it would seem the hungry brother lacking food is being heartlessly told 'Well go home and eat!'.

To not offend others, to seek to save them, means that we will not despise them. 1 Cor. 11:22 accuses some brethren of despising others [s.w. Mt. 18:10] in the ecclesia by "shaming" them. If we perceive the value of persons, the meaning of others personhood, we will not shame them in our words, gestures, body language or actions. No "shameful speaking" should proceed out of our mouths (Col. 3:8 RV). Of course, the true believer in Christ cannot be ashamed- for whilst some stumble on Christ, the rock of offence, the believer in Him will not be shamed (Rom. 9:33; 10:11- s.w. 1 Cor. 11:22). For his or her sure hope of the Kingdom "maketh not [to be] ashamed" (Rom. 5:5). Again, if our hope of the Kingdom is real to us, nobody will make us ashamed, will in reality make us feel despised, or make us stumble. The reality ahead will transfix us so that all human unkindness toward us gains no permanent lodgment in our hearts. We do well to review our way of talking and acting to ensure we do not shame others.

11:23- see on 1 Cor. 11:2.

1 Cor. 11:23 associates the themes of betrayal and the breaking of bread- and John quotes the prophecy that "He who feeds on bread with me has raised his heel against me" in the context of Judas breaking bread with Jesus. "Is it I?" must be a dominant part of the breaking of bread experience.

11:24- see on Jn. 6:51.

Paul's comment that as often as we take the bread and wine we "shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:24) is surely an allusion, but not a quotation, to the Lord's comment that He would not take the cup again *until* He returns (Mk. 14:25).

Paul saw the breaking of bread prefigured in Christ's feeding of the 4000 (Mt. 15:36 = 1 Cor. 11:24).

'Broken' can imply divided and shared out. The gruesome record of the Levite cutting up his wife's body and sending parts of the body throughout all Israel has much to teach us of the power of the memorial service. It was done so that all who received the parts of that broken body would "take advice and speak [their] minds" (Jud. 19:30). It was designed to elicit the declaration of their hearts, and above all to provoke to concrete action. Splitting up a body and sharing it with all Israel was

clearly a type of the breaking of bread, where in symbol, the same happens. Consider some background, all of which points forward to the Lord's sufferings:

- The person whose body was divided up was from Bethlehem, and of the tribe of Judah (Jud. 19:1)
- They were 'slain' by permission of a priest
- They were dragged to death by a wicked Jewish mob
- They were "brought forth" to the people just as the Lord was to the crowd (Jud. 19:25)
- "Do what seemeth good unto you" (Jud. 19:24) is very much Pilate language
- A man sought to dissuade the crowd from their purpose- again, as Pilate.

There should be a like effect upon us as we receive the emblems of the Lord's 'broken body' - the inner thoughts of our hearts are elicited, and we are provoked to action.

Broken Body?

Considering how the bread represents the body of Christ leads us to a common query: 'Seeing that "a bone of Him shall not be (and was not) broken", how can we say that we remember the *broken* body of Jesus by *breaking* the bread?'. First of all, it must be understood that 'breaking bread' or 'eating bread' is simply an idiom for sharing in a meal (Is. 58:7; Jer. 16:7; Lam. 4:4; Ez. 17:7; 24:17; Hos. 9:4; Dt. 26:14; Job 42:11). 'Bread' is used for any food, just as 'salt' is used in the same way in Arabic. The breaking of a loaf of bread is not necessarily implicit in the phrase (although it can be). However, we must also be aware of a fundamental misconception which one feels is held by many; that the physical blood and body of Christ are *all* that we come to remember. This notion is related to that which feels that there is some mystical power in the physical bread and wine in themselves. Robert Roberts makes the point in "The Blood of Christ" that "it is not the blood as literal blood that is precious or efficacious". And the same might be said about the Lord's literal body. His body and blood were no different to those of any other man.

The fact that we are asked to symbolize His broken body, when it is stated that His literal body was *not* broken, is proof enough that Christ's body is to be understood as something more than His literal flesh and blood. Indeed, 1 Cor. 10:16,17 seems to suggest that the "body of Christ" in which we partake through the bread is a symbol of the whole body of believers, just as much as His actual body which enabled this salvation. Likewise the Passover was not intended to commemorate the red liquid which flowed from the first Passover lambs, but to remember the salvation which God had achieved for *all Israel* on account of that. Christ bore our sins "in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24)- and it was more in His mind and mental awareness that this was true, rather than our sins being in (e.g.) His arms and legs. Other uses of "body" which require reference to our whole mind and being, rather than our literal body, include Mt. 5:29,30; 6:22-25; Jn. 2:21; Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 6:19; 9:23. Luke's record of the Last Supper shows how the Lord spoke of His body and blood as parallel with His whole sacrifice: "This is my body... this do in remembrance of *me* (His whole way of life- not just His physical body). This cup is the new testament in my blood, which *is* shed for you" (Lk. 22:19,20). Col. 1:20 likewise parallels "the blood of the cross" with "him" (the man Jesus). Rom. 7:4 puts "the body of Christ" for the death of that body; He was, in His very person, His death. The cross was a living out of a spirit of self-giving which *was* Him. The cup of wine represents the promises ("testament") of salvation which have been confirmed by Christ's blood. Note how Jesus quietly spoke of "my body which *is* (being) given for you... my blood which *is* shed for you". The pouring out of His life/blood was something ongoing, which was occurring even as He spoke those words. The cross was a summation of a lifetime of outpouring and breaking of His innermost being, or "body". It is this that we remember at the breaking of bread. The Passover was comprised of the lamb plus bread. The breaking of bread, the Passover for Christians, is wine and bread. The lamb was thus replaced in the thought of Jesus by His blood / wine. He perceived that His blood was Him, in that sense.

It is also worth reflecting how the Hebrew writer saw the torn veil as a symbol of the Lord's flesh. It is just possible that the physical tearing of the Lord's flesh at His death through the nails represented the tearing of His flesh nature, symbolized in the physical tearing of the veil. But the tearing of the veil was something essential and far reaching- not a surface rip. The Lord's death is surely to be understood as a tearing apart of the flesh nature and tendencies which He bore; and it is this we remember in breaking the bread which represents His flesh. Note that to break the bread in a place was an idiom for breaking the life there (Ez. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13; Lev. 26:26). This was what the Lord asks us to remember- not the physical breaking of His body, but the breaking of His life for us and sharing it with us (Is. 58:7).

11:25 The breaking of bread brings us before the cross, which is in a sense our judgment seat. There can only be two exits from the Lord's throne, to the right or to the left, and likewise we are faced with such a choice in our response to the bread and wine. The cup of wine is a double symbol- either of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25), or of condemnation (Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15; Rev. 14:10; 16:19). The very structure of the Hebrew language reflects this. Thus the Hebrew 'baruch' means both 'blessed' and 'cursed'; 'kedoshim' means both 'Sodomites' and 'saints'. Why this use of a double symbol? Surely the Lord designed this sacrament in order to highlight the two ways which are placed before us by taking that cup: it is either to our blessing, or to our condemnation. Each breaking of bread is a further stage along one of those two roads. Indeed, the Lord's supper is a place to which the rejected are invited (Zeph. 1:7,8; Rev. 19:7), or the redeemed (Rev. 3:20). Like the cup of wine, being invited to the Lord's supper is a double symbol. And there is no escape by simply not breaking bread. The peace offering was one of the many antecedents of the memorial meeting. Once the offerer had dedicated himself to making it, he was condemned if he didn't then do it, and yet also condemned if he ate it unclean (Lev. 7:18,20). So a man *had* to either cleanse himself, or be condemned. There was no get out, no third road. The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of "eating... condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. And so it is with us as we face the emblems. We must do it, or we deny our covenant relationship. And yet if we do it in our uncleanness, we also deny that relationship.

11:26 The most evident link between the breaking of bread and the judgment / second coming is in the fact we are to do it "until he come". The Jews expected Messiah to come at Passover, and the Lord seems to have plugged into that fact. 'Until he come' was an allusion by Paul to the contemporary Passover prayer for the coming of Messiah at the Passover meal: "May the Lord come and this world pass away. Amen. Hosanna to the house of David. If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen". Joachim Jeremias translates the phrase: "'Until (matters have developed to the point at which) he comes', 'until (the goal is reached, that) he comes'". He points out a similar construction in other passages relevant to the second coming (Lk. 21:24; 1 Cor. 15:25; Rom. 11:25). Thus each memorial meeting brings us a step closer towards the final coming of Jesus. It would therefore be so appropriate if the Lord did return during a breaking of bread. One day, the foretaste of judgment which we experience then will be, in reality, our final judgment. As we break bread, each time we are 'reminding' the Father as well as ourselves of His Son's work and the need to climax it in sending Him back.

1 Cor. 11:26 AVmg. makes the act of breaking bread a command, an imperative to action: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, shew ye the Lord's death, till he come". If we are going to eat the emblems, it is axiomatic that we will commit ourselves to shewing forth His death to the world, like Paul placarding forth Christ crucified in our lives (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). The Passover likewise had been a 'shewing' to one's family "that which the Lord did unto me" (Ex. 13:8), the redemption we have experienced.

The description of the memorial service as being a 'proclamation' of the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26 RV) is an allusion to the second of the four cups taken at the Jewish Passover: "the cup of proclamation". This was drunk after the reading of Psalms 113 and 114, which proclaimed Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Therefore our breaking bread is our proclamation that we really believe that we have been saved out of this world, and are on the wilderness path to the Kingdom. God forbid, really, that our breaking bread should come down to mere ritual and habit. It is a very personal proclamation of our own salvation- as well as that of the whole body of believers.

11:28

Joseph's Cup Of Divination

The Hebrew for "divineth" means literally 'to make trial'; their taking of the cup was their trial / judgment. Thus we drink either blessing or condemnation to ourselves by taking the cup. The word used by the LXX for "divineth" in Gen. 44:5 occurs in the NT account of the breaking of bread service: 'everyone should *examine* himself, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup' (1 Cor. 11:28). The Lord examines us, as we examine ourselves. There is a mutuality here- the spirit of man is truly the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27). He searches us through our own self-examination. He knows all things, but there may still be methods that He uses to gather than information. Our hearts are revealed to God through our own self-examination. And is it mere co-incidence that the Hebrew words for "divination" and "snake" are virtually identical [*nahash*]? The snake lifted up on the pole [cp. the crucified Jesus] is the means of trial / divination. Through the cross, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed (Lk. 2:35), just as they will be at the last day. Thus the breaking of bread ceremony is a means towards the sort of realistic self-examination which we find so hard to achieve in normal life.

The whole story of Joseph is one of the clearest types of Jesus in the Old Testament. The way His brethren come before His throne and are graciously accepted is one of the most gripping foretastes we have of the final judgment. The rather strange way Joseph behaves towards them was surely to elicit within them a true repentance. He sought to bring them to self-knowledge through His cup. Joseph stresses to the brethren that it is through his cup that he "divines" to find out their sin. He also emphasizes that by stealing the cup they had "done evil" (Gen. 44:4,5). And yet they didn't actually steal the cup. The "evil" which they had done was to sell him into Egypt (Gen. 50:20). They had "stolen" him (Gen. 40:15) in the same way they had "stolen" the cup. This is why he says that "ye" (you plural, not singular, as it would have been if he was referring merely to Benjamin's supposed theft) had stolen it (Gen. 44:15). And the brethren in their consciences understood what Joseph was getting at- for instead of insisting that they hadn't stolen the cup, they admit: "What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (Gen. 44:16). Clearly their minds were on their treatment of Joseph, the sin which they had thought would not be found out. And this was why they were *all* willing to bear the punishment of becoming bondmen, rather than reasoning that since Benjamin had apparently committed the crime, well he alone must be punished. The cup was "found" and they realized that God had "found out" their joint iniquity (Gen. 44:10,12,16). The cup was perceived by them as their "iniquity" with Joseph. They had used the very same Hebrew words years before, in telling Jacob of Joseph's garment: "This have we found..." (Gen. 37:32).

The cup made them realize their guilt and made them acceptive of the judgment they deserved. And it made them quit their attempts at parading their own righteousness, no matter how valid it was in the immediate context (Gen. 44:8). The cup made them realize their real status, and not just use empty words. Behold the contradiction in Gen. 44:9: "With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my Lord's bondmen / servants". The Hebrew words translated "servants" and "bondmen" are the same. Their mere formal recognition that they were Joseph's servants was to be translated into reality. Thus they say that Joseph had "found out the iniquity of

thy servants; behold, we *are* my Lord's servants". Describing themselves as His servants had been a mere formalism; now they wanted it in a meaningful reality. And the Lord's cup can do the same to us. The way they were "searched" (Gen. 44:12) from the oldest to the youngest was surely the background for how the guilty men pined away in guilt from the Lord, from the eldest to the youngest. The whole experience would have elicited self-knowledge within them. The same word is found in Zech. 1:12, describing how God Himself would search out the sin of Jerusalem.

Joseph was trying to tell them: 'What you did to the cup, you did to me. That cup is a symbol of me'. And inevitably the mind flies to how the Lord solemnly took the cup and said that this was Him. Our attitude to those emblems is our attitude to Him. We have perhaps over-reacted against the Roman Catholic view that the wine turns into the very blood of Jesus. It doesn't, of course, but all the same the Lord did say that the wine *is* His blood, the bread *is* His body. Those emblems are effectively Him to us. They are symbols, but not mere symbols. If we take them with indifference, with minds focused on externalities, then this is our essential attitude to Him personally. This is why the memorial meeting ought to have an appropriate intensity about it- for it is a personal meeting with Jesus. "Here O my Lord, I see thee face to face". If it is indeed this, then the cup will be the means of eliciting within us our own realization of sin and subsequently, of our salvation in Jesus.

Joseph's brothers' words are exactly those of Daniel in Dan. 10:15-17, where in another death and resurrection experience, he feels just the same as he lays prostrate before the Angel. Our attitude to the Lord in the last day will be our attitude to Him at the breaking of bread- just as our "boldness" in prayer now will be our "boldness" in the day of judgment. In the same way as the brothers had to be reassured by Joseph of his loving acceptance, so the Lord will have to 'make us' sit down with Him, and encourage us to enter into His joy. There will be some sort of disbelief at the extent of His grace in all those who are truly acceptable with Him ("When saw we thee...?"). The brothers grieved and were angry with themselves in the judgment presence of Joseph (Gen. 45:5)- they went through the very feelings of the rejected (cp. "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in self-hatred). And yet they were graciously accepted, until like Daniel they can eventually freely talk with their saviour Lord (Gen. 45:15). And so the sheep will feel rejected at the judgment, they will condemn themselves- in order to be saved ultimately. The same words occur in Neh. 8:10,11, when a repentant Israel standing before the judgment *bema* (LXX) are given the same assurance.

11:29 1 Cor. 11:29 invites us to *discern* the Lord's body at the memorial meeting. The same word occurs in v.28: "let a man *examine* himself". It's too bad that the translations mask this connection. We are to examine / discern the Lord's body, and to do the same to ourselves. The two are inextricably related. Meditation upon and analysis of *His* body will lead to *self* examination and discernment. In this lies the answer to the frequent question: 'What should we examine at the breaking of bread? Our own sins, or the facts of the crucifixion / resurrection?'. If we think about the latter, we will inevitably be led to think of the former. In the Corinthian context, the body of Christ is to be understood as the ecclesia. 1 Cor. 12 is full of this figure. The need to discern the Lord's body at the breaking of bread means that we must go beyond reflection upon His physical body. We must recognise / discern His ecclesia too. The immediate context of 1 Cor. 11 is of unbrotherly behaviour at the memorial meeting. If we fail to recognise / appreciate / discern the Lord's physical body, we will fail to recognise His brethren. And if we do this, we have made ourselves guilty of His body and blood, we have crucified Him again. This is why I plead with those who use the breaking of bread as a weapon for division within the Lord's body to think again. The body which we must discern at the breaking of bread evidently has some reference to the ecclesia. We thereby place ourselves in a dangerous position by refusing to share the emblems with others in the body, and disfellowshipping those who do so.

Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 10-12 seems to be specifically in the context of the memorial meeting. The issue he addresses is that of disunity at the Lord's table- different groups were excluding others. It is in this context that he urges believers to "discern the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:29)- and the

Lord's body he has previously defined as referring to the believers within that one body. For in 1 Cor. 10:17 he stresses that all who have been baptized into the body of God's people "being many are one loaf, and one body". There's only ultimately one loaf, as there's only one Christ. All within that one body are partaking of the same loaf whenever they "break bread", and therefore division between them is not possible in God's sight. "The bread which we break, is it not the *koinonia*, the sharing in fellowship, of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). By breaking bread we show our unity not only with Him personally, but with all others who are in His one body. To refuse to break bread with other believers- which is what was happening in Corinth- is therefore stating that effectively they are outside of the one body. And yet if in fact they *are* within the body of Christ, then it's actually those who are refusing them the emblems who are thereby declaring *themselves* not to be part of Christ.

Although sects and divisions should not be within the one body of Christ, in another sense there must be such sectarianism that they which are approved may be "made manifest" by their response to it (1 Cor. 11:29)- in anticipation of how we will all be "made manifest" (s.w.) at the judgment (Lk. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:13). In this we see the Divine ecology; nothing is wasted. There must not be divisions; but even when they do occur, they are used by God in order to manifest the righteous and the principles of true spirituality. Thus trial can easily arise from within our ecclesial experience. Although sects and divisions should not be within the one body of Christ, in another sense there must be such sectarianism that they which are approved may be "made manifest" by their response to it (1 Cor. 11:29)- in anticipation of how we will all be "made manifest" (s.w.) at the judgment (Lk. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:13). In this we see the Divine ecology; nothing is wasted. There must not be divisions; but because they do occur, they are used by God in order to manifest the righteous even now.

Our attitude to the cross *and all that is meant by it* is the summation of our spirituality. I normally dislike using alternative textual readings to make a point, but there is an alternative reading of 1 Cor. 11:29 which makes this point so clearly: "He who eats and drinks ['unworthily' isn't in many manuscripts], eats and drinks discernment [judgment] to Himself. Not discerning the Lord's body is the reason many of you are weak and sickly". The Corinthians were not discerning the difference between the Lord's body and a piece of bread, for they were eating the bread as part of a self-indulgent social meal, rather than discerning Him.

The command to *examine* ourselves (11:29) uses the same word as in 3:13 concerning the way our works will be *tried* with fire by the judgment process of the last day. If members of an ecclesia break bread unworthily, they "come together unto condemnation" (11:34). Yet we must judge ourselves at these meetings, to the extent of truly realising we deserve condemnation (1 Cor. 11:31). We must examine ourselves and conclude that at the end of the day we are "unprofitable servants" (Lk. 18:10), i.e. worthy of condemnation (the same phrase is used about the rejected, Mt. 25:30). This is after the pattern of the brethren at the first breaking of bread asking "Is it I?" in response to the Lord's statement that one of them would betray Him (Mt. 26:22). They didn't immediately assume they wouldn't do. And so we have a telling paradox: those who condemn themselves at the memorial meeting will not be condemned. Those who are sure they won't be condemned, taking the emblems with self-assurance, come together unto condemnation. Job knew this when he said that if he justifies himself, he will be condemned out of his own mouth (Job 9:20- he understood the idea of self-condemnation and judgment now). Isaiah also foresaw this, when he besought men (in the present tense): "Enter *into the rock*, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty", and then goes on to say that in the day of God's final judgment, "[the rejected] shall go *into the holes of the rock... for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty* when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Is. 2:10,11,19-21). We must find a true, self-condemning humility now, unless it will be forced upon us at the judgment.

Judging / examining ourselves is made parallel with discerning the Lord's body: as if discerning His body on the cross inevitably results in self-examination, and vice versa (1 Cor. 11:28,29). We must **discern** the Lord's body, and thereby **examine** ourselves (these are the same words in the Greek text). Yet the Lord's body in the Corinthian context is the ecclesia, the body of Jesus. To discern ourselves is to discern the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29,30 RV). By discerning our brethren for who they are, treating them as brethren, perceiving our own part in the body of Jesus, our salvation is guaranteed. For this is love, in its most fundamental essence.

If we examine / judge / condemn ourselves now in our self-examination, God will not have to do this to us at the day of judgment. If we cast away our own bodies now, the Lord will not need to cast us away in rejection (Mt. 5:30). There is a powerful logic here. If we pronounce ourselves uncondemned, we condemn ourselves (Tit. 3:11); if we condemn ourselves now, we will be uncondemned ultimately. This is why the Greek word translated "examine" (1 Cor. 11:29) is also that translated "approve" in 11:19 (and also 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 13:7; 2 Tim. 2:15). By condemning ourselves we in a sense approve ourselves. Our self-examination should result in us realising our unworthiness, seeing ourselves from God's viewpoint. There is therefore a parallel made between our own judgment of ourselves at the memorial meeting, and the final judgment- where we will be condemned, yet saved by grace (James 2:12; 3:1). If we don't attain this level of self-knowledge now, we will be taught it by being condemned at the judgment. This makes the logic of serious, real self-examination so vital; either we do it in earnest, and realise our own condemnation, or if we **don't** do it, we'll be condemned at the judgment. Yet as with so much in our spiritual experience, what is so evidently logical is so hard to translate into reality. The process of judgment will essentially be for our benefit, not the Lord's. **Then** the foolish virgins realise that they didn't have enough oil / spirituality; whilst the wise already knew this (Mt. 25:13). As a foretaste of the day of judgment, we must "examine" ourselves, especially at the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 11:28). The same word is used in 1 Cor. 3:13 concerning how the process of the judgment seat will be like a fire which **tries** us.

11:30 It was due to an incorrect attitude to the memorial meeting that many at Corinth were struck down "weak and sickly... and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30), presumably referring to the power the apostles had to smite apostate believers with physical discomfort and death. Such was the importance accorded to that meeting by them.

11:31 If we perceive ourselves as worthy of condemnation, we will be saved. If we would judge [i.e. condemn] ourselves, we will not be judged / condemned (1 Cor. 11:31). This is written in the context of the breaking of bread. When we examine ourselves then, and at other times, do we get to the point where we truly *feel* through and through our condemnation? If this is how we perceive our natural selves, then surely we will be saved- if we *also* believe with joy that God's righteousness is counted to us. See on Lk. 17:10.

If we would judge ourselves (at the breaking of bread), we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31) in the sense of being condemned. Our self-examination must be so intense that we appreciate that we ought to be condemned; if we achieve that level of self-knowledge now, we will not be condemned at the judgment. In the context of the self-examination command in 1 Cor. 11, Paul is speaking of the need to completely focus our attention on the sacrifice of Christ. Yet this command must have its basis in the directive for Israel to search their house for leaven before eating the Passover (Ex. 12:19). "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven... of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. 5:8). The disciples' question at the first breaking of bread, "Lord, is it I?" is another prototype of the command to examine ourselves at the feast (Mt. 26:22). Combining Paul's command to examine ourselves that we are really focusing upon our Lord's sacrifice, and the Exodus allusion which implies that we should examine our own lives for wickedness, we conclude that if we properly reflect upon Christ and His victory for us, then we will inevitably be aware of our own specific failures which Christ really has vanquished. But this will come as a by-product of truly grasping the

fullness of the Lord's victory. The Passover was to be a public proclamation to the surrounding world of what God had done for Israel. Likewise our feast 'shows forth' (Greek: publicly declares') the Lord's death. Our memorial meeting should therefore include a degree of openly declaring to others what spiritual deliverances the Lord has wrought for us. This is surely the sort of talk that should fill up the half hour between ending the service and leaving the hall.

11:32- see on Lk. 13:28.

Apostate Israel are spoken of as the pagan world; and therefore at the day of judgment the rejected of the new Israel will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32); assigned their portion "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46). If we are not separate from this world now, we will not be separated from them when the judgments fall. If we don't come out from Babylon, we will share her judgments (Rev. 18:4).

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts" (Prov. 20:27); our self-examination is what reveals us to the Lord. What we think about at the memorial meeting, as we are faced with the memory of the crucified Saviour, is therefore an epitome of what we really are. If all we are thinking of is the taste of the wine, the cover over the bread, the music, what we didn't agree with in the sermon, all the external things of our Christianity; or if we are sitting there taking bread and wine as a conscience salver, doing our little religious ritual to make us feel psychologically safe- then we simply don't know Him. We are surface level believers only. And this is the message we give Him. Our spirit / attitude is the candle of the Lord, with which He searches us. Our thoughts when confronted by the cross reveal us to Him who died on it. Likewise Joseph (one of the most detailed types of the Lord) knew / discerned his brethren by his cup (Gen. 44:5). 1 Cor. 11:31,32 further suggests that our self-judgment at the breaking of bread is in fact the lord's judgment of us: "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord". We expect Paul to say: 'But when we judged ourselves, we are chastened...'. But he doesn't; our judgment is what reveals us to the Lord, and is therefore the basis of His judgment of us. Even if we flunk conscious self-examination from an underlying disbelief that we will attain the Kingdom, then this of itself reveals our hearts to Him. Because of this connection between the breaking of bread and judgment, it would seem that the first century church experienced the physical chastising of the Lord in terms of being struck with sickness and even death *at the memorial meeting* (1 Cor. 11:29,30). Thus at ecclesial meetings- particularly the breaking of bread- the early church confessed their sins and prayed for healing from the afflictions some were smitten with as a result of their sins (James 5:14-16). It's easy to forget that the prophecy of the crucifixion in Is. 53 is in fact a confession of repentance by God's people- as His sufferings are spoken about, so they lead to the confession that "He was bruised for *our* iniquities... with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:3,5). Reflection on the servant's sufferings elicited repentance. See on Lk. 2:35.

11:34 If we break bread unworthily, they "come together unto condemnation" (11:34). Yet we must judge ourselves at these meetings, to the extent of truly realising we deserve condemnation (1 Cor. 11:31). If we feel we are worthy, then, we are unworthy. If we feel unworthy, then, we are worthy.

The eating and drinking at the memorial meeting is a judging of ourselves. It's a preview of the judgment. 1 Cor. 11 seems to be concerning behaviour at the memorial meeting. Time and again the brethren are described as "coming together" to that meeting (:17,18,20,33,34). Believers 'coming together' is the language of coming together to judgment. Where two or three are *gathered*, the Lord is in the midst of them (Mt. 18:20) uses the same word as in Mt. 25:32 concerning our gathering together unto judgment. We should not forsake the "assembling of [ourselves] together" (Heb. 10:25)- the same word as in 2 Thess. 2:1 regarding our "gathering together unto Him". The church being assembled (Acts 11:26), two or three being gathered (Mt. 18:20)- this is all a foretaste of the final gathering to judgment (Mt. 25:32 s.w.).

12:3 It deeply costs us to accept Jesus as Lord. Yet for so many moments of each day, we deny Him His Lordship in practice. In the first century, accepting Jesus as Lord was a life and death issue. Pliny wrote to Trajan how accused Christians had to both say "The emperor is Lord" and also curse Christ. Polycarp was urged by a Roman official to submit: "What harm is there in saying 'Caesar is Lord?'" and yet because he refused, Polycarp was killed (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8.2). It would seem that there were some Christians who gave in- and even justified it. For 1 Cor. 12:3 warns that "no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Jesus is cursed!'", and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit". My suggestion is that this is a reference to Mt. 10:17, which comforts believers that when we are delivered up, "what you are to say will be given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you". It would appear that some of the Christians who gave in were claiming that in accordance with this verse, it was the Spirit of God which had made them say "Jesus is cursed!" and deny that "Jesus is Lord". Paul is pointing out that this simply doesn't happen. In our context, the point simply is that to constantly affirm "Jesus is Lord" demands an awful lot from us, and as in the first century, so in the twenty first... we will be sorely tempted to think that just a few moments of denial when in a tough situation is quite OK. But in this there is the true test as to whether really we are under His Lordship or not. We have no court to face, no lions to fear. Instead, we have the court of human opinion, the lions of social mockery, financial loss, the human negatives that arise from the unselfish living which Christ's Lordship demands of us.

12:7- see on Mt. 25:15.

Having spoken of the need to 'discern the body' of Jesus at these gatherings, Paul launches off in 1 Cor. 12 into his explanation of how there is only one body of Christ, but to "each" has been given different gifts and emphases. Sadly many English translations confuse the issue, by speaking of how to "each man" is given a Holy Spirit gift (1 Cor. 12:7). But the Greek definitely means 'to each one', and I suggest it refers to how each house church was given a specific gift. I say that because there is New Testament evidence that suggests that not every single individual believer in the first century had Holy Spirit gifts. That is hard to square with 1 Cor. 12 teaching that 'each one' had such gifts. But remember the context. Paul has been arguing that there is one body of Christ in Corinth, and each house church contributes towards that. The house churches were divided against each other and some groups shunned others. Paul is saying that each of those house groups played a vital role. We can take a lesson from this. Each ecclesia even today has a somewhat different emphasis, and all too easily, ecclesias can divide from each other. And yet this would be a denial of the one body of Christ; we not only need each other individually, each ecclesia needs each other ecclesia in their area, if they are to fully function as the one body. The warning against "schism in the body" (1 Cor. 12:25) applied in the context to there being schism between local house churches, rather than between individuals.

12:11 - see on Mt. 25:15.

12:12 The term "Christ" is even used of the believers, such is His unity with us (1 Cor. 12:12). See on Jn. 3:11.

12:13- see on Gal. 3:27.

Christ "shall baptize *you*" plural (Mt. 3:11) was deeply meditated upon by Paul, until he came to see in the fact that we *plural* are baptized the strong implication that therefore we should be one body, without unnecessary divisions (= 1 Cor. 12:13).

"For *by one Spirit* are we all baptized into one body" of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit seems to be the baptizer. But how? The Lord Jesus baptizes by the Spirit (Jn. 1:33), although He didn't personally hold the shoulders of those He baptized (Jn. 4:2- doubtless to show that who does this is irrelevant). We obeyed the Truth (through baptism) "by the Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:22). This doesn't necessarily mean that the Spirit made us obey the Truth. Rather is the idea that as *Christ*

died and was raised by the Spirit (1 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 1:4), so we go through the same process in baptism, being likewise resurrected (in a figure) by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18-21). It is therefore the Spirit which raises us up out of the water, as it raised Christ; the man holding our shoulders is irrelevant. It is therefore through / by the Spirit that we have our hope of salvation (Gal. 5:5). There is only one resurrection, ultimately: that of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 6:14,15). By baptism into Him, we have a part in that. God in this sense resurrected us with Christ (Eph. 2:5,6), we even ascended into heavenly places in Him, as He rose up into the literal Heavens. And this whole process was achieved by the Spirit. But what does "the Spirit" mean in this context? The Lord Jesus Himself is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). The Spirit is what quickens us; but consider Jn. 6:63: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth... the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are (what gives) life". The process of coming alive with Christ by baptism, the raising out of the grave which the water represents, is therefore due to the work of the Lord Jesus through His Spirit and His word. He is "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). At baptism we are born of (or by) water-and-spirit (Jn. 3:5; the Greek implies one act, combining water and spirit). We were washed by baptism "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). "He that is joined to the Lord (Jesus) (by baptism) is one spirit (with Him)" (1 Cor. 6:17). We are saved "by the washing (baptism) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly by Jesus Christ" (Tit. 3:5,6). See on Jn. 3:5.

12:14 Our baptism was not only a statement of our relationship with the Lord Jesus; it is also a sign of our entry into the body of the Lord Jesus, i.e. the community of believers, the one ecclesia (Col. 1:24). Members are added to the church through baptism (Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 11:24); thus baptism enables entry into the one body of Christ. Consider carefully how that whoever is properly baptized is a member of the one body, and is bound together with all other members of that body: "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body... for the body is not one member, but many" (1 Cor. 12:12-14). Paul, in his relentless manner, drives the point home time and again. He goes on to reason that just because the hand says it isn't of the body, and won't co-operate with the feet, this doesn't mean that it *therefore* isn't of the body.

12:15 When we are first baptized, we can tend to view those who leave our community as simply hard to understand, but we may easily shrug it off. Yet surely we need to do *more*; to *feel* more for them. And to realize that we all leave, in that we can be lost in sin for minutes or hours at a time, having numbed our responsibilities to the Father and Son. And yet, we are in covenant relationship with Him. This means that we do not slip in and out of fellowship with Him according to our concentration upon Him or our spirituality. We likewise shouldn't call those who leave us Mr or Mrs. They are always our brother or sister. We are in a family bond with them. Even if the hand says "I am not of the body, it is not therefore not of the body" (1 Cor. 12:15 RV). These words were written in the context of some of the Corinthian brethren resigning from the ecclesia and joining the various temples of even synagogues in the town. But they couldn't really resign from a relationship with God; resign from the fact that their Lord bled to death for them.

Having reminded us that "by one Spirit are we all baptize into the one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), Paul makes the obvious point- that as members of that body we *cannot*, we dare not, say to other members of the body "I have no need [necessity] of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). To fellowship with the others in the body of Christ is our "necessity"; this is why an open table to all those who are in Christ isn't an option, but a necessity. Otherwise, we are declaring ourselves not to be in the body. Indeed "those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (1 Cor. 12:22). By rights, we ought to be condemned for such behaviour; for by refusing our brethren we are refusing membership in Christ. And yet I sense something of the grace of both God and Paul when he writes that if someone says "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" (1 Cor. 12:15). I take this to mean that even if a member of the body acts like they aren't in the body, this doesn't mean that ultimately they aren't counted as being in the body. But all

the same, we shouldn't stare condemnation in the face by rejecting ourselves from the body of Christ by rejecting the members of His body at the Lord's table. That's the whole point of Paul's argument. Naturally this raises the question: "Well who is in the body?". Paul says that we are baptized into the body (1 Cor. 10:17); and this throws the question a stage further back: "So what, then, makes baptism valid?". Baptism is into the body of Christ, into His person, His death and His resurrection; and not into any human denomination or particular set of theology. If the illiterate can understand the Gospel, if thousands could hear the Gospel for a few hours and be baptized into Christ in response to it- it simply can't be that a detailed theology is necessary to make baptism valid. For the essence of Christ, His death and resurrection, is surely simple rather than complicated. Those who believe it and are baptized into it are in His body and are thus our brethren- whatever finer differences in understanding, inherited tradition and style we may have.

12:21 1 Cor. 12:21 gives something more than a random example: the head (the Lord Jesus) cannot do without the feet (a symbol of the preacher in Rom. 10:15). In the work of witness especially, the Head is reliant on the preacher for the work He wills to be done. He likens preaching to drag net fishing (Mt. 13:47), in which one big fishing boat drags a net which is tied to a small dinghy. God's fishing is thus dependent on us, the smaller boat, working with Him. Thus the harvest was plenteous during the Lord's ministry, but relatively few were converted due to the dearth of labourers (Mt. 9:37 implies).

As John realized the tendency of some to think they could love God without loving His Sons, so Paul tackled the same problem at Corinth. He reasons that "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee... if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if they were all one member, where were the body?" (1 Cor. 12:21). He knew that some would want to go off on their own, and he shows that such behaviour would suggest that they alone were the whole body. He knew that some would think that they had no need of other parts of the ecclesial body; he saw that some would feel that they were so inferior to others that they had no place in the body. All these are reasons why believers push off on their own. But notice that Paul doesn't actually say 'the eye *shouldn't* say to the hand, I have no need of thee'; but rather "the eye *cannot* say to the hand...". Although some may say or feel this, ultimately, from God's perspective, it's simply not valid. Christian disillusion with Christianity mustn't lead us to quit the body. The same logic applies to those who think that the body of Christ is divided; ultimately, there is one body, and from God's perspective this is indivisible. The divisions only exist in the minds of men. Those who say that they don't need fellowship with their brethren "cannot say" this, according to Paul. If they continue on this road, ultimately they declare themselves not of the one body of Christ; although I trust there are many brethren who have done just this who may still receive God's gracious salvation.

Many of those who ungraciously storm out of fellowship with the rest of the body, do so because they complain that other believers are weak, unloving, hypocrites, don't practice what they preach etc. And in many ways, their complaints are true (seeing that the Lord came to heal those who need a doctor rather than shake hands with the healthy). And again, Paul has a comment on this situation. He says that those parts of our bodies "that seem to be weaker...that we think are less honourable... the parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty... with special honour" (NIV). The private parts of our bodies are the parts we are most sensitive to, although on the outside they seem weak and hidden. And so Paul reasons that the weaker parts of the ecclesial body should be treated the same. The Greek for "feeble" (1 Cor. 12:21) is used (notably in Corinthians) to describe spiritual weakness: Mk. 14:38; Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:7,10; 9:22; 11:30; 1 Thess. 5:14. And in some ways, we are all "weak" (1 Cor. 1:27; 4:10). So those we perceive ("that seem to be... that we think") to be spiritually weak in their external appearance, we should be especially sensitive towards. Significantly, the "sick" (s.w. "feeble") in the parable of Mt. 25:44 are the "least" of Christ's brethren, the spiritually weakest; and at the day of judgment, the rejected are condemned because of their attitude towards these spiritually weakest of Christ's brethren.

12:21,22- see on 1 Cor. 12:15.

12:22 Our attitude to the spiritually weak is a vital part of our salvation. Christian disillusion with Christianity ignores this at its peril. Thus "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are *indispensable*" (1 Cor. 12:22 NIV); indispensable for our spiritual development and salvation. So we shouldn't be surprised if we don't like our brethren, if there are things which unbearably bug us about the community. This irritation, this clear vision of the weakness of our fellow believers, is a God-designed feature of our spiritual experience. If the day of disillusion and disappointment with the brotherhood hasn't come for you, it surely will do. But remember how *indispensable* this all is. Consider all the miserable complaints believers make about us: they gossip about me, they actually fabricate things as well as exaggerate, she stole from me, he disregards me, her son *swore* at me, would you believe it (I would); they don't ask me to speak, he's such a hypocrite, and do you know what she did... Let's say every word is true. These weak brethren and sisters who are doing all this are "indispensable" to the salvation of the one who suffers all this, *if* he responds properly. Just walking away from them is to effectively put ourselves outside the body. We *need* them, the Spirit says, we need all the mud, the comments and the undermining and the upstaging and the betrayal, all at the most sensitive and hurtful points.

12:23 Paul, as always, is our hero. For no other believer was tempted to be as anti-Christian as he was. The one who gave his life, his health, his career, his marriage, his soul, for the salvation of others. Only to have confidences betrayed, to be cruelly slandered, to be threatened, to be so passionately hated by his converts that some even tried to kill him and betray him to the Romans and Jews. He talks of how we must honour those who we think are "less honourable" (1 Cor. 12:23). He uses a word he earlier appropriates to himself in 1 Cor. 4:10 (AV "despised"). He's saying 'OK, if you think I'm so weak, so despised, let's say I am. But you should receive me, because I'm still in the body'. And to that there was no answer (and still isn't any) by those Christians disillusioned with Christianity.

12:24- see on Eph. 5:31.

God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mingled" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made. It's like a husband and wife breaking apart their marriage, which God has joined together. It isn't only that we are missing out on the patience etc. which we could develop if we stayed in contact with our brethren. Our indifference and shunning of our brethren is actively doing despite to the Spirit of grace and unity which in prospect God has enabled His people to experience. The body "maketh increase of itself... unto the edifying of itself in love". By remaining in the body, we are built up from what every part of it contributes to the growth of the whole. To quit from our brethren is to quit from that source of nutrition and upbuilding. The earth in the sower parable represents various types of believers; and the Lord went on to say that the earth brings forth fruit "of itself". The community of itself brings forth spirituality in its members. Some of the most Spirit-filled brethren and sisters you can meet are those who have stuck at ecclesial life all their days, really struggled with personality clashes, with endless ecclesial storms and wrangles- but they've stuck it out. And thereby they have remained in touch with, and been moulded by, that Spirit of tempering together which is so fundamental to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"God hath... *given* more abundant *honour* unto that part which *lacked*" (1 Cor. 12:24), as the husband should "(*give*) *honour* unto the wife, as unto the *weaker* vessel" (1 Pet. 3:7). God's dealings with the ecclesia are replicated both within marriage, and within the ecclesia- for we too should give special respect and sensitivity to the weaker parts of the ecclesial body (Rom. 14:1; 15:1).

12:25- see on 1 Cor. 12:7.

12:28 God set the apostles *first* in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 12:28)- but in another sense, God set the apostles *last* in the ecclesia (1 Cor. 4:9).

12:31 1 Cor. 12:31-13:12 implies that Paul was faced with the higher choice of the ministry of love and the written word, compared to the lower choice of exercising the Spirit gifts. By all means compare this with the choice which he had in Phil. 1:21-26: to exit this life was made possible to him, but he chose the higher, more difficult and more spiritually risky option of living for a few more years, in order to strengthen his brethren. See on 1 Cor 7:11.

13 The description of love in 1 Cor. 13, the outline of the fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-26, these are all portraits of the man Christ Jesus. The clearest witness to Him "therefore consists in human life in which his image is reproduced".

13:2- see on Mt. 7:22.

The fact we copy the language patterns of those we are with was true for Paul. The Gospels were so much in his heart that he can hardly speak or write without some reference, consciously or unconsciously, to the Lord Jesus. Thus in 1 Cor. 13:2 I sense that Paul as he is writing (on a human level) was looking round for a superlative to express just how useless we are without love. And the superlative expression he picks is unconsciously taken out of the Gospels (Mt. 17:20): "Though I have all faith *so that I could remove mountains* and have not charity, I am nothing".

Even if we have faith to move mountains- an allusion to the Lord's teaching in Mt. 21:21- we 'are nothing' without love (1 Cor. 13:2). God so respects faith that He may hear the prayer of a believer, even though He considers that person "nothing" because they lack love. Rather like Elijah bringing fire down from Heaven by his faith- and yet the Lord Jesus seems to imply that this wasn't the right thing to have done, because Elijah lacked love (Lk. 9:55). In our self-examination we may perceive how God answers our prayers, our faith is rewarded... and think we're doing OK. But it could be that we are still "nothing". It's a sobering thought. Paul goes on in 1 Cor. 15:2,19 to say that faith can be "in vain", and hope can likewise be merely of benefit in this life. But 1 Cor. 13:3 hits even harder home: a believer can give their body to be burned, for nothing, if they lack love. Remember these words were written, albeit under inspiration, by a believer who did give his body to die a violent death, and who had seen with his own eyes the death of Christians. Surely Paul writes with a warning word to himself; that even that apparent pinnacle of devotion to the Lord can be in vain, if we lack love.

Note how he writes in the first person: "If I have all faith... but have not love, *I am nothing*" (1 Cor. 13:2). It's not only that Paul is warning himself personally; the only other time the Greek phrase "I am nothing" occurs is Paul speaking about himself, also to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:11). There's a kind of association of ideas between the "I *am* [nothing]" and "Love *is* [everything]". Unless we 'are' love, we 'are' nothing.

13:3- see on Acts 7:59.

Let's not equate true love with the mere act of giving aid to charities. We can give all our goods to feed the poor, but lack true love; the life of love, the love of Christ permeating all our being (1 Cor. 13:3 may well have been written by Paul with his mind on some in the early Jerusalem ecclesia, who *did* give all their goods to the ecclesial poor, but lacked a true love, and returned to Judaism).

Some of the legal terms used in the NT for our redemption imply that Christ redeemed us from slavery through His death. And yet one could redeem a slave by oneself becoming a slave (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 3:13; 4:5). This is why the crucified Jesus is typified by the suffering servant / slave of Isaiah's prophecies. And Paul seems to have risen up to something similar when he speaks of giving his body to be branded, i.e. becoming a slave (1 Cor. 13:3 Gk.).

13:4 The device of acrostic Psalms (9,10,25,34,37,119,145) and the use of acrostics in Lamentations and Esther would enable the reciting of them. The repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive sentences is yet another such feature (Dt. 28:3-6; 2 Sam. 23:5; Jer. 1:18; Hos. 3:4; 1 Cor. 13:4; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:12). The same phrase is also sometimes repeated at the beginning and end of a sentence with the same effect (Ex. 32:16; 2 Kings 23:25; Ps. 122:7,8; Mk. 7:14-16; Lk. 12:5; Jn. 3:8 Rom. 14:8 Gk.).

I find it deeply concerning that so many who have committed themselves to Christ are unable to confidently answer questions such as 'What is love?'. To expound the beasts of Daniel's visions is relatively easy- this equals that, that refers to this. But to get to grips with "love" appears to have been given all too little attention. Love is patient / long-suffering (1 Cor. 13:4). But let's not think that patience simply means how we react to forgetting our keys or spilling milk. To some extent, whether we take such events calmly or less calmly is a function of our personality, our nervous structure, the kind of cards we were dealt at birth. I suggest that the long-suffering patience Paul refers to instead has reference to our forgiving attitude to others, rather than applying to whether or not we get frustrated with ourselves. The man hopelessly in debt to his Lord begged for Him to show "patience" (Mt. 18:26). Patience is about not forcing others to "pay me what you owe me". We all have many people in our lives who are in our debt- more such people than we may realize. We have all been hurt by more people, and hurt more deeply, than we realize. Patience is about bearing long with their immaturity, waiting for them, whilst the debts remain unpaid; rather than demanding that they resolve with us before we'll fellowship them.

Love is not "puffed up" (1 Cor. 13:4). Earlier in Corinthians, Paul has warned that "knowledge puffs up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Let us never kid ourselves that because we "know" some things about God, even know them correctly, that we will thereby be justified. It's not a case of simply holding on to a set of doctrinal propositions which we received at the time of our baptism into Christ. For the day of judgment won't be an examination of our knowledge or intellectual purity. This is not to say that knowledge isn't important. Paul had been arguing that if we truly know that God is one, that idols therefore have no real existence, that we are free in Christ to eat any meat- then this knowledge should not lead us to be arrogantly insensitive to our brother or sister who has a less mature understanding or conscience. Love is... not like that. Love therefore restrains our own superior knowledge and bears with those who don't quite 'get it' as they should. Again, our pattern is God's attitude to us who know just a fraction of His ultimate Truth.

13:5 *provoked*- see on Acts 15:39.

Faced by the heights of such challenges, we can easily despair. We are not like this, or not like it very often nor very deeply. But Paul felt the same, even though under inspiration he himself wrote the poem. Paul too realized his failure, the slowness of his progress. When he writes that love is not "easily provoked" (1 Cor. 13:5), he uses the same Greek word which we meet in Acts 15:39 describing the provocation / contention he had with Barnabas which led to their division. Surely he had that on his conscience when he wrote that love is *not* like that.

This love "seeks not her own" (1 Cor. 13:5). This phrase again builds on Paul's earlier argument in Corinthians- that we should act sensitively to others weaker in the faith, not doing things which may make them stumble, according to the principle "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's good" (1 Cor. 10:25). This is quite something. All the time, in every decision, action, position we adopt, we are to think of what would be best for *others* rather than what's cool for ourselves. At the very least, this means that we are to act in life *consciously*- not just go with the flow, reacting to things according to our gut feeling, choosing according to what seems right, comfortable and convenient to us at that moment; but rather thinking through what import our positions and actions will have upon others. It takes *time* to think out what will be beneficial for them. And "love is..." just this. This is a way of life and thinking which it's very rare to meet in people. Almost frustrated, Paul lamented: "For all men seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). 1

Cor. 10:25 spoke of seeking not our own good, but the good of our brethren- i.e. "the things which are Jesus Christ's". But according to Phil. 2:20,21, Paul felt that only Timothy understood this spirit of not seeking our own good, but that of the things of Christ, i.e. our brethren. The life of love is therefore a lonely life. So few 'get it'.

Love is not easily provoked (1 Cor. 13:5)- and here we have an allusion to how slow God was to anger with Israel. As their loving husband He stuck with them for centuries, enduring what would have emotionally shattered many husbands if they endured it just for a few months, and putting up with what most men couldn't handle even for a year. God was slow to anger for centuries, and even then in that wrath He remembered mercy, even in His judgments He desperately sought to find a way to go on with Israel in some form. And we are asked to show that same slowness to anger.

The mind of love imputes no evil to others, as God doesn't to us (1 Cor. 13:5; AV "thinketh no evil", s.w. to count / impute in Romans). The Greek word can also mean that love keeps no records or count of wrong done. We must forgive our brethren as God forgives us (Eph. 4:32). God expunges the spiritual record of the sin, and will not feed it into some equation which determines whether we can be forgiven. Christ "frankly" forgave the debtors in the parable. The frankness of that forgiveness does not suggest a process of careful calculation before it could be granted. God's frank forgiveness is seen too in Ps. 130:3: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand?". God does not "mark" sin, as our love for our brethren should keep no record of their past sins (1 Cor. 13:5-7 N.I.V.). If we refuse fellowship people because of the *effect* of past sins for which they have repented, then we *are* 'marking' iniquity. God does not deal with us in a manner which is *proportional* to the type or amount of sin we commit (Ps. 103:7-12).

13:6 What Paul is advocating is a conscious outgiving of ourselves to love. Not just being a nice enough person, a reasonable neighbour, partner, parent, a "top bloke", real decent guy. But a love which is actually beyond even that. A love modelled on God's love, and the love of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us crucifixion. Paul's poem personifies love as a person- love, e.g., "rejoices with the truth", hopes and endures. We too are to 'be' love. Not just occasionally, not just in ways which we are accustomed to, which are convenient to us, or are part of our background culture such as occasional hospitality to strangers. "Love is...", and we are 'to be' love, as if our very name and soul and heart is '*agape*'. Love is not an option- it's to be the vital essence of 'us'.

13:7 Atonement means 'covering'. Because God covers our sins, we ought to cover those of others. The simple statement "love covereth all sins" (Prov. 10:12) comes in the context of appealing for God's people not to gossip about each others' failures. And the passage is most definitely applied to us in the NT (1 Pet. 4:8; James 5:20; 1 Cor. 13:7RVmg. "love covereth all things"). "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Prov. 11:13). Our natural delight in telling or brooding on the moral failures of others, as if life is one long soap opera, will be overcome if we have personally felt the atonement; the covering of our sins. "He that covereth his [own] sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). The opposition is between owning up to our sins, and trying to cover them for ourselves. If we believe in the covering work of God in Christ, then we will own up to our sins the more easily, confident in His atonement.

Love bears / covers / carries all things (1 Cor. 13:7). This is the language of the cross- the Lord Jesus bearing, carrying our sins, and covering them. If we really grasp this, it ought to make us take a deeper breath. We are being asked to personally enter into the cross of Christ. To not just benefit from it ourselves, admire it from afar, look at it as Catholics glance at a crucifix over the door, pause for a moment in unthinking respect of tradition, and then go headlong through the door. No. We are asked to get involved in the cross, to participate in it, to bear it ourselves. The mind that was in the Lord Jesus at that time is to be the mind which is in us (Phil. 2:5-7).

13:8-10 Paul didn't just start writing his poem about love in 1 Cor. 13. It's wedged firmly in a context, a clearly defined unit of material about the use of the Spirit gifts spanning 1 Cor. 12-14. Having clarified his own authority and personal experience of the miraculous gifts, he proceeds to shew the Corinthians "a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31). He uses a Greek word four times, although most English translations render it inconsistently. It's worth highlighting the words in your Bible, maybe with a note like "s.w." ['same word'] next to them:

- "Prophecies shall *fail*" (1 Cor. 13:8)
- The Spirit gift of "knowledge shall *vanish away*" (1 Cor. 13:8)
- "That which is partial shall be *done away*" (1 Cor. 13:10)
- "Now that I am become a man [mature], I have *put away* childish [immature] things" (1 Cor. 13:11).

I read this as Paul saying that he used the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in his spiritual immaturity; but in his maturity, he chose not to use them, he "put [them] away". Paul also writes of how the miraculous gifts will be "done away" when "that which is perfect [complete, mature] is come" (1 Cor. 13:10). He seems to be saying that his personal growth from childhood to manhood, from immaturity to maturity, is a reflection of how ultimately the gifts will be no more when the mature state has come; and he wishes to attain that state now in this life, and thus he ceased using the gifts. He asks us likewise in this context to follow his pattern, to be "mature" [AV "be men"] (1 Cor. 14:20). This connects with how he speaks in Col. 3:14 of "above all" having love, which is the seal, the proof, of the mature state [AV "the bond of perfectness"]. In his own way, John spoke of the same state when he wrote of "perfect / mature love", and how he who fears hasn't reached the 'perfected-in-love' stage (1 Jn. 4:18). Instead of flaunting the Spirit gifts, Paul sold his soul for love; he gave himself over to the life characterized by the kind of love about which he writes so powerfully in his poem. Paul laments that the Corinthians weren't mature (1 Cor. 3:2), and wishes to be able to speak to them as "mature" (1 Cor. 2:6). So often in the decisions we face in life, it doesn't come down to a right or wrong, a yes or no; rather it's a question of what is the mature Christian behaviour, and what isn't.

13:8-11 Closer study of 1 Cor. 13 suggests that the time of the withdrawal of the gifts was in fact at the time when the Mosaic sacrifices ceased to be offered. There was an interim period between the death of the Lord Jesus and the destruction of the temple in AD70. During this time, various concessions were made to the Jewish believers; they were permitted to obey Mosaic regulations for the time being, even though the Spirit through Paul made it clear that they were unable to give salvation, and were in comparison to Christ "the weak and beggarly elements". The early believers were guided through this period by the presence of the miraculous Holy Spirit gifts amongst them, pronouncing, prophesying, enabling preaching in new areas through the gift of languages, organizing the ecclesias etc. But once the ecclesia came to maturity, the written word replaced the gifts. Most if not all the New Testament was completed by AD70, and this was around the time the gifts were withdrawn. Paul uses the same Greek word several times in 1 Cor. 13, even though it is somewhat masked in the translations. The following words in italics all translate the same Greek word: "Prophecies... shall *fail*... [the gift of] knowledge shall *vanish away*... that which is in part shall *be done away*... when I became a man, I *put away* childish things" (:8,10,11). Paul is predicting how the gifts of the Spirit would be withdrawn once the church reached the point of maturity; but he says that he himself has already matured, and he has "put away" the things of his immaturity- i.e. he no longer exercised the gifts for himself. He presents himself, as he often does, as the pattern for the church to follow. Thus the gifts "shall be done away" in the future for the church as a whole when they are perfect / mature, but for him, he has already 'done them away' as he has himself reached maturity. In the same language as Ephesians 4, he is no longer a child, tossed to and fro and needing the support of the Spirit gifts. He laments that the believers were still children (1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13)- yet, using the same Greek word, he says that he is no longer a child, but is mature. In Gal. 4:3, Paul speaks about how he had once been a child in the sense that he

was under the Mosaic Law. But now, he has put that behind him. He is mature; and yet here in 1 Cor. 13:10 he associates being mature with putting away the gifts of the Spirit.

The same Greek word translated “fail... be done away... vanish away” is used in many other places concerning the passing away of the Mosaic Law:

- “We are *delivered* from the law” (Rom. 7:6). We are like a woman *loosed* from her husband, i.e. the Law of Moses (Rom. 7:2).
- The glory of the Law was to be *done away* (2 Cor. 3:7)
- The Law *is being done away* at the time Paul was writing (2 Cor. 3:11 Gk.). It was *abolished, done away* in Christ (:13,14)
- Christ *abolished* the law of commandments (Eph. 2:15)

Likewise, the prophecy that “tongues shall *cease*” (1 Cor. 13:8) uses the same word as in Heb. 10:2, concerning how the sacrifices *cease* to be offered. The “perfect man” state of the church, at which the Spirit gifts were to be withdrawn (1 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 4:13) is to be connected with how the Lord Jesus is the “greater and more *perfect* tabernacle” compared to the Mosaic one (Heb. 9:11). The conclusion seems to be that the ending of the Spirit gifts was related to the ending of the Mosaic system in AD70.

13:11 The autobiographical section in 1 Cor. 13 shows him confessing that first of all, the public, dramatic work associated with possession of the miraculous Spirit gifts had taken him up; yet he likens that period to his spiritual childhood (note how he uses the same figure of childhood to describe the dispensation of miraculous gifts in Eph. 4:11-16). He seems to have chosen not to use the gifts so much, because he realized that the real maturity was faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these, Paul came to realize, was love. And a true love must be the end point of our lives, as it was for Moses, as it was for Jacob. If Peter's list of spiritual fruits in 2 Pet. 1:5-7 has any chronological reference, it is significant that the final, crowning virtue is love- a love that is somehow beyond even "brotherly kindness". Love is above all things the bond of spiritual perfection (Col. 3:14).

13:12- see on Eph. 1:18; 4:15.

1 Cor. 13 and Eph. 4 are difficult to interpret. A valid case can be made for them meaning that the dispensation of the Spirit gifts was partial, but the completed spiritual man was made possible once the New Testament was completed. I have outlined this in *Bible Basics* Ch.2. But Paul's description of the completed, "perfect" state is so exalted that it is hard to resist applying it ultimately to our position in the Kingdom. "Then face to face... then shall I know (fully, not from parts); but *now* (as opposed to then) abideth faith, hope and charity" (1 Cor. 13:12,13) sounds like the Kingdom. So I would suggest we interpret those passages along these lines: 'Now, in the first century period of Spirit gifts, knowledge is partial; a completer state will come when the written word is finished. But even this is relatively partial, only a necessary step, towards the ultimate spiritual reality and knowledge of the Kingdom'. The parable of the talents speaks eloquently of all this.

Moses is the one who saw God face to face (Num. 12:8). Surely Paul saw the depth of fellowship which Moses achieved in this life as indicative of the richness of felicity with the Father which we will all ultimately achieve.

To describe or 'know' the real self is ultimately impossible; we can't write down an inventory of who we really are. Paul perceived this when he wrote that now he only knows himself partially, and only in the Kingdom “shall I know, even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12). This for me is one of the Kingdom's joys; to truly know myself, even as I am presently known by the Father. Until then, we remain mysteries even unto ourselves; and who amongst us has not quietly said that to themselves... The question ‘Who am I?’ must ultimately remain to haunt each one of us until that blessed day. It would be too simplistic to argue that the new man, the real self of the believer, is

simply "Jesus Christ". Our new man is formed in *His image*, but we are each a unique reflection of our Lord. He isn't seeking to create uniform replicas of Himself; His personality is so multi-faceted that it cannot be replicated in merely one form nor one person. This is why "the body of Christ" is comprised of so many individuals both over time and space; and it is my belief that when that large community has manifested every aspect of the wonderful person of Jesus Christ, then we will be ripe for His return. This is why the spiritual development of the last generation before the second coming will hasten His return; for once they / we have replicated Himself in ourselves in our various unique ways to a satisfactory extent, then He will return to take us unto Himself, that where He 'was' as He said those words, in terms of His character and person, there we will be (Jn. 14:3; note that read this way, this passage is clearly not talking about Him taking us off to Heaven). Ps. 69:32 RV says simply: "Let your heart live". In our terms, God is saying: 'Be yourself, let your inner man, the heart, come to the fore, and be lived out'. Even if we feel we haven't got there 100% in getting in touch with our real self, one of the joys of the Kingdom is that we shall know [i.e. ourselves] even as we are now known by God (1 Cor. 13:12). We never quite get there in our self understanding in this life- but then, we shall know, even as we are known.

Paul speaks as if he has in one sense matured into "love", no longer a child but a man; yet he writes as if he is still in the partial, immature phase, seeing in a mirror darkly, waiting for the day when he would see "face to face". Likewise "Now I know in part, but then shall I know..." (1 Cor. 13:12). It's the 'now but not yet' situation which we often encounter in Scripture. In a sense we have attained to the mature state of love; in reality, we are still far from it. Paul is alluding to Num. 12:8 LXX, where God says that He spoke with Moses face to face and not in dark similitudes. Paul felt that he wasn't yet as Moses, encountering God 'face to face' in the life of mature love. He was still seeing through a glass darkly. But some time later, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he was now beholding the glory of the Lord's face [as it is in Christ] just as Moses did, "with unveiled face", and bit by bit, that glory was shining from him (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). And hopefully we feel the same- that bit by bit, we are getting there. So let's take Paul's urging seriously: to grasp the utter supremacy of the life of love, to "follow after love", to press relentlessly towards that state of final maturity which *is* love (1 Cor. 14:1). Powerfully did Paul conclude his Corinthian correspondence: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).

13:13 In the future Kingdom of God, there will be no need for the miraculous Spirit gifts as they were in the first century. Love is "the greatest" because faith and hope will then have been turned to sight and will be no more (1 Cor. 13:13). A theme of Corinthians is the ability of the believer to live on different levels- e.g. 1 Corinthians 7 advocates the single life of devotion to God as the highest level, but goes on to make a series of concessions to lower levels. It seems that in the matter of the use of the miraculous Spirit gifts, Paul is again presenting a higher level upon which the believer of his time could live- a "more excellent way". He wanted to live the Kingdom life now as far as possible. We "have eternal life" not in the sense that we shall not die, but in the way that we in Christ can live the kind of life we shall for ever live- right now.

14:2 *The Songs Of The Sabbath Sacrifice* was a document used in the Qumran community, claiming that the Angelic choirs of praise to God were reflected in the praises of the Qumran community. They saw themselves as praising God with the "tongues of Angels". A similar idea can be found in the *Testament Of Job*, which also uses the term "tongues of Angels" to describe how the praises of Job's daughters matched those of the Angels in Heaven. These two apocryphal writings include many phrases which are used by Paul in his argument against how the Corinthians were abusing the idea of 'speaking in tongues': "understand all mysteries (1 Cor. 13:2)... in a spirit speaks mysteries (1 Cor. 14:2)... speaking unto God (1 Cor. 14:2)... sing with the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:15)... bless with the spirit (1 Cor. 14:16)... hath a psalm (1 Cor. 14:26)". It would seem therefore that the Gentile Corinthians were influenced by apostate Jewish false teachers, who were encouraging them to use ecstatic utterance with the claim that they were speaking with "tongues of Angels". And Paul's

response is to guide them back to the purpose of the gift of tongues- which was to preach in foreign languages. My point in this context is that even in the Gentile church at Corinth, there was significant influence from Jewish false teachers. So it's no surprise to find that in the area of the nature and person of the Lord Jesus, which was the crucial issue in the new religion of Christianity, there would also be such influence by Jewish thinking.

14:5 All the Corinthian Christians could have been prophets, all could have spoken with tongues (1 Cor. 14:1,5)- but the reality was that they didn't all rise up to this potential, and God worked through this, in the sense that He 'gave' some within the body to be prophets and tongue speakers (1 Cor. 12:28-30). He works in the body of His Son just the same way today, accommodating our weaknesses and lack of realization of our potentials, and yet still tempering the body together to be functional. The fact we fail to realize our potentials doesn't mean God quits working with us.

14:8 The Spirit likens public speaking within the church to the sounding of a trumpet. And "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? (i.e. for the day of the Lord? or the daily spiritual strife?). So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue significant words, how shall it be known (understood) what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air" (1 Cor. 14:8,9 A.V.mg.). One wonders how much 'speaking into the air' goes on from church platforms today. The Old Testament use of 'trumpet' language relates to the following ideas:

- To prepare for war
- To indicate the need to move on
- Convicting others of sin (Is. 58:1; Jer. 4:19)
- Warning of invaders (Ez. 33:3-6)
- A proclamation of the urgency to prepare for the day of the Lord (Joel 2:1)
- The certainty of salvation and God's response to prayer: "Ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God (Old Testament idiom for 'your prayers will be answered'), and ye shall be saved" (Num. 10:9).

All of these elements ought to feature in the work of our twenty first century priests.

14:12 Paul seems to want to inculcate the spirit of ambition in preaching when he told Corinth that they should be ambitious to gain those Spirit gifts which would be most useful in public rather than private teaching of the word (1 Cor. 14:1,12). In similar vein Paul commends those who were ambitious (from the right motives) to be bishops (1 Tim. 3:1). Perhaps men like Jephthah (Jud. 11:9) and Samson (14:4) were not wrong to *seek* to be the judges who delivered Israel from the Philistines.

14:20- see on Mt. 18:2; 1 Cor. 1:19.

14:21 The New Testament has examples of our being expected to deduce things which at first glance we might find somewhat demanding. 1 Cor. 14:21 rebukes the Corinthians for speaking to each other in languages which their brethren didn't understand. Paul considered that they were immature in their understanding because they hadn't perceived that Is. 28:11,12 states that it will be the Gentile non-believers who will speak to God's people in a language they don't understand.

14:21,22 The primacy of preaching to Israel is reflected in Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 14:21,22. He reasons that the Law had foretold that one of Israel's punishments was that they would be spoken to in languages which they did not understand; and Paul applies this to the gift of speaking in foreign languages. He concludes: "Wherefore tongues are a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not... but if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not...". The major example of speaking in tongues was of course to the Jews in Acts 2. "Them that believe not" are clearly the Jews, in Paul's thinking. And Paul's concern is that the Jews should be preached to in languages which they understood, rather than 'rubbing in' their curse for disobedience by speaking to them in languages they didn't understand. His whole thinking is based around the assumption that our priority in preaching is to the Jews.

14:23- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

The missionary drive of Paul was such that he saw in every outsider a potential insider, rather than merely a person to be separate from. Thus 1 Cor. 14:23 implies that the early ecclesial meetings were open for passers by to casually attend; indeed, the breaking of bread seems to have been used as a means of public witness “to shew [proclaim / preach] the Lord’s death” and His coming again.

Paul likewise warned the Corinthians that only a church which was manifestly united, with each member using his gifts in an orderly, sensitive and respectful way... only such a church could convict the unbeliever of Truth (1 Cor. 14:23 and context). And this was all building on the Lord’s clear statements in John 17- that the united church would lead to all men knowing of His grace and truth. This is why the Acts record describes the spectacular growth of the early church in the same breath as noting the intense unity and “all things common” between the believers. The mass conversions stopped after the politics of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, and the division over welfare matters in Acts 6. While that incredible and genuine unity prevailed, converts were made by the thousand.

14:23-25 1 Cor. 14:23-25 seems to imply that unbelievers came into house churches and ought to have been so deeply impressed that they declared that “God is in you of a truth”. They were to be the living exemplification of how, as the Lord had prayed in John 17, the witness of Christian unity ought to be enough to convert the world. We need to give His words there their true weight. To see slaves and masters, men and women, Jew and Gentile, all sitting at the same table celebrating their salvation in the same Lord, with offices of leadership and responsibility distributed according to spiritual rather than social qualifications... this would’ve been astounding to the Mediterranean world of the first century. The way men mixed with women and the poor with the rich would’ve been especially startling.

14:24- see on Heb. 11:7.

Whenever we come before the call of God in His word, whenever we hear the ‘judgments’ of God, we effectively come before His judgment. 1 Cor. 14:24 speaks of those who hear the prophesied word of God as being “judged” and convicted, and the secrets of their hearts being made manifest, just as they will be at the final judgment. Indeed Paul uses the same words in 1 Cor. 4:5 to describe what will happen at judgment day, and repeats them in 1 Cor. 14:25 about what happens when a man in this life is ‘judged’ by God’s word.

14:25- see on 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 9:11.

I’ve pointed out elsewhere how Paul so often alludes to and further interprets the words of the Lord Jesus. In Mk. 4:22 the Lord says: "For nothing is hidden, except to **be revealed**; nor has anything been **secret**, but that it should **come to light**". Paul’s inspired allusions to this can be found as follows: 1 Cor 4:5: "who will bring to light the **secrets** of darkness and will **make public** the purposes of the heart"; Rom 2:16: "God judges the **secrets** of people, according to my gospel through Jesus Christ"; and, significantly for our context, 1 Cor 14:25: "The **secrets** of his heart are made **public / revealed**". The context of 1 Cor. 14 is of behaviour at the memorial meeting, following on from Paul’s concerns about this in 1 Cor. 11 and 12. The point of the connections is this: As the secret / hidden matters of the heart will be judged at the last day, so they are revealed at the memorial meeting. For there, we stand before the cross, and the hidden thoughts of our hearts are revealed.

14:28 Those who had the gift of tongues should only have used it to edify others, speaking intelligible words publicly; but Paul was prepared to allow the Corinthians to speak in tongues to themselves (1 Cor. 14:28), although this seems to go against the tenor of his previous explanation of the *ideal* use of that gift. See on 1 Cor. 7:11.

14:29 How did it come about that the early church knew which books were inspired and which weren't? Paul and Peter were aware that there would be false prophets within the early church as well as true ones (2 Pet. 2:1). These false prophets wrote down their false teachings and claimed they were inspired. So there had to be a system of deciding whether a prophet was true, or false. There was a Holy Spirit gift which enabled the early church to 'discern the spirits' - to know for sure who was inspired and who wasn't (1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Jn. 4:1). 1 Cor. 14:29 suggests that as soon as a person claimed to be 'prophesying' from God, then the person with the gift of discerning spirits was to be present with them and to confirm their words. And Paul goes on to say that anyone who doesn't submit to this, doesn't really have the Holy Spirit gifts.

14:31- see on Eph. 1:22.

14:33- see on 1 Cor. 1:2.

14:34- see on 1 Cor. 7:17.

As I understand 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12 and basic OT precedent, a sister was not to teach brothers at the memorial meeting, which appears the context here in 1 Cor. 14. However, it is evident that women did possess the gift of teaching by 'prophecy' in other contexts:

- To teach other women after the pattern of Elizabeth teaching Mary, and Miriam the women of Israel- both by the gift of prophecy (cp. Tit.2:3,4). The reference in 1 Tim. 2:9 to how women should "also" pray publicly in an appropriate way suggests that there was an organised 'sisters class' movement in the early church. It has been observed: "Where women were kept secluded in Greek society, sisters would be the only ones who could teach them. Teaching by brethren would be difficult in such circumstances".

- To teach in 'Sunday Schools' (there is ample Old Testament precedent for women teaching children).

- To teach unbelievers. This clearly occurred in the early church. Euodia and Syntyche had "laboured side by side" with Paul in the work of the Gospel (Phil. 4:2,3 NIV). Priscilla helped Aquila teach Apollos the Gospel (Acts 18:26). At least eight of the sisters mentioned in Romans 16 are described as workers / labourers. Philip's seven daughters were prophetesses- presumably not speaking the word to baptized brethren, but either to the world or to other sisters.

There's even evidence that there was an organized women's missionary movement in the early church. Clement of Alexandria commented: "The Apostles, giving themselves without respite to the work of evangelism... took with them women, not as wives but as sisters, to share in their ministry to women living at home: by their agency the teaching of the Lord reached the women's quarters without raising suspicion".

All these references to women in the early church teaching would have been anathema to many of the surrounding cultures in which the Gospel spread in the first century: "Not only the arm, but the voice of a modest woman ought to be kept from the public, and she should feel shame at being heard...she should speak to or through her husband" (Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom* 31-32). Likewise the encouragement for a woman to "learn in silence" was a frontal attack on the position that a woman's duty was to follow the religion of her husband and concern herself with domestic duties rather than religious learning. The way the Lord commended Mary rather than Martha for her choice to learn and her rejection of domesticity similarly challenged the prevailing gender perception. There is no doubt that a 1st century Christian woman was far more liberated than in any other contemporary religion. In our societies too, our sisters mustn't concern themselves *only* with domestic duties.

14:35 A woman was to keep silent and ask her husband [Gk. 'man'] 'at [a] home' if she had any questions (1 Cor. 14:35 Gk.). Generations of mystified yet Godly women have read that verse and thought 'But I don't have a man at home to ask. I'm not even married'- or 'But my hubbie doesn't know a thing about the Bible!'. Read in the context of a house church scenario, it makes perfect

sense. The women weren't to interrupt the combined gatherings with disruptively asked questions from the floor. They were to ask the elders back in their house churches. And that's why the Greek in 1 Cor. 14:35 strictly makes a distinction, between the woman not speaking / publicly asking questions in the church, but asking the brethren in a house [church].

14:38 Having explained the truth about Holy Spirit gifts, Paul comments: "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor. 14:38). This recalls his comment in 1 Cor. 11:16 about head coverings: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God". Paul seems to allow for the possibility of some in the church remaining in disagreement with his inspired teaching. His desire, it seems, was to state Divine truth and not to cause division in the ecclesia by insisting that all he said about these procedural issues in church life should be enforced at all costs. Considering he was inspired, this is quite some concession.

15:1 The classic chapter about the resurrection of body, 1 Cor. 15, is also about the resurrection of Jesus. And it is not just a doctrinal treatise which Paul throws in to his letter to the Corinthians. It must be viewed in the context of the entire letter. He has been talking about the correct use of the body- not abusing it, defiling it, in whatever way. And he has spoken specifically about sexual issues. And then in summary, at the end of his letter, he speaks at such length about the resurrection of the body. Seeing that God intends resurrecting our body, our body means so much to Him that Christ died and rose again to enable our bodily resurrection, therefore it matters a lot what we do with our body right now!

15:2 - see on 1 Cor. 11:2.

15:3-7- see on Lk. 23:55.

15:4 *raised on the third day* – this is a quotation from the LXX of Hos. 6:2; is this "the scripture" which Paul has in mind?

15:5 - see on Mt. 17:1; Mk. 16:9.

The graciously unrecorded appearing of the risen Lord to Peter (1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34) may have involved the Lord simply appearing to Him, without words. It was simply the assurance that was there in the look on the face of the Lord.

Mary was the first to see the risen Lord (Mt. 28:1; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 20:1). But Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 15:5 as if Peter was the first witness of the risen Jesus. From his other writings and practice, it's evident that Paul wasn't simply 'anti-women'. But here he's surely making another concession to weakness- for in the first century world, the witness of a woman wasn't acceptable. And so Paul speaks of the first man who saw the resurrected Lord, rather than mention Mary.

15:6 One of the features of newly baptized converts is that they are generally young- often under 25. There are many Biblical examples for young people. The very first converts of the early church were comprised largely of the same age group- and yes, it's possible to Biblically prove this. 1 Cor. 15:6 states that the majority of the 500 brethren who saw the risen Lord Jesus were still alive when Paul wrote to Corinth, about 25 -30 years later. Seeing that life expectancy in first century Palestine was around 50, it would follow that the vast majority of those first witnesses of the risen Lord were under 25.

15:8 When Paul speaks of his sinfulness and weakness, it is nearly always in the context of writing about the privilege and wonder of our commission to preach Christ. He humbly wonders at the trust God places in him, to entrust him with the Gospel. He senses a privilege and responsibility in having been entrusted with the Gospel, to the extent that he can say that his preaching is done more by the grace of God he has received than by the natural Paul (1 Cor. 15:8-10).

The whole idea of conversion and changing, even transforming, one's basic personality was deeply unpopular in the culture against which the Gospel was first preached in the first century. Ben Witherington comments: "Ancients did not much believe in the idea of personality change or

development. Or at least they did see such change- a conversion, for example- as a good thing; it was rather the mark of a deviant, unreliable person... Greco-Roman culture valued stability and constancy of character... the virtuous Stoic philosopher was one who "surmises nothing, repents of nothing, is never wrong, and never changes his opinion". Of course, this mindset was attractive because human beings never like changing- we're incredibly conservative. And whilst we may live amidst an apparent mindset that 'change is cool', we all know how stubborn we are to changing our basic personality, or even seeing that we need to be transformed. And yet, despite the cultural background, the Gospel of conversion and radical personal change spread powerfully in the first century. The radical change in Saul / Paul's life was proclaimed by him as programmatic for all who truly are converted (1 Tim. 1:16)- and for him, this involved a radical re-socialization, seeing the world in a quite opposite manner, losing old friends and considering former enemies his beloved family. Quick, radical, 180 degree change was especially unpopular in the first century- Proselytes, e.g., had to go through a lengthy process to become such. Yet Paul presents the change in him as being dramatic and instant on the Damascus road. Perhaps he alludes to how skeptically this was received by others when he answers the charge that he is an *ektroma*, a miscarriage, one born too quickly (1 Cor. 15:8,9). And he says that indeed, this had been the case with him.

15:9- see on 1 Tim. 1:16.

Paul directly connects his experience of grace with his witnessing: "I am...not meet to be called an apostle...by the grace of God I am what I am [an apostle / preacher] and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured [as an apostle, in preaching] more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1 Cor. 15:9,10). He surely isn't boasting that he was worked and preached harder than others. Rather Paul sees a direct connection between the grace of forgiveness that so abounded to him to a greater level than to others, and his likewise abounding preaching work. He speaks as if a man called 'The grace of God' did the work, not him. So close was and is the connection between receipt of grace and labour in the Gospel (he makes the same connection in Eph. 3:8). Note that in the context of 1 Cor. 15, Paul is demonstrating the reality of the Lord's resurrection. Because of it, he received grace and therefore he preached it.

15:10 - see on Acts 23:6.

Gal. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 15:10 show Paul using the phrase "yet not I but...." to differentiate between his natural and spiritual self. Perhaps he does the same in the only other occurrence of the phrase, in 1 Cor 7:10: "And unto the married I command, yet not I [the natural Paul], but the Lord [the man Christ Jesus in the spiritual Paul], Let not the wife depart from her husband".

When Paul speaks of how he laboured more abundantly than all, he seems to be making one of many allusions back to incidents in the Gospels, this time to Lk. 7:47, where the Lord comments that Mary loved much, because she was forgiven much. It was as if the Lord didn't need to have knowledge of her sins beamed into Him by a bolt of Holy Spirit; He perceived from her great love how much she had sinned and been forgiven. Paul really felt that Mary was his example, his pattern. And so should we feel. The much love which she had for her Lord was, in Paul's case, articulated through preaching Him

We are, in the very end, Yahweh manifested to this world, through our imitation of the Lord Jesus. Paul was alluding to the Yahweh Name (as he often does) when he wrote: "... by the grace of God *I am what I am*" (1 Cor 15:10). Paul was especially chosen to bear the Name (Acts 9:15). 'Yahweh' means all of three things: I am who I am, I was who I was, and I will be who I will be. It doesn't *only* mean 'I will be manifested in the future' in a prophetic sense; that manifestation has been ongoing, and most importantly it *is* going on through us here and now. Paul felt Yahweh's insistent manifestation of the principles of His Name through and in himself and his life's work. We are right now, in who we *are*, Yahweh's witnesses to Himself unto this world, just as Israel were meant to have been. Thus he felt "jealous with the jealousy of God" over his converts (2 Cor. 11:2); jealousy

is a characteristic of the Yahweh Name, and Paul felt it, in that the Name was being expressed through him and his feelings. His threat that "I will not spare" (2 Cor. 13:2) is full of allusion to Yahweh's similar final threats to an apostate Israel. "As *he is* [another reference to the Name] so *are we* in this world" (1 Jn. 4:17). Appreciating this means that our witness is to be more centred around who we essentially *are* than what we *do*. The fact God's Name is carried by us, the righteousness of it imputed to us, should lead us to a greater awareness of His grace. Paul alludes to how he carried the Yahweh Name when he says that "by the grace of God *I am what I am*" (1 Cor. 15:10). And his response was therefore to labour abundantly. A theme of Malachi is that Israel failed to appreciate God's Name of Yahweh, and *therefore* they were half-hearted in their service. They gave the minimum to God, they were partial in their generosity, because they despised His Name. The fullness and richness of the Name, of who God is, a God *full* of grace and truth (Ex. 34:6 RV), should lead us to a fullness of response. For the sake of the Name, believers labour (Rev. 2:13). To know the name of Yahweh is an imperative to serve Him (1 Chron. 28:9). The greatness of the Name should have led to full and costly sacrifices (Mal. 1:6-8,9-11,14; 2:2). Thinking upon the Name led the faithful to pay their tithes and fellowship with each other (Mal. 3:6,10). Giving unto Yahweh the glory due to His Name is articulated through giving sacrifice (Ps. 96:8).

There is an interplay between God's calling of men, and human participation in that outreach. The case of Paul exemplifies this. Without the vital work of Ananias, he wouldn't have been able- in one sense- to come to Christ. And yet it was God who called Paul. 'Ananias' means 'the grace of God'. And several times Paul alludes to this, saying that "By [Gk. 'on account of'] the grace of God [i.e. Ananias] I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:14). His conversion was by both God and Ananias. And thus we see the seamless connection in every conversion between God's role, and that of the preacher.

15:14 He preached, and *so* the Corinthians believed (1 Cor. 15:11). "Our preaching" and "your faith" are paralleled in 1 Cor. 15:14.

Because Christ rose, we have not believed and preached "in vain" (1 Cor. 15:14). Because He rose, therefore "awake to righteousness and sin not" (15:34)- for He is our representative. We labour for Him because our faith in His resurrection is not "in vain". Our faith in His resurrection is not in vain (:2,14), and our labour is therefore not in vain (:58) because it is motivated by His rising again. The grace of being able to believe in the resurrection of Jesus meant that Paul "laboured abundantly" (:10). And he can therefore bid us follow his example- of labouring abundantly motivated by the same belief that the Lord rose (:58)

15:20 We are the firstfruits (Rev. 14:14), and yet in some ways the Lord Jesus was the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20,23). Because we are in Him, and because God sees the gap between His exaltation and ours as irrelevant, we are called "the firstfruits" too. This is why Rom. 1:4 Gk. and 2 Cor. 5:14,15 RSV speaks as if ultimately there is only one resurrection: that of the Lord Jesus, in which we had a part as being in Him. The appearing of Christ is paralleled with our appearing with Him in glory (Col. 3:4)- because effectively, when He returns, we will appear with Him in the same moment.

15:21- see on Rev. 20:5.

15:22- see on Jn. 5:21.

15:24 1 Cor.15:24 speaks of "the end" of the Millennium, when he will have put down "all rule and all authority and power"; he will reign until "all enemies" are subdued. There will still be enemies of Christ throughout the Millennium; and there will also be human rulers and powers opposed to Him, to some degree, until they are finally subdued at "the end" of the Millennium. As Solomon's reign featured local rulers still existing in surrounding lands, so there is reason to think that Christ's Kingdom will still feature local human rulers of some kind, who may not be forced to be subject to Him. It takes time for the little stone to destroy the kingdoms of men, and totally establish God's Kingdom. Zeph.3:19 speaks of the Jews getting glory and praise in every nation which have

persecuted them. The lands of their dispersion, Russia, Germany etc., will then recognize the spiritual status of God's people. This in itself implies that humanity will not be one homogeneous mass. The *nations* will decide to go up to worship God at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16); hinting at some kind of high level national decision by their leaders, as well as the individual desire of ordinary people from all nations?

15:26 As in our own day, literature and thought of Bible times tried to minimize death. Yet in both Old and New Testaments, death is faced for what it is. Job 18:14 calls it "the king of terrors"; Paul speaks of death as the last and greatest enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). Humanity lives all their lives "in fear of death" (Heb. 2:17). Facing death for what it is imparts a seriousness and intensity to human life and endeavour, keeps our sense of responsibility to God paramount, and the correct functioning of conscience all important. We see this in people facing death; but those who've grasped Bible truth about death ought to live like this all the time, rejoicing too that we have been delivered from it.

15:27 In the end, all the enemies of Jesus will be placed "under His footstool" (Acts 2:35 etc.). Yet we were all His enemies, due to the alienation with Him caused by our sin (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21). The Lord's footstool is the place where His people are figuratively located, praising Him there (Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Lam. 2:1). Ultimately, all things will be subjected under Jesus, placed at the Lord's footstool, under His feet (1 Cor. 15:27). Submission to Him is therefore the ultimate end of both the righteous and the wicked; the difference being, that the righteous submit to Him now, rather than in the rejection and final exaltation of the Lord over them in the condemnation process.

15:28 Then God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28), through the full expression of His Name. But Eph. 1:23 says that right now, *all* the fullness of God fills "all in all" in the church; in other words we should now be experiencing something of that total unity which will then be physically manifest throughout all creation.

Eph. 4:8 states that Jesus ascended in order to give the Spirit gifts to men, as He stressed in His discourse in the Upper Room. Then v.10 says that He ascended "that He might fill (s.w. Him that filleth all in all with the fullness, Eph. 1:23) all things" (the saints). Note in passing how the phrase "all things" and "all in all" are used about the saints. The latter phrase is used solely in this context of the saints (Col. 3:11 is a good example), and this is how we should read 1 Cor. 15:28 "God may be all in all" - i.e. that God may be manifested completely in all His *saints* (not just 'in all creation generally'), who lived both before and during the Millennium. So the Spirit, in its' manifestation in the gifts or the word, was in order for us to be filled, to come, v.13, to the "stature of the fullness of Christ" - which is God's fullness.

15:30 Lk. 8:23 = 1 Cor. 15:30. Paul felt that if he gave up his faith, he'd be like those faithless disciples in the storm on Galilee.

Paul found that every hour of his life, he was motivated to endure by Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:30); this was how deep was his practical awareness of the power of that most basic fact.

15:31 "I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31 RV). By this he perhaps means that because he was daily crucified with Christ, he was thereby able to rejoice in them; to overcome the pain and hurt which their treatment of him would naturally give rise to, because he could be another person. That new person could rejoice in the Corinthians and view them so positively.

Paul could say that he died daily (1 Cor. 15:31); and out of each death, there comes forth new life. For His resurrection life, the type of life that He lived and lives, becomes manifest in our mortal flesh right now (2 Cor. 4:11).

15:32- see on Is. 22:13; Rev. 19:10.

Paul quotes Solomon's words in Ecc. 2:24 as the words of those who have no faith that there will be a resurrection (1 Cor. 15:32). The rich fool likewise disbelieved the resurrection, and his words also allude to those of Solomon (Lk. 12:19 = Ecc. 2:24; 11:9).

15:34- see on 1 Cor. 4:14.

We died and rose with Christ, if we truly believe in His representation of us and our connection with Him, then His freedom and sense of conquest will be ours; as the man guilty of blood was to see in the death of the High Priest a representation of his own necessary death, and thereafter was freed from the limitations of the city of refuge (Num. 35:32,33). Because Christ really did rise again, and we have a part in that, we must *therefore* abstain from sin, quit bad company and labour with the risen, active Lord (1 Cor. 15:34,58).

One of the greatest false doctrines of all time is the trinity- which claims that there are three "persons" in a Godhead. Trinitarian theologians borrowed a word- *persona* in Latin, *personon* in Greek- which was used for the mask which actors wore on stage. But for us, God doesn't exist in personas. He exists, as God the Father. And we practice the presence of that God. The real, true God, who isn't acting, projecting Himself through a mask, playing a role to our eyes; the God who is so crucially real and *alive*, there at the other end of our prayers, pulling at the other end of the cord... What we know of Him in His word is what and who He really is. It may not be *all* He is, but it is all the same the truth of the real and living God. And this knowledge should be the most arresting thing in the whole of our existence. So often the prophets use the idea of "knowing God" as an idiom for living a life totally dominated by that knowledge. The new covenant which we have entered is all about 'knowing' Yahweh. And Jer. 31:34 comments: "They shall all know me... for I will forgive their iniquity". The knowledge of God elicits repentance, real repentance; and reveals an equally real forgiveness. It is possible for those in Christ to *in practice* not know God at all. Thus Paul exhorted the Corinthian ecclesia: "Awake to righteousness and sin not: for some have no knowledge of God" (1 Cor. 15:34 RV). The knowledge and practice of the presence of God ought to keep us back from sin. Ez. 43:8 RV points out how Israel were so wrong to have brought idols into the temple: "in their setting of their threshold by my threshold, and their door post beside my door post, and there was but the wall between me and them". How close God was ought to have made them quit their idolatry. But their cognizance of the closeness of God was merely theoretical. They didn't feel nor respond to the wonder of it. And truly, He is not far from every one of us.

15:35 Where and when and how the judgments of Father and Son are finally manifested and outplayed isn't the most important thing. The *essence* of their judgment is what needs to concern us. Tragically we as a community have all too often been like the foolish questioner Paul envisages in 1 Cor. 15:35; he was preoccupied with *how* the body would come out of the grave, rather than on the essence of the fact that as we sow now, as we now allow God's word to take root in us, so we will receive in the nature of the eternal existence which we will be given at the judgment. I'm not saying that how we are raised etc. is unimportant; but it's importance hinges around its practical import for us. All too easily we can bat these questions around with no attention to their practical relevance for us.

15:38 The word of God / the Gospel is as seed (1 Pet. 1:23); and yet we believers end our lives as seed falling into the ground, which then rises again in resurrection to be given a body and to eternally grow into the unique type of person which we are now developing (1 Cor. 15:38). The good seed which is sown is interpreted by the Lord both as the word of God (Lk. 8:11), and as "the children of the Kingdom" (Mt. 13:38). This means that the word of the Gospel becomes flesh in us as it did in our Lord.

15:43- see on 1 Cor. 8:9.

15:45 Be aware that the original writers didn't have quotation marks or brackets (consider where Paul might have used them in 1 Cor. 15:45-47!).

There was a first century Jewish speculation that Adam would be re-incarnated as Messiah. Paul's references to Adam and Christ in Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:45-47 are very careful to debunk that idea. Paul emphasized that no, Adam and Jesus are different, Jesus is superior to Adam, achieved what Adam didn't, whilst all the same being "son of man". And this emphasis was effectively a denial by Paul that Jesus pre-existed as Adam, or as anyone. For Paul counters these Jewish speculations by underlining that the Lord Jesus was *human*. The hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 is really a setting out of the similarities and differences between Adam and Jesus- and unlike Adam, Jesus did not even consider equality with God as something to be grasped for (Gen. 3:5). The record of the wilderness temptations also appears designed to highlight the similarities and differences between Adam and Jesus- both were tempted, Adam eats, Jesus refuses to eat; both are surrounded by the animals and Angels (Mk. 1:13).

15:47- see on Mt. 3:7.

The apocryphal Jewish *Book of Enoch* held that the "Son of man" figure personally pre-existed (1 Enoch 48:2-6; 62:6,7). The idea of personal pre-existence was held by the Samaritans, who believed that Moses personally pre-existed. Indeed the idea of a pre-existent man, called by German theologians the *urmensch*, was likely picked up by the Jews from the Persians during the captivity. Christians who believed that Jesus was the prophet greater than Moses, that He was the "Son of man", yet who were influenced by Jewish thinking, would therefore come to assume that Jesus also personally pre-existed. And yet they drew that conclusion in defiance of basic Biblical teaching to the opposite. Paul often appears to allude to these Jewish ideas, which he would've been familiar with, in order to refute and correct them. Thus when he compares Jesus and Adam by saying: "The first man is of the earth, the second man is from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:45-47), he is alluding to the idea of Philo that there was an earthly and heavenly man; and one of the Nag Hammadi documents *On The Origin Of The World* claims that "the first Adam of the light is spiritual... the second Adam is soul-endowed". Paul's point is that the "second Adam" is the now-exalted Lord Jesus in Heaven, and not some pre-existent being. Adam was "a type of him who was to come" (Rom. 5:14); the one who brought sin, whereas Christ brought salvation. Paul was alluding to and correcting the false ideas- hence he at times appears to use language which hints of pre-existence. But reading his writings in context shows that he held no such idea, and was certainly not advocating the truth of those myths and documents he alluded to.

15:49- see on Col. 1:15.

When Paul writes of our being transformed into "the image of Christ" (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49) he seems to have in mind Ez. 1:28 LXX: "The appearance of the image of the glory of the Lord". "The glory" in Ezekiel is personified- it refers to a person, and I submit that person was a prophetic image of Jesus Christ. But Paul's big point is that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the Lord's glory (2 Cor. 3:16- 4:6); just as he did on the Damascus road, and just as Ezekiel did. It follows, therefore, that not only is Paul our example, but our beholding of the Lord's glory propels us on our personal commission in the Lord's service, whatever it may be. See on Acts 9:3.

15:50- see on 1 Cor. 5:5.

15:52- see on 1 Thess. 4:17.

"In a moment... the dead shall be raised incorruptible (i.e.) we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). "The dead" here refers to the group of dead believers who will be found worthy. Their immortality will be granted to them together, as a group, "in a moment". Yet in a sense we will each receive our reward immediately after our interview with the Lord- another powerful indicator that the meaning of time must be collapsed at the day of judgment. The words of Mt. 25:34 are spoken collectively: "Come, ye (not 'thou', singular) blessed... ye gave me meat... then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, When saw we thee an hungered...".

"Raised incorruptible" (1 Cor. 15:52)

The One Body of believers has been divided over the interpretation of this passage. Some see in it clear teaching that we emerge from the grave immortal, and therefore the judgment is only for the dividing up of rewards rather than the granting of immortality to mortal bodies.

Biblical Objections

There are a number of objections to this interpretation from other parts of Scripture:

- "We shall all be *changed*... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be *changed*. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is *swallowed up* in victory" (1 Cor. 15:51-54). The rebuilding / raising up incorruptible is the "change", the mortal putting on immortality, death being swallowed up. All these phrases are rather uncomfortable within a scenario of immortal emergence from the grave. If the mortal bodies of saints are even further humbled before the piercing analysis of the judgment seat and *then* swallowed up in victory, clothed upon with immortality- these words find their natural fulfillment.
- Paul speaks of us being *clothed upon* with immortality at the judgment (2 Cor. 5:2,4,10 RV), as if we exist in a form which lacks the clothing of immortality, but is then 'clothed upon'.
- At the Lord's coming, our vile body will be changed to be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:20,21).
- God will quicken our *mortal bodies* (Rom. 8:11). The mortal bodies of Paul and the Romans have yet to be quickened; therefore they must be resurrected mortal and then quickened. However, it could be that Rom. 8:11 is one of several expectations of the second coming within the lifetime of the first century believers.
- At the judgment seat, we will receive a recompense for the things we have done, in a bodily form (2 Cor. 5:10). Of the flesh we will reap corruption, of the spirit: life everlasting (Gal. 6:7,8).
- We *will be* justified and *be* condemned by our account at the day of judgment- not at resurrection (Mt. 12:36,37).
- The nobleman came, called his servants, reckoned with them, and only then was taken from the slothful servant even that which he seemed to have- at the judgment, not the resurrection (Lk. 19:12-26). The unprofitable are cast into outer darkness at the judgment, not the resurrection.
- The sheep go away *into life eternal* and the goats *go away into death*- after the judgment process. It is hard to square this with immortal emergence before the judgment.
- "Come, inherit the Kingdom" (Mt. 25:34) is spoken at the end of the judgment process. Only then will the faithful inherit the Kingdom and thereby receive immortality.
- The Lord will raise up the dead and quicken (i.e. immortalise) whom He will of those He has raised up (Jn. 5:21).
- 1 Thess. 4:17 teaches that the dead are raised and go with the living to the judgment, where sheep and goats are divided finally. It seems inappropriate for already immortalised believers to be judged and rewarded.
- When a man is tried (always elsewhere translated "approved") he will receive the crown on life- the crown which will be given at the last day (James 1:12 cp. 2 Tim. 4:8). The approval is surely not in the physical fact of resurrection- for the rejected will also experience this.
- If immortality is given at the resurrection rather than at the judgment, we would have to read 'resurrection' as a one off act; and yet it evidently refers to a process, something more than the act of coming out of the grave. The fact there will not be marriage "in the resurrection" is proof enough of this- it refers to more than the act of coming out of the grave. Also, if immortality is not given at the judgment, this creates a problem in respect of those who are alive at the Lord's return. Are we to believe that they will just be made immortal in a flash when the Lord comes, with no judgment?
- Immortal emergence inevitably means that men live with no fear of judgment to come. And yet the very fact of future judgment is an imperative to repentance (Acts 17:31; 2 Pet. 3:11). Admittedly,

there is the danger that judgment can be over-emphasised to the point that God seems passive now, reserving all judgment until the last day. Both extremes must be avoided.

What Does It Mean?

Taking the passage as it stands, it is quite possible to place it alongside several other Pauline passages which speak of the whole process of resurrection-judgment-immortalization as one act. This may be because he sometimes writes as if he assumes his readership will all be worthy of acceptance into the Kingdom, and will not be rejected. If we see our brethren as truly in Christ and therefore acceptable with Him, clothed in His righteousness, and seeing we cannot judge in the sense of condemning them, this ought to be a pattern for us. Judgment in the sense of condemnation will not pass upon those who will be in the Kingdom, although this doesn't mean that therefore they will not stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The Gospels likewise speak of both the resurrection and the judgment process as occurring at "the last day" (Jn. 11:24; 12:48); as if the "resurrection" includes the judgment process. The way 'the resurrection' can be 'better' or 'worse' (Heb. 11:35) and of two kinds (Jn. 5:29) further indicates that the term cannot be limited to just the emergence from the ground.

However, there is another reason why Paul wrote as he did. We have shown in Appendix 1 that the meaning of time will be collapsed at the period of the Lord's return and judgment. It is therefore quite possible that in terms of real time, the resurrection-judgment-immortalization process will take place in a micro second. To an onlooker, there would appear to be immortal emergence (cp. how the record of creation is described as an onlooker would have seen it). But if we were to break the process down, there would be the resurrection, coming forth as a mortal body, gathering to judgment, discussion with the judge, giving of reward, immortalization. Paul saw the trumpet blast as the signal of both the call to judgment (1 Thess. 4:17) and also the moment of glorification (1 Cor. 15:52).

Against the proposition that "raised incorruptible" in 1 Cor. 15:52 means an immortal emergence in theological terms, the following points should be considered:

- Paul doesn't say 'the dead are resurrected incorruptible', but rather that they are raised (Gk. *egeiro*) incorruptible. If he referred to actual resurrection, he would surely have used the word *anastasis*. But he doesn't. *Egeiro* is used of rising up from sickness (Mk. 1:37), rising in judgment (Mt. 12:42), the raising up of men as prophets (Mt. 11:11), raising up a Saviour (Lk. 1:69), the raising up of Pharaoh to do God's will (Rom. 9:17), to rise up against, to raise up a building. These are all processes leading to a completed action, not a simple one time action. Therefore it is not unreasonable to interpret Paul's words as does Bro. John Thomas: 'the dead shall be rebuilt incorruptible', referring to the whole process rather than just the coming out of the ground.
- The seed is sown "a natural body" (1 Cor. 15:44)- a *psuchikon soma*, a living body. This raises a question as to whether Paul is really talking about a *dead* body going into the grave and then coming out immortal. 1 Cor. 15:36 speaks of the seed as being sown, being scattered, right now (*speiro* in the active voice). This is almost certainly one of Paul's many allusions back to the Gospels- this time, to the parable of the sower. The seed is being sown now, and we respond to it. The seed is sown in the corruption, dishonour and weakness of this present nature (15:42,43). But that seed ("it") will be raised / rebuilt in an incorruptible, glorious body; this is the power of the seed of the Gospel.

All this reasoning is in the context of 1 Cor. 15:35,36: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool...". To max out on the exact form in which we emerge from the grave is *foolish*, Paul says. And yet some of us have done just that. Surely Paul is saying 'Don't get distracted by this issue as a physicality *in itself*'. The point is, as the seed of the Gospel is sown in you day by day, so in a corresponding way you will be rebuilt in the glory of the resurrection. So sow to the spirit, for as you sow you will reap (cp. Gal. 6:7,8)'.

15:53 When the Lord spoke of how the faithful will be clothed by Him in a robe (Mt. 22:11; Lk. 15:22), He is connecting with the usage of “clothing” as a symbol of the covering of righteousness which He gives, and which also represents the immortality of the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:53,54; 2 Cor. 5:2-5). The choice of clothing as a symbol is significant; the robe covered all the body, except the face. The individuality of the believer still remains, in the eyes of Christ. What we sow in this life, we will receive in the relationships we have in the Kingdom; there will be something totally individual about our spirituality then, and it will be a reflection of our present spiritual struggles. This is Paul's point in the parable of the seed going into the ground and rising again, with a new body, but still related to the original seed which was sown.

15:54- see on Rom. 1:3.

15:57 There were in the early church standard acclamations or doxologies which may reflect common phrases used in prayers throughout the early brotherhood- just as there are certain phrases used in prayers throughout the world today. “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” is an acclamation that crops in up in some form or other in 1 Cor. 15:57; Rom. 6:17; 7:25; 2 Cor. 2:14; 8:16; 9:15. Likewise “God... to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 3:15; Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:21; 2 Tim. 4:18; 1 Tim. 1:17).

15:58- see on 2 Cor. 8:7.

The fact we are really and truly witnessing for Jesus, in His Name, doing His work, ought to endlessly inspire us to unflagging labour in this enterprise. We are to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord” Jesus, knowing it is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). And yet it is the work of preaching which has just been defined as not being in vain (:14); the more abounding labour is in the work of preaching (:10). Preaching is the work of the Lord Jesus in that He is working through us to do His saving work, and therefore we ought to be constantly active in His cause.

His preaching ministry was proportional to the grace he had received, and in this he saw himself as a pattern to us all (1 Tim. 1:12-16). He makes the connection even more explicit in his argument in 1 Cor. 15:10 and 58: “His grace which was bestowed upon me was *not in vain*; but I *laboured* more *abundantly* than they all” is then applied to each of us, in the final, gripping climax of his argument: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always *abounding* [as Paul did] in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your *labour* is *not in vain*”. Paul says that God's grace to him “was not in vain”, in that he *laboured* more abundantly than any in preaching. Yet within the same chapter, Paul urges us his readers that our faith and *labour* is also “not in vain”; the connection seems to be that he responded to grace by *labouring* in preaching, and he speaks as if each of the Corinthians likewise will not *labour* in vain in this way (1 Cor. 15:2,10,58). He clearly sees himself as a pattern of responding to grace by preaching to others.

16:2- see on Acts 2:45.

16:9 An insight into Paul's attitude is revealed in the way he speaks of how a door of preaching opportunity had been opened to him at Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:9). Surely he is alluding to the Lord's words about knocking in prayer, and a door is opened. He had presumably prayed for the opportunity to spread the word in Ephesus, and he was given the positive answer. We likewise should be praying systematically for the people in our lives, for unreached nations and peoples. Yet the language of a door being opened sends us to Acts 14:27, where the response of the Gentiles to Paul's missionary work is likewise spoken of as a door being opened- presumably, meaning that here was an answer to prayer for response. A door was opened at Troas, we assume also because of sustained prayer beforehand (2 Cor. 2:12). We must ask whether we really desire the Gospel to spread; if we do, it will be reflected in our prayer life.

16:15 There is a word play in 1 Cor. 16:15, masked in the translations: the household of Stephanas ‘addicted’ themselves to the Lord's service (Gk. *Tasso*), and the ecclesia is bidden “submit” (Gk. *Hupotasso*) to them. Enthusiastic service by individuals truly influences the whole community.

16:19- see on Acts 20:20.

16:20- see on Rom. 16:16.

16:22 Those who departed from the faith didn't just drift away; they were formally pronounced anathema (1 Cor. 16:22), delivered unto the satan of this world. And it follows that within a community with such tight boundaries, there would be strong identity with each other who were within those boundaries.

2 CORINTHIANS

1:3-7 It seems that hymns developed in the early church, fragments of which are found in the poems of 2 Cor. 1:3-7; Eph. 1:13,14; 5:14; Phil. 2:6-12; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:4.

1:4 One can recount instances of repetition in the narratives of our own lives. Our experiences connect with those of Biblical characters- and thus the Biblical records become alive and intensely personal for each of us. Further, we see similarities in patterns and experiences between our lives and those of others contemporary with us. This is surely to enable the principle of 2 Cor. 1:4- that if we suffer anything, it is so that we can mediate comfort to those who suffer as we do. To go into our shells and not do this not only makes our own sufferings harder, but frustrates the very purpose of them. The repeating similarities between our lives and those of others also reveal to us that God at times arranges for us to suffer from our *alter ego*- persons who behave similarly to us, and who through those similarities cause us suffering. In this way we are taught the error of our ways, both past and present. It seems that Jacob the deceiver suffered in this way from Laban the deceiver- in order to teach him and cause his spiritual growth. For example, as Jacob deceived his blind father relating to an important family matter, so Laban deceived Jacob in the darkness of the wedding night. Esau once begged food of Jacob, and he deceived him cruelly. As an old man, Jacob twice had to beg food from the estranged brother, his own son Joseph. No wonder he so tried not to have to send his sons to Egypt to beg for food. He was being taught- even after all those years- how Esau his brother had felt.

1:4 Job was a "perfect" man before the afflictions started; and he is presented as a 'perfect' man at the end. The purpose of his trials was not only to develop him, but also in order to teach the friends [and we readers] some lessons. The purpose of our trials too may not only be for our benefit, but for that of others. If we suffer anything, it is so that we might help others (2 Cor. 1:4). Consider too how the palsied man was healed by the Lord in order to teach others that Jesus had the power to forgive sins (Mt. 9:2-6).

Our trials are specially designed so that we *may* give comfort to others who suffer in essence the same experiences- and this is how "our comfort aboundeth through Christ" (2 Cor. 1:4,5 RV). He is the comforter insofar as His brethren minister that comfort which He potentially enables them to minister. As we partake in the Lord's sufferings, so we partake of the comfort which is in Him- but which is ministered through the loving care of those in Him (2 Cor. 1:7). This is why any attitude of insularity is totally impossible for the true brother or sister in Christ. Behind every human face, there is a tragedy behind the brave façade which is put up. Almost everybody has been bruised by life, and is feeling the pressure of temptation or defeat, depression, loneliness or despair. It's true that some need to be disturbed from their complacency, but the vast majority need above all else to be given by us *the comfort of God's love*. People, all people (not just our brethren) are desperate for real comfort and compassion. And it is up to us to mediate it to them.

As Paul makes explicit in 2 Cor. 1:4, if we suffer anything, it is so that ultimately *others* may be comforted in our comfort. True Christianity, authentic relationship with God, simply can't be lived out in isolation, with us asking God for things and Him giving them to us just for us. We need to discern how *others* will be affected by our experience of answered prayer, and bear this in mind when formulating our prayers. And all this is surely the answer to the cynic's complaint that prayer is essentially selfish. It can be, it too often is; but Biblical prayer is not at all. In words which need reading twice, Elizabeth O'Connor drives the point home in *Journey Outward*: "If engagement with ourselves does not push back horizons so that we see neighbours we did not see before, then we need to examine the appointments kept with self. If prayer does not drive us into some concrete involvement at a point of the world's need, then we must question prayer... the inner life is not nurtured in order to hug to oneself some secret gain". The Psalms have all this as a major theme.

1:5- see on Acts 9:16.

1:6 It could be argued that *all* our experiences are in order that we might be able to give out to others from our own experience of God's grace (2 Cor. 1:4-6).

1:9 The tragic brevity of life means that "childhood and youth are vanity", we should quit the time wasting follies of youth or overgrown childhood (and the modern world is full of this), and therefore too "remove anger from thy heart and put away evil from thy flesh" (Ecc. 11:10 AVmg.).

Ecclesiastes uses the mortality of man not only as an appeal to work for our creator, but to simply have faith in His existence. Likewise: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves [" in our hearts we felt the sentence of death", NIV], *that* we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9). The fact we are going to die, relatively soon, and lie unconscious... drives the man who seriously believes it to faith in the God of resurrection. It seems that at a time of great physical distress, Paul was made to realize that in fact he had "the sentence of death" within him, he was under the curse of mortality, and this led him to a hopeful faith that God would preserve him from the ultimate "so great a death" as well as from the immediate problems. Death being like a sleep, it follows that judgment day is our next conscious experience after death. Because death is an ever more likely possibility for us, our judgment is effectively *almost upon us*. And we must live with and in that knowledge.

1:11 The Corinthians "helped...by prayer for us" (2 Cor. 1:11)- as if Paul's unaided prayers had less power than when the Corinthians were praying for him too. Stephen believed this to the point that he could pray for the forgiveness of his murderers, fully believing God could hear and grant such forgiveness. Job believed this, in that he prayed God would forgive his children in case they sinned. The friends mocked this in Job 5:4; 8:4; 17:5 and 20:10, saying that the children of the foolish die for their *own* sins, whereas, by implication, Job had figured that *his* prayers and sacrifices could gain *them* forgiveness. Yet in the end, Yahweh stated that Job had understood Him and His principles right, whereas the friends hadn't.

1:12 I've always sensed that the more complex a person, the harder it is for them to be generous. But we are all commanded to be generous to the Lord's cause, knowing that nothing we have is our own. And I am not only talking to wealthy brethren. *All* of us have something, and all of us can give something to our brethren. Consider how the poor believers of the first century such as Corinth [amongst whom there were not many rich or mighty, Paul reminds them] collected funds for the poor brethren in Judea. There is a Greek word translated "simplicity" which occurs eight times in the NT. Five of these are in 2 Corinthians, written as it was in the context of Corinth giving funds for the Jerusalem poor. Consider how the word is translated:

- Paul had "*simplicity* and Godly sincerity" (2 Cor. 1:12)
- They had "*liberality*" (2 Cor. 8:2)
- "*Bountifulness*" (2 Cor. 9:11)
- Their "*liberal distribution*" (2 Cor. 9:13)
- He feared lest they be corrupted from "the *simplicity* that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Evidently Paul saw a link between generosity and the simplicity of the faith in Christ. It doesn't need a lexicon to tell you that this word means both 'simplicity' and also 'generous'. The connection is because the basis for generosity is a simple faith. Not a dumb, blind faith, glossing over the details of God's word. But a realistic, simple, direct conviction. This is why Paul exhorts that all giving to the Lord's cause should be done with "simplicity" (Rom. 12:8- the AVmg. translates 'liberally'). Give, in whatever way, and don't complicate it with all the ifs and buts which our fleshly mind proposes. Paul warns them against false teachers who would corrupt them from their "simplicity"- and yet he usually speaks of 'simplicity' in the sense of generosity. Pure doctrine, wholeheartedly accepted, will lead us to be generous. False doctrine and human philosophy leads to all manner of self-complication. Paul was clever, he was smart; but he rejoiced that he lived his life "in simplicity...by the grace of God" (2 Cor. 1:12). If our eye is single (translating a Greek word related to that translated 'simple'), then the whole body is full of light (Mt. 6:22)- and the Lord

spoke again in the context of generosity. An evil eye, a world view that is not 'simple' or single, is used as a figure for mean spiritedness.

Our fear of what others think of us, of their reactions and possible reactions to who we are, to our words and our actions; our faithless worry about where we will find our food and clothing, how we will be cared for when we are old, whether our health will fail... all these things detract us from a simple and direct faith in the basic tenets of the Gospel, which is what should lead us to humility. "The *simplicity* that is in Christ... in *simplicity* and godly sincerity... by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world... [doing our daily work] with *singleness* [s.w. 'simplicity'] of heart, as unto Christ" (2 Cor. 1:12; 11:3; Eph. 6:5,6). Worries about the material things of life, or deep seated doubt developed during years of atheism or wrong belief... these all so easily distract us from the simplicity of a true and humbled faith.

1:13

Paul: Victim Of Slander In The Church

Too physically weak to do the job (2 Cor. 10:10)

Underhanded, cunning (2 Cor. 4:2 RSV)

Tampering with God's word (2 Cor. 4:2 RSV)

Not preaching according to the sanction of the Lord Jesus, but inventing things for himself (in the context of Gentile liberty, Gal. 1:1).

Preaching himself as the saviour, not Christ (2 Cor. 4:5)

Commending himself, showing himself to be so spiritually strong (2 Cor. 3:1)

Trying to build up his own self-image with his listeners as he preached the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:5)

Trying to domineer over his brethren (2 Cor. 1:24; 8:8 Gk.)

Mentally unstable (2 Cor. 5:13)

Causing others to stumble (2 Cor. 6:3)

An imposter (2 Cor. 6:8- in the context, Paul is saying that the fact he is so maligned is a kind of proof that he really is a genuine worker for the Lord!).

Wronging, corrupting, financially defrauding brethren (2 Cor. 7:2)

Demanding so much money from others that they would become impoverished themselves (2 Cor. 8:13,14 J.B. Phillips)

But not a real apostle, seeing that if he was then he would do as the Lord had bidden and receive "hire" for being a "labourer"; if he was worthy, he would have accepted it. The fact he didn't showed he wasn't a hard labourer. This was so untrue. It's a real cruel example of slander in the church.

He only threatened ecclesial discipline but never did anything in practice- he was all talk and no do (2 Cor. 10:1-6)

What he wrote was in his letters was a contradiction of the person he was in practice (2 Cor. 1:13)

He kept changing his mind over important issues (2 Cor. 1:17-19)

They were offended that Paul didn't take money from them (2 Cor. 11:7 RSV), and yet also grugged giving money for the Jerusalem Poor Fund because the Corinthian church slandered Paul that he claimed he was only trying to get the money for himself.

Crafty and a liar, not opening his heart to his brethren (2 Cor. 12:16 cp. 6:11)

Preaching that we can be immoral because God's grace will cover us (Rom. 3:8)

Preached in order to get money and have relationships with women (1 Thess. 2:3-12)

Still secretly preached that circumcision was vital for salvation (Gal. 5:11).

Note: If you can imagine where Paul might have used quotation marks, this helps to reveal certain phrases which he was probably quoting from their claims. Most of the above slander in the church was from just one ecclesia (Corinth): one can be certain that there were many other such slanders.

1:14 With what measure we give to others in these ways, we will be measured to at the judgment (Mk. 4:24 and context). 1 Cor. 3:9-15 likewise teaches that the spiritual "work" of "any man" with his brethren will be proportionate to his reward at the judgment. Paul certainly saw his reward as proportionate to the quality of his brethren (2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 2:19,20; Phil. 2:16; 4:1).

1:15 It was also the Lord's desire that His word should be spread. The neat maps in our Bibles notwithstanding, it is clear that Paul had no such clear plan of where to found ecclesias. He preached in Galatia because illness required that he spend some time there, against his original intention (Gal. 4:13). He was forbidden to preach in Bithynia as he had planned, he fled to Athens for safety and ended up preaching there, then he fled from there to Corinth (Acts 16:6,7). And it seems that he was only in transit through Ephesus, but found the people responsive and therefore continued working there (Acts 18:19). Indeed, his movements were so uncertain that he was open to the charge of vacillating about his plans (2 Cor. 1:15,18). And yet it has been shown that the places where Paul founded ecclesias were strategic points, in that they were centres where different nationalities mixed, where trade routes crossed, where social and religious conditions were better than elsewhere for the spread of the Gospel. Yet this was not due to any conscious desire of Paul for this; the Lord overruled this, so that, e.g., from Thessalonica the message sounded out throughout Asia, due to the many mobile people who heard the Gospel there.

1:17 Not only must we preach because our Lord preached. We must witness *as He witnessed*. Paul understood us to have been anointed in a similar way to who Christ was anointed; and thereby we become witnesses of Him. In this context, he explains that he wasn't vague and uncertain in the matter of preaching; he didn't keep vacillating between yes and no because this was not how Jesus preached- in Him was "yes!" (2 Cor. 1:21,17).

1:18 Paul could tell the Corinthians that his preaching of the word to them "was not yea and nay...for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us...was not yea and nay" (2 Cor. 1:18,19). Paul's preaching was an exact transmission of the person of Jesus; He was not indecisive, He was positive; and likewise Paul's preaching of Him had the same marks. He quotes this as a counter to the criticism that he was "yea and nay", a man with no sense of truth or decision. 'If I am a man in Christ, then I will axiomatically act like Him, and therefore this criticism of me *cannot* be true'.

1:19 We are "in Christ" to the extent that we *are* Christ to this world. In this sense He has in this world no arms or legs or face than us. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was preached among you through us, even through me and Silvanus" (2 Cor. 1:19 RVmg.). Paul was a placarding of Christ crucified before the Galatians (Gal. 3:1 Gk.); to the Corinthians he was "the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:10 RSV).

Because "God is true", therefore it ought to be axiomatic that our words are true, as those bearing His Name (so Paul argues in 2 Cor. 1:18; 11:10).

1:20 We know that the promises were confirmed by the death of the Lord; and yet "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20). "In him" is put for 'on account of His death which confirmed them'. 'He' was His death and His cross. In the preceding verse, Paul has spoken of "Christ crucified". He was brought to the cross a man who had already died unto sin; and the very quick time in which He died reflected how physically worn out His body was, in reflection of how sin had virtually already been put to death in Him.

The connection between the atonement and faith in prayer is brought out in 2 Cor. 1:20 RSV: "For all the promises of God in him are yea. That is, we utter the Amen through him". The promises of God were confirmed through the Lord's death, and the fact that He died as the seed of Abraham, having taken upon Him Abraham's plural seed in representation (Rom. 15:8,9). Because of this,

“we utter the Amen through [on account of being in] Him”. We can heartily say ‘Amen’, so be it, to our prayers on account of our faith and understanding of His atoning work.

1:21 *Anointed*- see on Acts 13:9.

One big word which keeps cropping up in Ignatius is the Greek *bebaion*, meaning ‘valid’. Ignatius [and others] taught that for service of the Lord to be valid by a believer, it had to be validated through obedience to the church leadership. *They* gave his or her service its validity. “Whatsoever [the Bishop and presbytery] shall approve, this is well-pleasing also to God; that everything which ye do may be sure and valid [*bebaion*]” (*Smyrneans* 8.2). Significantly, Paul addresses this very issue, using the very same Greek word, and in precisely this context- of justifying his service to God even though it was not approved / validated by others who thought they were elders: “He who validates us [*bebaion*], along with you [the ordinary members of the flock]... is God, who also sealed us” (2 Cor. 1:21,22). God has validated and called each of us to His service. We don’t need approval / validation / authorization from anybody on this earth. Of course we should seek to work co-operatively with our brethren, for such is obviously the spirit of Christ; neither Paul nor myself are inciting a spirit of maverick irresponsibility. But he *is* clearly saying that the idea of needing authorization / validification from any group of elders in order to minister, preach, break bread and baptize [which is the context of his writing to the Corinthians] is totally wrong.

1:22- see on 2 Cor. 3:3.

1:23 David speaks of God enthroned in the court of Heaven judging him and yet also maintaining his right; and yet in the same context, David speaks of how God’s throne is prepared for future judgment, He *will* minister judgment (Ps. 9:4 cp. 7,8,19). The court of Heaven that was now trying him would sit again in the last day. Paul does the same when, under ‘judgment’ by his brethren, he calls God as a witness right now (2 Cor. 1:23 RSV), several times saying that he spoke “before God”, as if already at judgment day.

1:24 Nobody, not even faithful brethren, can have dominion over our faith; by our *own* faith we stand (2 Cor. 1:24, filling in the ellipsis). Solomon exhorts his son to get wisdom, for “if thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it” (Prov. 9:12). The understanding of God we gain from His word, and the result of rejecting it, is so intensely personal.

2:4- see on Rom. 9:3.

2:10- see on Gal. 3:1.

2:10 Paul was a placarding of Christ crucified before the Galatians (Gal. 3:1 Gk.); to the Corinthians he was “the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:10 RSV).

2:12- see on 1 Cor. 16:9.

Frequently Paul uses the word “Gospel” as meaning ‘the preaching of the Gospel’; the Gospel is in itself something which *must* be preached if we really have it (Rom. 1:1,9; 16:25; Phil. 1:5 (NIV),12; 2:22; 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:5; 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:8). The fact we have been given the Gospel is in itself an imperative to preach it. “When I came to Troas for the Gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:12 RV) has the ellipsis supplied in the AV: “to preach Christ’s Gospel” [although there is no Greek word in the original matching ‘preach’] .

2:13 Not only on a personal level, but also collectively, we can limit the amount and extent of witness. Thus Paul had a door opened to him to preach in Troas, but the ecclesial problems in Corinth that were so sapping his energy meant he had to leave those opportunities inadequately used (2 Cor. 2:12,13 RSV).

2:14 “There is none (not one) that seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:11). But somehow we are “always”, time and again, caused to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14), participating day by day (and hour by hour at times) in His triumphant victory procession (so the allusion to the Roman ‘triumph’ implies).

The spirit of ambition shouldn't just be an occasional flare in our lives; it should characterize our whole way of living and thinking.

2:14,15 The preacher is his message; if the doctrines of the Gospel are truly in us, then we ourselves will naturally be a witness to it in our lives. The Gospel is the savour of Christ; and yet we personally are the savour (2 Cor. 2:14,15); *we* are the epistle and Gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 3:3).

2:14-17 2 Cor. 2:14-17 seems to have a series of allusions back to Mary's anointing of the Lord:

2 Cor. 2

Mary's anointing

Maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place (:14)

The house filled with the smell of Mary's anointment

For we are the smell of Christ (:15) in our witness of Him to the world

Mary must have had the same smell of the same perfume on her, as was on Jesus whom she had anointed with it

Making merchandise of the word of God (:17 RVmg.)

As Judas coveting the anointing oil for mercenary gain

The simple point of the allusions is that we like Mary are spreading the smell of Christ to the world; she is our pattern for witness.

2:14-17 2 Cor. 2:14-17 invites us to see the Lord Jesus after His victory- which can only refer to His victorious death on the cross- leading a victory parade, in which we are the triumphant soldiers, carrying with us burning incense. This represents our preaching of the Gospel, as part of our participation in the joyful glory of the Lord's victory on the cross. And yet that incense is used as a double symbol- both of us the preachers, who hold the aroma, and yet we are also the aroma itself. We are the witness. The light of the candlestick is both the believer (Mt. 5:15) and the Gospel itself (Mk. 4:21). But the motivation for it all is our part in the victory procession of the Lord, going on as it does down through the ages, as He as it were comes home from the cross.

2:16- see on Mt. 3:11.

"And who is sufficient for these things?", Paul comments- as if to say, 'We simply don't appreciate the power and the implications of the logic we are putting before men'.

2:17 When Paul speaks of how he is "like those sent from God and standing in His presence" (2 Cor. 2:17), he's using language which the Jews applied to the Angels. I take this to suggest that Paul felt himself to be so at one with his guardian Angel that he can appropriate such Angelic language to himself.

Paul twice assures his readers that he speaks the truth because he is speaking in the sight / presence of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 12:19). The fact God is everywhere present through His Spirit, that He exists, should lead us at the very least to be truthful. In the day of judgment, a condemned Israel will know that God heard their every word; but if we accept that fact now then we will be influenced in our words now. And by our words we will be justified (Ez. 35:12). Reflection upon the omniscience of God leads us to marvel at His sensitivity to human behaviour. He noticed even the body language of the women in Is. 3:16- and condemned them for the way they walked. Paul says that he does not personally profit from his preaching, but in the sight of God does he preach (2 Cor. 2:17 RVmg.). Our motivation in preaching, whether it be to demonstrate intellectual prowess, or to sincerely save somebody, or merely to look good in the eyes of our brethren, is all weighed up; and so we must preach in the sight of God, knowing He watches.

3:1 The subverters of Corinth ecclesia came with “letters of commendation” (2 Cor. 3:1 cp. 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 10:12,18; 12:11), and one wonders whether these letters were not from Jerusalem too; for in the synagogue system upon which the early ecclesia was based, the Jerusalem rabbis issued such letters. Recall how Saul had such letters to authorise him to persecute the Damascus Christians. Their tactics were political and aggressive- they made Peter so scared that he forgot all the lessons the Lord had taught him through the conversion of Cornelius, that from fear of them he refused to break bread with Gentiles when their representatives were present.

3:2 Jesus ‘came down’ to this world in the sense that He was the word of the Father made flesh, and ‘all men’ saw the light of grace that was radiated from His very being. And that same word must be flesh in us, as it was in the Lord. We are to be a living epistle, words of the Gospel made flesh, “known and read of all men” (2 Cor. 3:2).

3:3 We read of the new covenant that was made with us by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Heb. 8 proves that we are under the new covenant by quoting from Jer. 31, which is a prophecy of how in the future, Israel will repent, and will enter into the new covenant. Twice the Spirit uses Jer. 31:31 to prove to us that we are under the new covenant now (see Heb. 8:6-13 and 10:16-19); yet Jer. 31 is a prophecy of how natural Israel in the future will enter into that covenant, after their humiliation at the hands of their future invaders. So we are being taught that our entering of the covenant now is similar to how natural Israel will enter that covenant in the future. The point is really clinched by the way the Spirit cites Jer. 31 as relevant to us today. The reasoning goes that because Jer. 31:34 speaks of sin forgiven for those who accept the new covenant, therefore we don't need sacrifices or human priesthood now, because Jer. 31:34 applies to us. So therefore God writing in our hearts is going on now, too. This is confirmed by Paul's allusion to Jer. 31 in 2 Cor. 3:3. God wrote with His Spirit on our hearts, He made a new covenant on the covenant-tables of our heart. Likewise 2 Cor. 1:22: "Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the spirit in our hearts". There are several prophecies which speak of Israel entering that new covenant, and what it will mean to them. All of them, in some sense, apply to us who are now in the new covenant. All of us should be earnestly seeking to appreciate the more finely exactly what our covenant with God means, exactly what covenant relationship with God really entails. 2 Cor. 3:16 reasons that when Israel's heart shall turn to the Lord Jesus, then the veil that is on their heart will be taken away. But now, through the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, we each with unveiled face can behold the glory of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). The clarity of vision concerning Christ which Israel will eventually come to should be ours now; our hearts should turn to Christ now, as theirs will do. The Old Testament gives us much information as to how Israel's heart will turn to Christ.

3:5- see on Mt. 3:11.

The wonderful word for “impute” occurs again in a wonderful, truly wonderful passage of assurance: “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ... not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think [s.w. “impute”] any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency [s.w. “worthiness”] is of God” because our face / image is being changed into His image, “even as by the spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:3,5,18). We look in the mirror, and see Christ in us. This looking in the mirror is used by James as a figure for self-examination (James 1:18,22-25). By doing the word of truth, we find we will live lives of looking in the mirror, of self-perception. This is the essence of self-examination; to perceive the Christ-man within us, and that all other behaviour is our being unfaithful to our true self, living out a persona. We are to see ourselves as being Christ; we are to have a high view of ourselves in this sense, whilst despising and seeking to dismantle the personas we so often act out which are unfaithful to Him. See on 2 Cor. 11:5.

2 Cor 3:5: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to *think* [s.w. impute] any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God”. We *are* able to count / feel to ourselves as righteous; for God has counted us righteous. See on Rom. 2:26.

3:6 The Law of Moses (and the whole Pentateuch? Consider Acts 7:38,53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2) was given by Angels. That the Angels ministered the Word in the past is picked up by Paul in 2 Cor. 3 when he says that because we have taken over the role of the Angels in this respect, we should teach the word boldly: "Who hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter but of the spirit; seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech"(v. 6,12). The context refers to our preaching, that it should not be with the "enticing words of man's wisdom". See on Rev. 22:9.

3:11 God Himself was very patient with the Jewish difficulty in accepting the Law had ended on the cross. He inspired Paul to write that the law is being done away, even at the time he wrote to the Corinthians, many years after Calvary (2 Cor. 3:11,13 RV). God and Paul could have taken a hard line: the Law is finished. This is why Jesus bled and lived as He did. But they are so sensitive to the difficulty of others in accepting what we know to be concrete truth. And we must take our lesson. In our witness to the world, we mustn't give up at the first sign of wrong doctrine or inability to accept our message. See what is positive and work on it.

3:12 Paul exhorts us to speak 'freely' in our preaching (2 Cor. 3:12), just as he himself "speak freely" in his witness to Agrippa (Acts 26:26). Our salvation is through faith in God's absolute grace; but if it is *real* faith, we will preach it on the housetops, we simply can't keep the knowledge of *such* grace, such great salvation, to ourselves. "Having, then, such hope, we use much freedom of speech" in preaching (2 Cor. 3:12 YLT).

3:15-4:6 Throughout 2 Cor. 3:15-4:6, Paul comments on how Moses' face shone with God's glory, and yet he spoke to Israel through a veil, with the result that Israel did not appreciate God's glory. He speaks of him and all preachers of the true Christian Gospel as "able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6)- clear allusion to Moses as the minister of the old, inferior covenant. Paul uses this to explain why Israel did not respond to his preaching; "if *our* preaching be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3). Paul therefore saw himself and his fellow preachers as like Moses, radiating forth the glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to an Israel which had the veil upon their heart. This allusion must have so angered the Jews- to suggest that Christian preachers were like Moses!

3:15-18 In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel without a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost- as if *we* are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.

3:16 When a [Jewish] man turns to the Lord Jesus, the veil of obedience to the Law is taken away (2 Cor. 3:16 RVmg.). Yet the Law also led men to Christ; and yet it also veils Him from them- depending whether they read it as God intended.

3:17 The Jews believed that the *shekinah*, the physical light of glory associated with the tabernacle, was somehow a personal being associated with a Messiah figure. Paul deconstructs this idea in 2 Cor. 3:17,18, where he says that the *shekinah* seen on the face of Moses was a *fading* glory of the Old Covenant, having been made insignificant by the glory of Christ. Thus Paul is attacking the common Jewish idea by saying that the Lord Jesus was *not* the *shekinah* but is *superior* to it. Indeed, he so often makes the same point by stressing that the glorification of the Lord Jesus was at His resurrection and ascension. He *became* "the Lord of glory" by what He suffered, and received

this glorification at the resurrection and ascension. If the Lord's glory was somehow pre-existent before that, the wonder and personal significance of the resurrection for Jesus is somehow lost sight of; the idea of suffering and *then* being glorified, as a pattern for us, is quite lost sight of. And yet this was the repeated theme of Paul's inspired writings. Note in passing how when describing the *shekinah* cloud in which the Angel dwelt, Paul comments that the cloud was mere water, for at the Red Sea it played a part in symbolizing Israel's baptism "into Moses in the cloud [water above them] and in the sea [water on both sides of them]" (1 Cor. 10:2). Moses and not the *shekinah* cloud was the type of Christ. Yet Justin Martyr and many other careless Bible readers, coming to Scripture in order to seek justification for their preconceived trinitarian ideas, have interpreted the cloud as being the Angel which was supposedly Jesus. Hebrews 1 clarifies that God spoke in Old Testament times through Angels and prophets- but *not* through His Son. This He began to do in the ministry of the human Jesus. That path of thought alone should remove all possibility that any Old Testament Angel was in fact the Lord Jesus.

3:18- see on Jn. 11:40; Ex. 33:11.

The Lord Jesus is "the Lord the spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RV); and "the Spirit" is one of Jesus' titles in Revelation, so closely is He identified with the work of the Spirit. The Lord calls men and women to Him, having first prepared their way to Him, guiding the preachers of His word. He brings people to baptism, enters into a husband-wife relationship with them (Eph. 5:24), has children by them (i.e. spirituality develops in our characters, Rom. 7:4), strengthens them afterwards, keeps them in Him, "in everything... co-operates for good with those that love God" (Rom. 8:28 NEB), saves them in an ongoing sense, develops them spiritually, and then finally presents them perfect at His return. He is actively subduing "all things", even in the natural creation, unto Himself (1 Cor. 15:27,28 Gk.). However, the NT focuses on His work amongst us, the ecclesia. Where two or three are gathered, He manifests Himself in the midst of them (Mt. 18:20). He is like a priest constantly on duty, bringing His people to the Father (Mt. 26:29 cp. Lev. 11:9).

2 Cor. 3 speaks of our beholding the glory of the Lord Jesus in a mirror; and this process slowly transforms us into that same image of Him which we see. The "glory" of God was revealed to Moses at Sinai in Ex. 34 as the declaration of His character. In this sense, the Lord Jesus could speak of having in His mortal life "that glory which was with [the Father]" when the [Jewish] world came into existence at Sinai (Jn. 17:5 Ethiopic and Western Text). It was that same glory which, like Moses, He reflected to men. But according to 2 Cor. 3:18, the very experience of gazing upon the glory of His character will change us into a reflection of it. There is something transforming about the very personality of Jesus. And perhaps this is why we have such a psychological barrier to thinking about Him deeply. We know that it has the power to transform and intrude into our innermost darkness. I have given reason elsewhere for believing that the Gospel records are in fact transcripts of the Gospel message preached by the four evangelists. The 'Gospel according to Matthew' is therefore the Gospel message which he usually preached. And it's significant that at least three of them start and end where many of us would- starting with the promises to the Jewish fathers, and concluding with an appeal for baptism. Actually John's Gospel does this too, if you decode the language he uses. This is surely the explanation of the Lord's otherwise strange remark that wherever the Gospel is preached, the anointing of His feet by Mary would be part of that message. And this is one of the few incidents that all four Gospel writers each mention. What this shows is that the Gospel message is in its quintessence, the account of the man Christ Jesus- with all that involves. It has truly been commented that "the central message of the gospels is not the teaching of Jesus but Jesus himself". This is true insofar as Jesus is the word made flesh.

A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have *really* seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will *inevitably* reflect it to others. Jesus didn't say 'Do good works so that men may see the light'. He said "*let your light shine*" - and *then* men will see your good works and glorify the Father. Paul puts the same principle another way

when he says that we're all mirrors (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have *really* seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will *inevitably* reflect it to others. Many of the Lord's parables portray the [preaching of] the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as a kind of secret force: treasure hidden in a field, the tiniest seed in the garden, wheat growing among weeds, a pinch of yeast worked into dough, salt on meat... these are all images of something which works from within, changing other people in an ongoing, regular manner.

Jesus Himself is described as "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). "The Spirit" is a title of Jesus (Rom. 8:16,26,27; Rev. 2:7,11 etc.). To walk each day in the Spirit is to live in Him, to act as He would act. It is this "Spirit" which will be the basis of our new life. Living life in that Spirit is living the life we will eternally lead. If we don't like the righteous, clean life in Christ, if we find it limiting and boring, then we are signing ourselves out of the eternal life. There will be no point in our receiving it. The eternal life is there to be lived. It's there for the taking in the sense that it is there to be lived. If we live it, we have it. And our bodies will be changed at the Lord's coming so that we can eternally live it.

Paul explains his approach to Jewish conversion in 2 Cor. 3:15-18. Whenever they read Moses, they have a veil over their minds, but when a Jew turns to the Lord, that veil is removed. He is perhaps alluding to the Jewish practice of covering their head and even face with a prayer shawl or *tallit* when reading or hearing God's word (Mk. 12:38). And this perhaps is behind his demand that brethren should not cover their heads in ecclesial meetings in 1 Cor. 11:4. They are like Moses, hiding his face behind a veil. But when the veil is removed by conversion, then the glory of Christ will shine forth from them. The implication surely is that a true Jewish convert to Christ will in turn radiate forth the Lord's glory to others. We *each*, with unveiled face, have like Moses seen the glory of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). When Moses saw the glory, he was immediately given a ministry to preach to Israel, to share that glory with them (Ex. 34:34). And Paul drives home the similarity; we *each* have had the experience of Moses, and so "therefore seeing we (too, like Moses) have this ministry", "we each" are to exercise it to Israel.

The new man / person created in us at baptism by the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) is essentially a character; or at least, the potential for a character, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus. For Christ is said to be "formed in us". As we gaze into His glory, we are changed bit by bit into His image. His glorious character is a mirror, Paul says; as we look into it, our image comes to reflect His glory (2 Cor. 3:18). He doesn't subsume us beneath Himself. Self-expression, or even self-manifestation, is one of God's features, and so He intends it to be in us who are made after His image. God manifestation doesn't in that sense mean the destruction or ignoring of the individual human person; rather, the very opposite, in that the real character, the new life, will be eternally developed and preserved. This is where Hinduism is so wrong, as wrong as any monolithic, apostate Papal or Protestant Christianity- the person disappears into the great Whole. Joash understood where 'God manifestation' can be taken too far; he told the Baal worshippers to let Baal plead for himself, rather than them pleading for him (Jud. 6:31). This needs thinking through. He was saying that they were assuming that they had to 'play God' for Baal; they had to mindlessly, unthinkingly manifest the god they thought existed. Joash says that if Baal really exists, he himself will act for himself, openly. And this of course is where the One True God excels; He does act for Himself, and doesn't rely *solely* upon manifesting Himself through men in order to achieve anything.

3:18-21 The fact that God is a person means that who *we* are as persons, our being as persons, is of the ultimate importance. It has been observed, in more sophisticated language: "To predicate personality to God is nothing else than to declare personality as the absolute essence". Thus who we are as persons, who we develop to become, is indeed the ultimate issue. And further. Having a personal relationship with a personal God means that we in that process develop as persons after His image; for there is something magnetically changing about being in relationship with Him. We are

changed from glory to glory, by simply beholding His face and inevitably reflecting the glory there, which glory abides upon us in the same way as it stuck to the face of Moses even after his encounters with the Angel of Yahweh (2 Cor. 3:18-21 RV). And yet we live in a world which increasingly denies us ultimate privacy or isolation; the loudness of the world is all permeating, all intrusive, to the point that Paul Tillich claims: “We cannot separate ourselves at any time from the world to which we belong”. And at times, we would all tend to agree with him. We just can’t seem to ‘get away from it all’ and be with God, no matter where we go on holiday, with whom we go, even if we slip off for an hour to be quite alone in the local park. But ultimately, I believe Tillich was wrong. We *can* separate from the world’s endless call and insistent pull, even if we’re stuck with an unbelieving or unhelpful partner, sniffling kids, long hours at work, the TV always on, the phone always ringing. Because we as unique and individual persons can *personally* relate to the *personal* God and His Son, thus finding the ultimate privacy and isolation which being human in this world appears to preclude. But further, it’s actually in the very razzamattaz of our mundane, frustrated experience in this world that we can come to know God, and in which God reveals Himself to us.

4:1 Paul seems to ascribe his own unflagging zeal for preaching to his experience of God’s gracious forgiveness of him. And further, he speaks in the third person, suggesting that his fellow preachers had a like motivation: “Therefore, seeing we have this ministry (of preaching), *as we have received mercy*, we faint not” (2 Cor. 4:1).

“This is the true grace of God. Stand ye fast in it” (1 Pet. 5:12 RV mg.). Appreciating that we personally have experienced that grace, so great, so free, will of itself make us hold fast and not fall from it. Because we have received grace, Paul reminisces, therefore we don’t faint in our faith (2 Cor. 4:1 Gk.).

4:2 By showing that we are real men and women, who are desperate sinners thankful for the real and true grace we have so wonderfully come across, we will persuade men. The more real, the more credible. Paul described the genius of his preaching thus: “By the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience” (2 Cor. 4:2). It is our very transparency which strikes a chord in the heart of those who hear us.

4:4

“The god of this world”

The Eastern (Aramaic) text reads: “To those in this world whose minds have been blinded by God, because they did not believe”

Note in passing that it is darkness which blinds men’s eyes (1 Jn. 2:11), i.e. not walking according to the light of God’s word. There is only *one* God – not two. And it’s also noteworthy that Is. 6:10 speaks of *God* as having the power to blind Israel. The New Testament repeats this. Rom. 11:8 says that *God* (and not Satan) blinded Israel to the Gospel; 2 Cor. 3:14 says that their minds were blinded or “hardened” (RV) as Pharaoh’s was. Whoever “the god of this world” is or was, God worked through it and is therefore greater than it. Henry Kelly comments: “Given this track record, can we see the God of this Aeon as *our* God, as Yahweh? He is, after all, in charge of everything”. It is God and not any independent Satan figure who sends people an *energeia* of error to believe falsehood (2 Thess. 2:12) – the ultimate ‘energy’ in the process is from God.

For something to be called “the god of this world” does not necessarily mean that it is in reality “the god of this world”; it could mean ‘the thing or power that this world counts to be God’. Thus Acts 19:27 speaks of the goddess Diana, a lifeless idol, “whom all the world worshippeth”. This doesn’t mean that the piece of wood or stone called Diana was in reality the goddess of this world. I mentioned in section 1-1-2 that Paul is quoting “the god of this world” from contemporary Jewish writings rather than actually believing such a ‘god’ existed. It’s also possible that “the god of this

world” who blinds people is an allusion to material in the documents comprising what are now known as the Gnostic Gospels. The *Hypostasis of the Archons* claims to record God’s rebuke of Satan: ““You are mistaken, Samael”, which means, “god of the blind”“⁴. Paul in this case would be alluding to popular belief about Satan, and reapplying this language to the Jewish opposition to the Gospel, and to the human “blindness” which stops them accepting Christ. In Eph. 4:18 Paul specifically defined what he meant by “darkness”: “Having the understanding darkened... through the ignorance that is *within* them... The blindness of their heart”. That opposition, rather than any mythical ‘Samael’, was the real adversary / Satan.

Even if it is insisted that Satan exists as a personal being, the question has to be faced: Who created Satan? Is his power under God’s control, or not? Time and again the ‘Satan’ and ‘demon’ passages of the Bible indicate that however we are to understand these terms, God is more powerful, God is in control. The book of Job shows how the Satan there had all power given to him *by God*. The power of the Lord Jesus over ‘demons’ makes the same point. And in that context, note how Ex. 4:11 assures us that God is the one who makes people deaf, but Lk. 11:14 speaks of how such muteness is apparently caused by demons. Clearly, God is in control. This world, with all the evil and negative experience in it, has not been left under the control of some out-of-control evil being. With this in mind, it should be apparent that the ‘god of this world’ can’t mean that the world is under the *ultimate* control of Satan rather than God. Rather, “the god of this world” [*aion*] “can also be read as merely a personification of all the forces of this *aion* that would thwart the success of the Christian message”.

The way that the idea of ‘Satan’ is used to describe both individual sin and societies governed by the principle of sin is very much in line with the way that first century society was very much a communalistic rather than an individualistic society. The society was the person. Further, social scientists and psychologists have time and again confirmed the Biblical teaching that the fundamental motivation of human beings is the ego, self-interest – what the Bible calls ‘Satan’. This is what drives people at the individual level, and thus drives societies ⁽⁴⁾. It’s appropriate, therefore, for ‘Satan’, the personification of human sin and self-interest, to also be a term applied to human governments and societies as a whole. Truly in this sense (the Biblical) Satan could be understood as “the god of this world”.

A Jewish Interpretation

If Scripture interprets Scripture, “the god of this world (*aion*)” in 2 Corinthians 4:4 must be similar to “the prince of this world (*kosmos*)” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Both the Jewish age [*aion*] and *kosmos* ended in A.D. 70. In the context, Paul has been talking in 2 Cor. 3 about how the glory shining from Moses’ face blinded the Israelites so that they could not see the real spirit of the law which pointed forward to Christ. Similarly, he argues in chapter 4, the Jews in the first century could not see “the light of the glorious (cp. The glory on Moses’ face) gospel of Christ” because they were still blinded by “the god of this world” – the ruler of the Jewish age. The “prince” or “God” of the “world” (age) was the Jewish system, manifested this time in Moses and his law. Notice how the Jews are described as having made their boast of the law...made their boast of God (Rom. 2:17,23). To them, the Law of Moses had become the god of their world. Although the link is not made explicit, there seems no reason to doubt that “the prince of this world” and “Satan” are connected. It is evident from Acts (9:23–25,29–30; 13:50,51; 14:5,19; 17:5,13; 18:12; 20:3) that the Jews were the major ‘Satan’ or adversary to the early Christians, especially to Paul. Of course it has to be remembered that there is a difference between Moses’ personal character and the Law he administered; this contrast is constantly made in Hebrews. Similarly the Law was “Holy, just and good”, but resulted in sin due to man’s weakness – it was “weak through the flesh”, explaining why the idea of Satan/sin is connected with the Law. Because of this it was in practice a “ministry of condemnation”, and therefore a significant ‘adversary’ (Satan) to man; for in reality, “the motions of sins...were by the Law” (Rom. 7:5).

4:4- see on Eph. 1:20.

The blessings now mediated by the exalted Lord mean that *whatever* the barriers, those who appreciate those blessings and the *height*, the pure, wondrous *height* of His exaltation and what this thereby enables for us, will *naturally* preach it. The Gospel is “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4 RSV).

The glory of the “similitude of the Lord” that Moses saw and reflected (Num. 12:4) is likened to “the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). Like Moses, Jewish people have that glory, but they have it veiled; they potentially have it, but it is hidden, because their minds are veiled. This could possibly suggest that Paul saw more potential in the Jewish mind for Christ than other races; thus he speaks in Rom. 11 of how the natural branch which has been cut off [Israel] will be more effectively grafted back into the olive tree than the wild Gentile branches. This of course has similarities with the Lord’s teaching about Himself as the vine, whose unfruitful branches had been cut off (Jn. 15:2). Israel “much more” than the Gentiles can be grafted back in, whereas Gentile converts do this “against nature” (Rom. 11:24). In the context of Israel’s final repentance, God speaks of how every one of the Jewish people has been potentially created for His glory, because they carry His Name (Is. 43:7). Although Israel have been “quenched as a wick” for their sins (Is. 43:17 RVmg.), we are to realize that the wick is still smouldering, and are to follow the Lord’s example of never totally quenching it but instead seek to fan the wick of Israel back into life (Is. 42:3).

4:6- see on Jn. 13:32.

Paul’s description of how the light of the glory of God in Christ shines in the heart of the new convert (2 Cor. 4:6) was not without reference back to his own Damascus road conversion (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13). Because the light was shone to us, we reflect it to others.

“In the beginning”, perhaps a huge period of time ago, God created the heavens and earth. But the present creation can be seen as being constituted some time later, after the previous creations. When during the six days of creation He said “Let there be light” this may not have necessitated the actual manufacture of the sun; this was presumably done “in the beginning”. But the sun was commanded to shine out of the darkness (2 Cor. 4:6), and therefore from the viewpoint of someone standing on the earth, it was as if the sun had been created.

We read in Is. 52:14 that His face was more marred, more brutally transmogrified, than that of any man. And yet reflecting upon 2 Cor. 4:4,6, we find that His face was the face of God; His glory was and is the Father’s glory: “The glory of Christ, who is the image of God... the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. Who is the one who redeems His people? Isaiah calls him “the arm of the Lord”: “to whom has *the arm of the Lord* been revealed?” (53:1; compare 52:10). Then he continues: “*He* grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground” (v. 2). So, the *arm of the LORD* is a person- a divine person! He is God’s “right arm,” His “right-hand Man”! He is also human: He grows up out of the earth like a root out of dry ground.

It is emphasized that God created through His word of command; He said, and it was done (Ps. 33:6,9; 148:5; Is. 40:26; Jn. 1:3; Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:5). God is outside the constraints of time, and outside the possibility of His word not being fulfilled. Therefore if He says something, it is as it is done, even if in human time His command is not immediately fulfilled. Thus He calls things which are not as though they are (Rom. 4:17). It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus and those in Him are spoken of as if we existed at the beginning; although we didn’t physically. And so God spoke the words He did on six literal, consecutive days, and the orders (‘fiats’ is the word Alan Hayward used) were therefore, in this sense as good as done. But the actual time taken to carry them out by the Angels may have been very long. The Genesis record can then be understood as stating these commands, and then recording their fulfilment- although the fulfilment wasn’t necessarily on that

same day. It would seem from later Scripture that the orders and intentions outlined by God on the six literal days are *still* being fulfilled. Take the command for there to be light (Gen. 1:3,4). This is interpreted in 2 Cor. 4:6 as meaning that God shines in men's hearts in order to give them the knowledge of the light of Christ. The command was initially fulfilled by the Angels enabling the sun to shine through the thick darkness that shrouded the earth; but the deeper intention was to shine the spiritual light into the heart of earth-dwellers. And this is still being fulfilled. Likewise the resting of God on the seventh day was in fact a prophecy concerning how He and all His people will enter into the "rest" of the Kingdom. The Lord realized this when He said that even on Sabbath, God was still working (Jn. 5:17). The creation work had not *really* been completed in practice, although in prospect it had been. In this very context the apostle comments that although we must still enter into that rest, "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:3). See on Col. 1:15.

4:7 Paul and Timothy were vessels used by God (Acts 9:15; 2 Tim. 2:21); but so are we all (2 Cor. 4:7). This means that nobody can claim they have a right to certain types of work which others in the congregation can't do. For they are only doing officially and publicly what in spirit we are all seeking to do. We may respect them to the extent that we let them do the public work, but this doesn't mean that we are freed of our own responsibilities, nor that they can lord it over us.

4:8 The blowing of trumpets by the 300 at Gideon's time (Jud. 7:19) points forward to the resurrection, and the breaking of the clay to reveal the burning lamps within the pitchers, is clearly at the root of 2 Cor. 4:6-8: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (cp. the sudden appearance of those lights on that night)... we have this treasure in earthen vessels (cp. Jud. 7:19), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (cp. Jud. 7:2). We are troubled on every side" (cp. Jud. 6:2-6). All this would suggest that the 300 men are to be connected with the resurrected of the new Israel, whose "earthen vessels" are broken (by means of resurrection and judgment) at the end of Israel's Arab downtreading and immediately prior to the great destruction of their enemies by them. However, it is also correct to suspect that the 300 also typify the righteous remnant among Israel who will work with us to achieve this.

4:10 Through *our personal* dying to the flesh, the life of Christ is manifest not only in us, but is made available to others: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Cor 4:10-12). The life that is even now made manifest *in us* is also made available to work in others because death to the flesh has worked in us personally.

Paul speaks of "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10), as if he full well understood the ongoing nature of the Lord's crucifixion, and saw it as the pattern of his daily living.

The almost terrifying thing is that *we*, for the sake of our identity with Christ, are also "delivered up to death" (2 Cor. 4:11). We are asked to share, in principle, the height of devotion that He reached in that moment. Analyzing 2 Cor. 4:10,11 in more detail, we find a number of parallels:

v. 10	v. 11
Always	For we which live are alway
bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus	delivered unto death for Jesus' sake
that the life also of Jesus	that the life also of Jesus

might be manifest in our body	might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.
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The second parallel is significant. To be delivered unto death for Jesus' sake is to bear about in an ongoing sense His crucifixion. This means that His being "delivered over" was seen by Paul as a cameo of His whole sufferings on the cross. See on Mt. 27:26.

4:12 We can gain our brother for God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7). Through *our personal* dying to the flesh, the life of Christ is manifest not only in us, but is made available to others: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Cor 4:10-12). The life that is even now made manifest *in us* is also made available to work in others because death to the flesh has worked in us personally.

4:13 "I believed, and *therefore* have I spoken" (Ps. 116:10) is quoted in 2 Cor. 4:13 concerning the attitude of the preacher; *because* we have believed, *therefore* we preach, after Paul's pattern. We carry in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, and live His resurrection life even now in our mortal flesh- and "We having the same spirit of faith [as He had], according to that which is written, I believed and therefore did I speak. We *also* believe, and therefore *also* we speak" (2 Cor. 4:11-13). Here Paul quotes the Messianic Ps. 116:10 about *our* witness, which is a living out of the spirit which Jesus had in His death and present life and being in Heaven. And we should adopt a similar positive approach.

We are all terminally ill, if only we would know it. Paul quotes from the experience of Hezekiah at this time and says that this should be the keynote of our witness (2 Cor. 4:13 cp. Ps. 116:10). He was "delivered from death" and therefore promised to walk before the Lord "in the lands of the living", believing in salvation and therefore speaking to those lands of it (RV). We all face the day when we shall be as water spilt on the ground, that cannot be gathered up; when the delicate, beautiful chandelier of human life will come crashing to the ground, when the rope holding the bucket snaps, and it falls into the well. In all these Biblical images of death, we face the tragic irreversibility of it all. Our bodies are already riddled with the cancer of inevitable decay. *Today*, while it is still today, we must focus ourselves upon the vital and essential realities of our faith, and away from all the peripheral issues upon which our flesh would far rather dwell.

4:17 Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works out an eternal weight of glory for us (2 Cor. 4:17). It follows from this that every moment of our lives is being intensely used by God to prepare us for the eternity ahead. It is incredible that our probations here are so short- just forty years or so after our baptisms. It would seem more appropriate if we suffered for say one million years in order to prepare us for the infinite time we will one day enjoy, in which one million years will be as a moment. The point is, a tremendous amount of spiritual development and preparation is packed in to a very very small space of time. And from this a crucial conclusion follows: we must allow God to use every moment of our present lives as intensively as possible, to the end we might be prepared for His eternal Kingdom.

4:25 It has been truly commented: "He was raised again because of our acquittal" [Rom. 4:25] Paul joyously proclaims. The verdict of the last day need no longer be awaited in awful suspense; it is anticipated here and now. "Since we are justified by faith"- here and now in this present age- "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" [Rom. 5:1]. United with Christ a man could face the judgment unafraid, released from the paralyzing terror of wondering all through his life if he would be accepted or rejected at the last". For us, judgment ought to be perceived as salvation. Indeed, these two ideas are paralleled in Is. 59:16,17. Israel looked for judgment, but there was none; for salvation, but it was far from them (Is. 59:11). In this sense judgment to come is a comfort

not a threat. Ps. 135:14 parallels the Lord judging His people with Him feeling sorry for them (Heb.).

5:4 The struggle of prayer (see on Col. 2:1) is reflected in a word associated with it- 'groaning'. The Lord Himself prayed with strong groanings and tears, and He even now makes intercession for our prayers with groanings which are inexpressible within the limitations of descriptive words. 2 Cor. 5:4 says that we groan, being burdened (RVmg.), for the day when "mortality might be swallowed up of life". This is the language of a burdened Israel in Egypt, groaning for deliverance. Our 'groaning' in this mortal flesh (2 Cor. 5:2) is therefore not to be read as a justification for groaning and complaining about our humanity; but rather intense prayer for the second coming.

5:5 For us who understand not only Bible teaching about death, but also the insistent Biblical emphasis upon it, we don't live life in an eternal now. We live now for tomorrow, joyful in our awareness of the eternal consequence of our actions and personalities beyond the grave, knowing that all our beliefs, actions, faith, character developments- all come to their ultimate term before the judgment seat of Christ. In speaking of our mortality and our longing for immortality, Paul comments that "He that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God" (2 Cor. 5:5). The reference to how God "wrought us" would appear to comment upon the mortality of our bodies; human mortality [when correctly understood] makes us long for the coming of the Lord to clothe us with our new nature which is to be brought to us from Heaven (2 Cor. 5:2). God "wrought us" as He did in order to enable us to have this longing. According to the Bible, the spirit of man is God's. He gave us that life force (Is. 42:5), and at death "the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). If we seriously believe this, then we will see death as an opportunity to give back to God what He gave us, namely our very life force. If in our lives we followed this principle, realizing nothing we 'have' is really ours but His, and therefore we were open handed with our possessions and knowledge of Him, freely giving it out as it were to Him, then giving back our life force to Him will be but a natural progression from this way of living. And thus we will see immortality not as something we personally crave for our own benefit, but rather a further opportunity to reflect back to Him, to His glory. Thus understanding Bible truth about death affects how we face death and eternity, and therefore radically influences our lives now.

That God is working in our lives through His Spirit, and that He has granted us the gifts of forgiveness and prospective salvation by its working, should not engender any spirit of relaxation. If we truly believe this, it will motivate us to greater personal effort: "God... hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident... wherefore we labour that... we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgement seat... knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:5-11)- i.e. 'Despite having had God's gift of salvation in prospect, the utmost personal effort is still required in responding to it. Think of the day of judgement, the fear that you will have then because of God's holiness and your sinfulness. Although this is not our only motivation, indeed it is somewhat human ("we persuade men"), it is still powerfully true'.

5:8- see on Lk. 12:37.

5:9 "In this (body) we *groan*... we that are in this tabernacle do *groan*, being burdened... we are always *confident*... we are *confident*, I say... Wherefore we *labour* (are ambitious), that... we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:1-10). Notice the designed repetition of the words "groan" and "confident". The humdrum groaning of this life is related to our ambitious confidence that we really will be accepted at the day of judgment. The very thought of acceptance on that day requires real ambition, an ambition that will lift us right up out of the 'groaning' of this life.

5:10- see on Jn. 3:21.

The RSV renders 2 Cor. 5:10 as teaching that we will be judged according to the deeds we have done in "the body", and it may just be that Paul had in mind 'the body of Christ'. Our actions there,

to our brethren, will be the basis of our judgment. To keep the faith to ourselves without reaching out into the world of others was foreseen by the Lord as a very major problem for us.

God reconciled the world; but the word of reconciliation is committed unto us (2 Cor. 5:19). All men were reconciled to God on the cross, even while they were sinners (Rom. 5:10); but it depends upon us to take that Gospel of reconciliation to them. So far as we fail in this, so far we leave His death for them in vain, only a potential achievement. We were given reconciliation personally (Rom. 5:11 RV); and we are also given "the ministry of reconciliation", the command to preach that reconciliation and share it with others (2 Cor. 5:10). To be reconciled to God is to be given a charge to reconcile others.

"We must all *appear* before the judgment seat" (2 Cor. 5:10) doesn't just mean we'll put in an appearance. The Greek means to be exposed utterly. We shall have "our lives laid open" (NEB). Then, the unshareable self will be revealed; that essence of personality which is unknown even to us.

5:11- see on 1 Jn. 3:19.

Fearing God's judgment and righteousness is not in itself a bad motivation. It may not be the highest motivation, but in practice, because we so often understand no other language, the real fear of God is a necessary motivation. Knowing the "terror of the Lord" (a phrase used in the OT with reference to coming judgment), Paul persuaded men to accept His grace (2 Cor. 5:11). Noah went into the ark (cp. baptism) from fear of the coming flood (Gen. 7:7), as Israel crossed the Red Sea (again, baptism) from fear of the approaching Egyptians, as men fled to the city of refuge (again, Christ, Heb. 6:18) from fear of the avenger of blood, and as circumcision (cp. baptism) was performed with the threat of exclusion from the community (possibly by death) hanging over the child. Biblically, *phobos* is the motivation for a pure life (1 Pet. 3:2; 2 Cor. 7:11), for humility in our dealings with each other (Eph. 5:21), for accepting the Gospel in the first place (2 Cor. 5:11). It must be remembered that the Gospel is not only good news, but also the warning of judgment to come on those who reject it (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38-40). The good news is *so* good that a man can't hear it and decide not to respond- without facing judgment for his rejection of God's love and Christ's death. There are many who know the Gospel (e.g. by being 'brought up in the Faith') but who calmly walk away from the call of the cross. I would suggest that they need more reminding than it seems they are given of the fear of God, the tragic inevitability of judgment to come, the sense of desperate self-hate and bitter regret that will engulf men then, the sense of no place to run... . Paul used "the terror of the Lord" , the concept of fearing God, to persuade men who had rejected his beseeching (2 Cor. 5:11).

The idea of conditional salvation, and that not for everybody but a tiny minority, I find both hard to accept and yet the very thing that clinches the actual reality of 'the truth' we hold. Josiah's zealous reforms started with reading "the book of the covenant" (2 Kings 23:2), probably the list of curses which were to come for disobedience (2 Kings 22:19 = Lev. 26:31,32). And this book was in some way a joy and rejoicing to Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16). In this sense Paul used the terror of possible condemnation to persuade men (2 Cor. 5:11). And when those that had already believed (Acts 19:18 Gk.) saw how the condemned sons of Sceva fled away from the spirit of Jesus naked and wounded, in anticipation of the final judgment, they ceased being secret believers and came out openly with their confessions of unworthiness and need for salvation. In the light of that foretaste of judgment to come, they realized that nothing else mattered. The image of them fleeing naked definitely alludes to Am. 2:16: "The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day, Says the Lord" (NKJV).

5:12 Like the Lord, Paul's transparency was what connected him with people. He says that he needs no letter of recommendation to them, because he is written on their hearts; "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God...we are made manifest

unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences” (2 Cor. 3:3; 4:2; 5:11). There were those in Corinth who thought in terms of appearances rather than the heart; those who demanded letters of recommendation before accepting Paul (2 Cor. 5:12); but Paul’s response is that because he is transparent to God, it is inevitable that he is transparent before them his brethren. They knew in their hearts / consciences, no matter how they sought to deny it, that he was sincere. And this was why Paul could be so open with the critical Corinthians about his personal life. “Be ye also enlarged” invites us to be like him in this. To be asked to have the openness of Paul is a challenge indeed. Even in our Christian experience, those brethren and sisters who have the most influence on others are those who artlessly radiate their own spirit, whose struggle with sin, devotion and example is unconcealable and uncontrived.

5:13 As Paul wrote to his unspiritual Corinthian brethren, he was doubtless hurt at the thought of their opposition to him; yet his mind flew to the similarities between himself and his Lord being rejected by *his* brethren (Mk. 3:21 = 2 Cor. 5:13).

5:14- see on 2 Cor. 8:9.

The love of Christ (and this phrase is almost always used in the NT of the cross) must *constrain us* (2 Cor. 5:14); we must reflect upon it until with Paul we pray with bowed knees to know the length, and the breadth and the height, of that love of Christ (on Calvary) that passes our unaided human knowledge (Eph. 3:19). For this alone is what will drive our passivity from us; here at last is something to respond to with all our heart and soul.

If we really think of the Lord's passion seriously, our thoughts will be punctuated with the realization: "I would not have done that. I would simply not have held on". But in that He died for us all in Him, it is reckoned that we all died with Him the death of the cross (2 Cor. 5:14). We are graciously counted as having died with Him in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), and now we try to live this out in practice. And in appreciating this, inevitably our patience with our brethren will be the more thorough-going.

The image of soldiers in their time of dying has often been used afterwards as a motivation for a nation: "Earn this" is the message their faces give. And it is no more true than in the death of the Lord. "The love of Christ", an idea elsewhere used of His death (Jn. 13:1; 2 Cor. 5:14,15; Rom. 8:32,34,35; Eph. 5:2,25; Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5 cp. 1 Jn. 4:10), *constrains us*; it doesn't force us, but rather shuts us up unto one way, as in a narrow, walled path. We cannot sit passively before the cross of the Lord. That "love of Christ" there passes our human knowledge, and yet our hearts can be opened, as Paul prayed, that we might know the length, breadth and height of it. The crucified Son of God was the full representation of God.

He died as He did so that the love of God, the real meaning of love, might be displayed in a cameo, in an intense, visual, physical form which could be remembered and meditated upon. Observing the memorial meeting is the very least we can do to this end; and this itself is only a beginning. "The love of Christ *constraineth us*" not to live for ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and to show this by our concern for our brethren (2 Cor. 5:14 and context). Marvin Vincent has a telling comment on the Greek word translated "constraineth": "The idea is not urging or driving, but *shutting up* to one line or purpose, as in a narrow, walled road" (*Word Studies Of The N.T.*). We shouldn't be driven men and women; we are not urged or driven by the cross, but shut up by it to one purpose. There are only two ways before us, to death or life; and we are shut up by the cross in that road to life. In this lies the sustaining and transforming power of the cross, if only we would meditate upon it. It is an epitome of every facet of the love of God and of Christ. There the Name of God was declared, that the love that was in the Father and Son may be in us (Jn. 17:26).

5:14,15 The representative nature of the Lord's death means that we are pledged to live out His self-crucifixion as far as we can; to re-live the crucifixion process in our imagination, to come to that point where we *know* we wouldn't have gone through with it, and to grasp with real wonder and

gratitude the salvation of the cross. " As one has died for all, then all have died, and that He died for all in order to have the living live no longer for themselves but for Him who died and rose for them" (2 Cor. 5:14,15 Moffatt). It has been powerfully commented: "To know oneself to have been involved in the sacrificial death of Christ, on account of its representational character, is to see oneself committed to a sacrificial life, to a re-enactment in oneself of the cross" (W.F. Barling, *The Letters To Corinth*).

5:15 All that is true of the Lord Jesus becomes in some sense, at some time, true of each of us who are in Him. It's true that nowhere in the Bible is the Lord Jesus actually called our "representative", but the idea is clearly there. I suggest it's especially clear in all the Bible passages which speak of Him acting *huper* us- what Dorothee Sölle called "the preposition of representation". Arndt and Gingrich in their Greek-English Lexicon define *huper* in the genitive as meaning "'for', 'in behalf of', 'for the sake of' someone. When used in the sense of representation, *huper* is associated with verbs like 'request, pray, care, work, feel, suffer, die, support'". So in the same way as the Lord representatively prays, died, cares, suffers, works "for" us, we are to do likewise, if He indeed is our representative and we His. Our prayers for another, our caring for them, is no longer a rushed salving of our conscience through some good deed. Instead 2 Cor. 5:15 becomes our motivation: "He died for (*huper*) all [of us], that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for (*huper*) them". We are, in our turn, to go forth and be "ambassadors for (*huper*) Christ... we pray you in Christ's stead (*huper* Christ), be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Grasping Him as our representative means that we will be His representatives in this world, and not leave that to others or think that our relationship in Him is so internal we needn't breathe nor show a word of it to others. As He suffered "the just for (*huper*) the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18), our living, caring, praying for others is no longer done "for" those whom we consider good enough, worthy enough, sharing our religious convictions and theology. For whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died *huper* us (Rom. 5:6). And this representative death is to find an issue in our praying *huper* others (Acts 12:5; Rom. 10:1; 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11), just as He makes intercession *huper* us (Rom. 8:26,34). We are to spend and be spent *huper* others, after the pattern of the Lord in His final nakedness of death on the cross (2 Cor. 12:15). These must all be far more than fine ideas for us. These are the principles which we are to live by in hour by hour life. And they demand a huge amount, even the cross itself. For unto us is given "in the behalf of Christ [*huper* Christ], not only to [quietly, painlessly, theoretically] believe on Him, but also to suffer for (*huper*) his sake" (Phil. 1:29). In all this, then, we see that the Lord's being our representative was not only at the time of His death; the fact He continues to be our representative makes Him our ongoing challenge.

5:17 F.F. Bruce has observed: "Something of Paul's native impetuosity is apparent in his epistolary style... time and again Paul starts a sentence that never reaches a grammatical end, for before he is well launched on it a new thought strikes him and he turns aside to deal with that" (*Paul: Apostle Of The Free Spirit*, Exeter: 1980, p. 456). His style is exemplified in 2 Cor. 5:17. The Greek text here is a sentence in which there are no verbs: "If anyone in Christ- new creation". It is as if the thrill of it leads him to just blurt it out. And observe that this was to be found in a man of extraordinary culture and intellectual ability. By perceiving this tension, the passion behind his style is thereby accentuated the more. Likewise consider how in Galatians Paul uses so many negatives, as if his passion and almost rage at the false teachers is coming out. See on Gal. 1:1.

God is seeking to work a new creation in the experience of men and women. He has done this for us in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), and yet the reality of it is still dependent upon whether we will allow ourselves to put on the new man after the image of God, whether we will become born again after His image and likeness (Eph. 4:23,24).

The Greek of 2 Cor. 5:17 is tellingly ambiguous; the sense can be: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature", or, "If any man be in Christ, let him be a new creature". The fact of becoming in

Christ through baptism means that we are new creations potentially, and therefore must work towards being new creations. We must go on further than just being baptized into Christ.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor.5:17) is very much the language of Rev.21:5 concerning the creation of new things on the ruins of the old, at Christ's return. Yet this dramatic change must occur within the believer as a result of being in Christ in this life, before he can share in the wonders of that future age.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation... all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). As a new born baby sees a chair, a table, a brother or sister, for the very first time, so do we after baptism. It is so hard for us to appreciate the newness of everything to a baby or small child. "All things are become new" in our attitude of mind after baptism. Yet we live in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), as if this process of birth is ongoing throughout our spiritual lives. After baptism, therefore, we set out on a life in which we should be gazing, in wide eyed wonder, at new spiritual concepts and realities. How patient we should be with others who are in this position. "Old things are passed away" at baptism, just as the old world order will "pass away" at the Lord's return (Rev. 21:5). The dramatic change that will come upon this planet in the Kingdom should therefore be paralleled in our new spiritual vistas after baptism, and throughout the process of being re-born and becoming a new creation.

5:18 God reconciled us by the cross, and *therefore* to us was given the work of preaching the Gospel of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18,20)- a sharing with others of our own experience. This was clearly what fired the first century ecclesia. On the basis of our experience of reconciliation with God, we have been given "the ministry of reconciliation", in that God "hath put in us [Gk. settled deep within us] the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18,19) . That which is deeply internal issues in an outward witness. For this reason all discussion of how that outward witness should be made is somewhat irrelevant- the witness naturally springs from deep within. If it doesn't, we have to ask whether we have anything much deep within.

5:18-20 Our preaching should flow naturally out of our own personal experience of God's grace. The fact that we were reconciled is tied up with the fact that we have been given, as part of this "being reconciled", the ministry of preaching reconciliation (2 Cor. 5: 18-20). It is the greatness of God's grace which will form the content of our preaching, not our own practical experience of it. Our experience will only motivate us personally, not anyone else. We preach not ourselves, but Christ as Lord and Saviour. Let's really get down to serious self examination, to more finely appreciating the holiness of God and the horror of sin. If we can do this- and only if- our preaching, our speaking, our reasoning, even our very body language, will be stamped with the vital hallmark: humility.

5:19- see on Ps. 32:2.

Christ "reconciled the world" in that He obtained forgiveness for *us* (2 Cor. 5:19)- *we* are "the world" which was reconciled, we are the "all things" purged by His blood (Heb. 9:22).

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself... and hath committed unto us the word (Gospel) of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech (men) by us... we then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted... behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 5:19-6:2). We are the means by which God is appealing to mankind; and we must do this while there is the opportunity for salvation. As Moses delivered God's people "with the hand of the angel", we likewise are working in co-operation with huge Angelic forces (Acts 7:35 RV). According to 2 Cor.5, in prospect, God reconciled the whole world to Himself on the cross, the devil was destroyed, *all* sin was overcome then, in prospect. In this sense Christ is the propitiation for our sins as much as He is for those of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2).

On the cross, He bore away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). So now we must spread this good news to the whole world, for *all* men's sins were conquered on the cross.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19) seems to be a comment on the death, rather than the nature, of the Lord Jesus. It is in the context of the statement that Christ died for all men (2 Cor. 5:14). In that death, God was especially in Christ. Perhaps it was partly with reference to the cross that the Lord said: "I shall shew you plainly of the Father" (Jn. 16:25). See on Jn. 19:19.

5:20 We are the face of Christ to this world, and to our brethren; He has no arms or legs or face on this earth apart from us, His body. God "makes His appeal by us" (2 Cor. 5:20 RSV).

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith Yahweh. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow" (Is. 1:18). This is extraordinary indeed. God is seeking to persuade men to accept the forgiveness available in the blood of His Son. And He asks us to do this work for Him, to reflect this aspect of His character to the world, with that same spirit of earnest humility: "As though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). No wonder in the context Paul says that we should *therefore* watch our behaviour and attitudes. The fact men turn away from God's *beseeching*, His *praying* that they will accept His grace, is surely the greatest tragedy in the whole cosmos, in the whole of existence. Little wonder we should *look diligently* lest any man fail, or (Gk.) fall away from God's grace (Heb. 12:15) on account of bitterness in the ecclesia.

Consider the implications of 2 Cor. 5:20: "On behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ: be ye reconciled to God [because] him who knew no sin he made to be a sin [a sin offering?] on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him". *Because* of the cross, the atonement which God wrought in Christ's offering, we beseech men to be reconciled to God. Appreciating the cross and the nature of the atonement should be the basis of our appeal to men. And indeed, such an appeal is *God* appealing to men and women, in that there on the cross "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". The blood and spittle covered body of the Lord lifted up was and is the appeal, the *beseeching* of God Himself to men. And this is the message that we are honoured to preach on His behalf; we preach the appeal of God through the cross. See on Jn. 19:19.

2 Cor. 5:14-21 urges us to preach the salvation in Christ to all men, because He died for us, as our representative. He died *for* [the sake of] all (5:14,15), He was made sin *for* our sake (5:21); and therefore we are ambassadors *for* [s.w.] His sake (5:20). Because He was our representative, so we must be His representatives in witnessing Him to the world. This is why the preaching of Acts was consistently motivated by the Lord's death and resurrection for the preachers. Phil. 2 draws out the parallel between the Name of Jesus, in which all the names of those in Him find a part, and the need to confess this in preaching. By baptism into the name of Jesus, men confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. There was and is no other name given under Heaven by which men can be saved; "every name" under the whole Heaven must take on the name of Jesus in baptism. This is why Acts associates His exaltation (Acts 2:33; 5:31) and His new name (Acts 2:21,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,18,30; 5:40) with an appeal for men and women to be baptized into that Name. Realizing the meaning of the Name of Jesus and the height of His exaltation meant that they realized how "all men" could have their part in a sacrifice which represented "all men". And thus they were motivated to preach to "all men". And thus Paul's whole preaching ministry was a bearing of the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

5:21 2 Cor. 5:14-21 urges us to preach the salvation in Christ to all men, because He died for us, as our representative. He died *for* [the sake of] all (5:14,15), He was made sin *for* our sake (5:21); and therefore we are ambassadors *for* [s.w.] His sake (5:20). Because He was our representative, so we

must be His representatives in witnessing Him to the world. This is why the preaching of Acts was consistently motivated by the Lord's death and resurrection for the preachers. See on Heb. 2:9.

There was a child-likeness about the Lord. Not in that He was naive- He was the least naive of all men. But rather did He have an innocence about sin, as if He were a sweet child caught up within the web of sinful men around Him. Indeed the point has been made that when Paul spoke of the Lord as being one "who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), he was using the very phrase used in rabbinic and other contemporary writings to describe children, who were too young to 'know sin'. This child-likeness was beautifully related to His utter naturalness

6:1 Workers together- see on 1 Sam. 14:45.

Paul seems to have the great commission in mind, when he wrote to the Corinthians that to all of us has been committed the ministry of reconciliation [a reference to the great commission?], and in discharging it we are 'workers together' with God (2 Cor. 6:1)- the very same word used in Mk. 16:20 concerning how the Lord Jesus 'worked with' His men as they fulfilled the commission.

6:2- see on Ps. 69:13

There's an allusion here to Ps. 32:6. For every sinner, for whom David is our example, *now* is the time when God may be "found" in the sense of experiencing His forgiveness. God *is* love towards men, He *is* forgiveness. To experience this and respond back to it is therefore to find the knowledge of God. This "time when thou (i.e. God's forgiveness, which *is* God) mayest be found" which David speaks of is that of 2 Cor.6:2: "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation". Paul was speaking of how all sinners, baptized or not, need to realize this; we are all in David's position. Some complain that they did not experience a very great upsurge in finding and knowing God at the point of baptism. This may be due to an insufficient emphasis on the need for repentance and appreciating the seriousness of sin before baptism. We must not think that we know God because we believe a Statement of Faith and have been baptized. "Now is the accepted time", Paul wrote to the baptized Corinthians, to truly take on board the marvel of God's forgiveness, to know it and respond to it for ourselves, and thereby to come to a dynamic, two-way relationship with God.

6:2 = Is. 49:8 "In an acceptable time have I heard thee". This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures [here Is. 53:1] are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ. Is. 49:8,9: "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee" is quoted about us in 2 Cor. 6:2 in the context of us being preachers, labouring with God]. Isaiah continues: "And I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; saying to them that are bound, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves" (RV). This is the language of the Lord's preaching, which freed men from the prison house (Is. 61:1,2). Yet because we are in Him, we too have His ministry; our words too can *make men inherit* the Kingdom, and free men from their bondage. "We are witnesses [through being] in him" (Acts 5:32 RVmg.). As the Lord in Isaiah's servant songs was the suffering, saving, atoning servant, lifted up to give salvation world-wide- so are we. "Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee" (Is.49:8) is quoted by Paul in 2 Cor.6 about us. The next verse, Is.49:9, must therefore also be about us: "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves...they shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water". In the same way as *we* have experienced the "acceptable time" in this life, so we will be able to encourage the mortals to make use of the "accepted time" of the Millennium. It is *when* they do this that "they shall not hunger nor thirst".

6:4 We are not only Jesus to this world but also effectively we are the witness to God Himself. We minister His care to others; to the extent that Paul could write both that he was a minister of God, and also a minister of the church (2 Cor. 6:4; Col. 1:24,25).

6:4,5 It is primarily *people* who communicate, not words or ideas. Personal authenticity is undoubtedly the strongest credential in our work of communicating the message. Thus Paul could speak of his afflictions as being his credentials (2 Cor. 11:21-33; 1 Thess. 2:1-4; 2 Tim. 3:10-12). And God's true servant commends himself by the endurance of opposition (2 Cor. 6:4,5).

6:6 There is repeated N.T. warning against the ease of slipping into a mindset which thinks itself to be 'loving' when actually it isn't. "Let love be without dissimulation" (s.w. "unfeigned"; Rom. 12:9). The fact he knew himself to have "love unfeigned" (2 Cor. 6:6) was one of Paul's credentials as a genuine apostle. James 3:17 speaks of the true spirituality, including gentleness, patience, kindness etc., as being "without hypocrisy" (s.w. "unfeigned"). A true response to the doctrines of the basic Gospel will result in "love unfeigned" (1 Pet. 1:22). Israel of old failed in this: "With their mouth they shew much love; but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ez. 33:31). This is all some emphasis. It helps explain why both in ourselves and in others it is possible to behold a great emphasis on love whilst at the same time harbouring a very unloving attitude. I think all of us with any ecclesial experience will be able to recall conversations where 'love' has been advocated, or 'unloving behaviour' criticized, in language which simply *breathes* bitterness and contempt!

6:8 We could almost conclude that being unfairly gossiped about is a characteristic of the true servant of God. Indeed, when Paul lists the things which confirm his apostleship, he not only lists his imprisonments and shipwrecks; he says that the fact he has been slandered is another proof that he is a servant of Christ (2 Cor. 6:8). See on 1 Tim. 5:19.

6:10- see on Mt. 26:39.

In our *attitudes* we must be as if we possessed nothing, as if we have in our heart of hearts resigned everything, even the very concept of personal 'possession'. Paul could say that he was *as if* he possessed nothing (2 Cor. 6:10), although he evidently had at least some money to his name (Acts 24:26), and could offer to re-imburse Philemon for any damages. There is a great freedom in this, if only we would know it.

He speaks of how we received the riches of God's grace (Eph. 1:18; 2:7; 3:8,16); and yet in writing to the Corinthians he uses only to them a specific Greek word meaning 'to enrich'. He reminds them of how we are *enriched by Him* in the knowledge of forgiveness which we have (1 Cor. 1:5; 2 Cor. 9:11), and *therefore* we are to 'enrich' others in our preaching to them of the same grace (2 Cor. 6:10).

6:11- see on 2 Cor. 8:24.

The openness of Paul, his self-revelation of his innermost spirit, especially to his detractors at Corinth, is incredible. In such situations one tends to be cagey and reserved rather than open-hearted. But much of what we learn about Paul's innermost struggles comes from his letters to the Corinthians, who seemed ready to abuse his every word. He bluntly reminded them of his openness: "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is opened unto you, our heart is enlarged" (2 Cor. 6:11). And he asks them, as his very own children, to be that open with him: "Now for a recompense in the same (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged" (2 Cor. 6:13).

6:11-13 Many find that human leaders or elders come between them and a personal following of Jesus. Yet we need to remember that Jesus never delegated his personal authority over His people to anyone. This is where the Catholic idea of the Pope as the personal representative of Jesus is so wrong. Much as we should respect our elders, this respect shouldn't come between us and the Lord Jesus. Note how Paul never demanded power over his converts. He made himself vulnerable to them, in the hope that they would respond to him in an open relationship: "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you... As a fair exchange- I speak as to my children- open wide your hearts also" (2 Cor. 6:11-13).

6:14 Paul's selfless relationship with Corinth was inspired by that of Moses with Israel. Thus Paul warns Corinth not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), or else he would come to them and not spare. He is quoting the LXX of Num. 25:3 concerning how Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, resulting in Moses commanding the murder of all those guilty- just as Paul later did to Corinth.

Paul appeared to lay the law down to the Corinthians about separation from the world- and they complained. His comment is that their sense of 'limitation' or being 'cramped' [Gk.] was not due to what he'd said, but more because of their own consciences as believers: "You are not cramped in us, but you are cramped by your own hearts... be you also enlarged! Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?" (2 Cor. 6:12-14). He's saying that the apparent 'cramping' or 'limitation' of being separate from the ways of the world is actually not a cramping at all- it's an enlargement of the heart's horizons. And this fits in admirably with the above examples of 'holiness'. Separation from sin is actually a separation unto so much more.

Israel were not to sow "mingled seed" in their fields, or make clothes of "mingled" materials (Lev. 19:19). The materials would, as the Lord Himself mentioned, tear apart. The garment wouldn't last. And sowing different seeds together likewise would bring no fruit to perfection. But the LXX in these passages is quoted in one place only in the NT: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14). If we are, *the relationship can't work*. So don't think that if we marry out of the Faith, it will all work out OK. Unless there is serious repentance (and even then, not always), *it won't work*. It will be a garment patched up with two different materials.

6:17 We are to "be separate" in this life, as an act of choice in the myriad of daily decisions we face (2 Cor. 6:17)- and yet at the judgment, the Lord will "sever" (s.w.) the wicked from the just (Mt. 13:49), or "separate" the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:32). But we are to live out the judgment now in our separation from wickedness. And if we do this, wicked men shall "separate" from us- the judgment is worked out ahead of time (Lk. 6:22).

God will confirm us in coming out from the world. He told His people to flee from Babylon, to come out of her and return to His land and Kingdom (Is. 48:20; 52:7; Jer. 50:8; Zech. 2:7). Babylon offered them a secure life, wealth, a society which accepted them (Esther 8:17; 10:3), houses which they had built for themselves (Jer. 29:5). And they were asked to leave all this, and travel the uncertain wilderness road to the ruins of Israel. They are cited in the NT as types of us in our exit from this world (2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4). Those who decided to obey God's command and leave Babylon were confirmed in this by God: He raised up their spirit to want to return and re-build Jerusalem, and He touched the heart of Cyrus to make decrees which greatly helped them to do this (Ezra 1:2-5). And so the same Lord God of Israel is waiting to confirm us in our every act of separation from the kingdoms of this world, great or small; and He waits not only to receive us, but to be a Father unto us, and to make us His sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:18).

Paul spoke of how those who join themselves with unbelievers (and marriage must surely have been in his mind) had to retract or repent of that relationship, and *then* God would receive them and *be their God* (2 Cor. 6:14-17). He was referring back to the Abrahamic promise of Gen. 17:7, that God would be the God of Abraham's seed. Is not the suggestion that those who unrepentantly marry unbelievers have broken the covenant?

7:1 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers... what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?... wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing... having therefore these promises... let us cleanse ourselves". The links with Is. 52:11 and Rev. 18:4 suggest that the people referred to were actually *in* spiritual Babylon; they had unequally yoked themselves together with unbelievers; they needed to separate (s.w. to divide, sever) themselves, and come out from among them. The idea of unequal yoking

could be a marriage allusion. Could it be that Paul is suggesting that they sever themselves from the unbelievers they had wrongly married? In Neh. 13 we have those who had married out being "cleansed" from their relationships, even though they didn't actually end them.

We must wash ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit even after baptism (2 Cor. 7:1); by doing so, we as it were go through the death-and-resurrection process of baptism again; we live it all once again. See on Gal. 3:27.

2 Cor. 7:1 exhorts us to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh (RV), not being like those sinners who "defile the flesh" (Jude 8). These passages would imply that the flesh is defiled not by who we are naturally, but by human behaviour and mindsets from which we can separate ourselves. Whilst we consider ourselves so awful that we consider our flesh to be defiled *naturally*, we will never value the human person, and will give way too easily to sin as if it's just our natural fate. See on Rom. 8:3.

7:4 When Corinth reviled him (2 Cor. 7:4), Paul saw this as being reviled and persecuted after the pattern of Mt. 5:12.

7:7-11 A New Testament allusion to David's penitence may be found in 2 Cor. 7:7-11: "Ye were made sorry...ye sorrowed to repentance...ye were made sorry after a *Godly* manner (cp. "every one that is *Godly*..." , Ps.32:6)...for *Godly* sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...ye sorrowed after a *Godly* sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation (cp. David's in 2 Sam.12:5)...what zeal...your mourning, your fervent mind" . Allusion after allusion to David is being piled up here. The eight references to their "sorrow" in four verses is surely a signpost back to David's intense sorrow for his sin with Bathsheba: "My sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3)... my sorrow is continually before me...I will be sorry for my sin...many sorrows shall be to the wicked" who, unlike David, refused to repent (Ps. 38:17,18; 32:10). This association between sin and sorrow is a common one (Job 9:28; 1 Tim. 6:10; Ex. 4:31; Is. 35:10. The last two references show how Israel's sorrowing in Egypt was on account of their sinfulness). We must pause to ask whether our consciousness of sin leads us to a like sorrowing, whether our repentance features a similar depth of remorse. It would appear that Paul is likening Corinth to David. They too were guilty of sexual "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness" (2 Cor. 12:21). As David's repentance was made in a "day of salvation", so in 2 Cor.6:2 Paul told Corinth that they were in a similar position to him; they too had the chance of repentance. Those who had heeded this call earlier had experienced the zeal and clear conscience which David did on his repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11). In this case, Paul would be likening himself to Nathan the prophet. This zeal which was seen in both David and Corinth is a sure sign of clear conscience and a joyful openness with God. Again, we ask how much of our zeal is motivated by this, or is it just a continuation of a level of service which we set ourselves in more spiritual days, which we now struggle to maintain for appearances sake?

7:8 There are Biblical examples of refusing to take guilt when others feel that it should be taken. Recall how the Lord's own parents blamed Him for 'making them anxious' by 'irresponsibly' remaining behind in the temple. The Lord refused to take any guilt, didn't apologize, and even gently rebuked them (Lk. 2:42-51). In similar vein, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Even if I made you sorry with a letter, I do not regret it" (2 Cor. 7:8). He would not take guilt for their being upset with him. Likewise Absalom comforted his raped sister not to 'take it to heart', not to feel guilty about it, as it seems she was feeling that way, taking false guilt upon her (2 Sam. 13:20).

7:9- see on Lk. 9:23-25.

7:10 "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" by God (2 Cor. 7:10). If we repent / change our minds, then God will not repent of His plan for saving us.

7:11 The Greek word *zelos* means both zeal in a good sense (2 Cor. 7:11,12; 9:2; 11:2)- and also it's translated jealousy, strife, envying (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20). Likewise, *thumos* is used

both about righteous anger, and also fits of anger which are sinful. It's clear enough from these linguistic facts, quite apart from our practical experience, that zeal turns into strife far too often and far too easily. The problem is, we so easily defend the strife, the jealousy, the anger... as righteous zeal, Godly anger. The line seems to us very fine, although it isn't in God's eyes. I observe too often brethren who appear so full of anger, but never reveal it openly... until it comes to some matter connected with their religious life. And then, wow, they let it all rip on some poor person, feeling they are justified.

7:11-15 2 Cor. 7:11-15, when properly translated, perhaps reflects Paul at his angriest and most abrasive: "I robbed other churches [an exaggeration!], getting money from them to be a minister to you!...as the truth of Christ is in me- I swear that this reason to be proud will not be stopped as long as I work in the area of Achaia! You ask me why do I do this? Do you think it's because I don't love you? God knows I do! It's because what I do- and I am going to go on doing it- shuts up some people who are trying to pretend they are as good as we are, those fakes! Such apostles are treacherous workmen. They deck themselves out as apostles of Christ and it's no wonder people are fooled... but they'll get what's coming to them!". Even through the barrier of words, time, culture and distance, the abrasion of Paul in full-flow comes down through the centuries.

7:13 Paul sincerely felt the joy of others as being his personal joy (Rom. 12:15 cp. 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 2:3). Because we are in one body, we rejoice with those who rejoice. "We are partakers of *your* joy", Paul could write. The comfort which Titus felt was that which Paul felt (2 Cor. 7:6,7,13); Corinth's joy was Paul's (2 Cor. 7:13). This should ensure a true richness of experience for the believer in Christ, sharing in the joys and sorrows, the tragedies and triumphs, of the one body on the Lord. "He that separateth himself seeketh his own desire" (Prov. 18:1 RV). This says it all. Any separation from our brethren, whether it be from personal dislike of them or for fear of losing friends amongst others who order us to separate from them... is all ultimately selfish.

8:2 For the Macedonians "the abundance of their joy... abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2). Their joy for what the Lord had done for them, for the "abundance" [s.w.] of His grace and giving to them (Rom. 5:17), led to their giving to the poor.

We can give on some kind of proportionate level to what we have. Or we can give *more than we can afford*; the kind of giving the Philippians are commended for (and no, Paul didn't scold them for being irresponsible): "In their deep poverty... to their power... yea, and *beyond their power*" (2 Cor. 8:2). The basic message of so many of the parables is that our generosity to the Lord's cause should be offered without a calculated weighing up process first of all, and with a recognition that such giving may be contrary to all human wisdom. Thus the rich man sells *all he has* and buys a pearl- he's left with nothing, just this useless ornament. He doesn't sell what he has spare, his over-and-above... *all he had* went on that pearl, for the sheer joy and surpassing, all-demanding excellence thereof. His wife, colleagues, employees- would have counted him crazy. He acted against all the conventions of human wisdom. Likewise the shepherd leaves 99% of his flock unguarded and goes chasing madly after the one weak, straying one. This was crazy, humanly; one per cent loss wasn't unreasonable. But he risked all, for love of the one. And in this He set us a pattern for forsaking all we have.

8:5 Paul speaks of how the believers in Macedonia "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us" (2 Cor. 8:5). He saw their response to the Lord as their response to him- because he appreciated the degree to which he as their converter was a full manifestation of the Lord whom he preached.

In 2 Cor. 8:4,5 Paul parallels *giving* to the poor believers with *giving* our own selves to the Lord. Every act of generosity to the Lord's people is a giving to Him personally. Paul had obviously grasped the huge implications of the Lord's teaching that whenever His people are cold, thirsty, in need... then He is in such need, and every ministration to them is a ministration to Him. 2 Cor. 8:9 teaches that our response to the Lord's sacrifice should be giving to others *until we are poor*,

reflecting the Lord's making of Himself 'poor' to the extent of being left naked and dead, hanging upon a stake of wood. We must review all our generosity in this light. Is it a giving of our abundance, or is it a giving until we make ourselves poor...? The practical implications of this are *huge*.

8:6 Paul asked Titus to visit the Corinthians. He himself "of his own accord" decided to visit them. But God put the idea in the heart of Titus (2 Cor. 8:6,16,17). The freewill desire of Titus was confirmed by the hand of God operating on the heart of Titus. It could be argued that it was God who put the idea there in the first place, foreknowing that of Titus's "own accord" he would wish to do this work.

8:7 Unless our 'love' reflects a genuine care and respect for the other person, it isn't love. William Barclay suggests that the Greek word *porneia*, prostitution, is rooted in the verb *pernumi*- to sell. If our love is the love which is bought and sold, which goes to the highest bidder, which treats its object as a thing which can be discarded, or 'loved' without truly intimate union... then it's actually a form of prostitution. Each time we ditch a friend because the going got tough, withheld love because we weren't getting from it what we intended... we're essentially showing a spirit of prostitution rather than love. This is why love in the end must always find practical expression in a self-sacrificial way. The Corinthians were to show the sincerity of their love [implying there can be a fake 'love'] by their generosity to the poor believers in Judea (2 Cor. 8:7,8,24).

We cannot know God's grace without likewise 'abounding' with it ourselves. This can be in acts of generosity; the early believers 'abounded' in generosity to the needy (2 Cor. 8:7- the same word used about the abounding of God's grace). But the spirit of 'abounding' is far more than material generosity. We are to 'abound' in the work of edifying the church (1 Cor. 14:12; 15:58); abounding in prayer for each other (1 Thess. 3:10), rather than just praying once about someone else's problem as a conscience-salving formality. Ask yourself- whether your prayer for others is of the 'abounding' quality that the Lord's intercession was and is *for* you? We are to 'abound' in praise- for God's abounding grace abounds through us to His glory if we praise Him for that grace (2 Cor. 4:15). And so... how is your praise? A mouthing off of familiar words and lyrics, that you've hummed and hymned for years? Or the internal praise that has some real fire and flame to it? As God makes His grace *abound* to us, *we* are to *abound* to every good work (2 Cor. 9:8). We are to 'abound' in love to each other, as God abounds to us (1 Thess. 3:12). This is why there will never be a grudging spirit in those who serve properly motivated by God's abundance to us. This super-abounding quality in our kindness, generosity, forgiveness etc. is a feature lacking in the unbelievers around us. If we salute our brethren only, then we do not super-abound (Mt. 5:47); if we love as the world loves its own, then we have missed the special quality of love which the Father and Son speak of and exemplify. This radical generosity of spirit to others is something which will mark us apart from this world.

8:9- see on Mt. 13:46.

We have each been touched by God's grace, and His influence upon us leads us to reach out to influence others by lives of grace. The grace of the Lord Jesus meant that "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9). And this cannot be received passively. The Corinthians' response was to make themselves poor, so that their poor Jewish brethren might be made richer. *Every* person who has been enriched in the Lord Jesus will in turn respond in a life and even a body language that somehow transforms others. Prov. 13:8 speaks of how our attitude to wealth is a crucial factor in our eternal destiny: "The ransom of a man's life are his riches". Just prior to that we read in Prov. 13:7: "There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches". This verse is actually part quoted in 2 Cor. 8:9 and Phil. 2:7, about how on the cross, the Lord Jesus made himself poor, of no reputation, and now has been so highly exalted. Our living out of the Lord's cross is shown in our making of ourselves poor. That is surely the unmistakable teaching of this allusion.

Do we struggle to be truly generous to the Lord's cause, and to turn our words and vague feelings of commitment into action? Corinth too were talkers, boasting of their plans to give material support to the poor brethren in Jerusalem, but doing nothing concrete. Paul sought to shake them into action by reminding them of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" on the cross (2 Cor. 8:9). Corinth had few wealthy members, but Paul knew that the cross of Christ would inspire in them a generous spirit to those even poorer than they. The richer should be made poor by what the Lord did, Paul is saying- not harmlessly giving of their pocket money. For He gave in ways that hurt Him, ways that were real, meaningful and thereby effective and powerful.

To put it mildly, our experience of His death for us should lead us to be generous spirited in all ways. In appealing for financial generosity to poorer brethren, Paul sought to inspire the Corinthians with the picture of Christ crucified: "For ye know the grace [gift / giving] of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor [Gk. a pauper], that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). In the light of this, we should not just be generous from the abundance of what we have; we should become as paupers in our giving. The Lord's giving wasn't financial; it was emotional and spiritual. And so, Paul says, both materially and in these ways, we should likewise respond to our brethren, poorer materially or spiritually than we are. "The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:14 Philips; it "urges us on", NRSV).

Because in the Kingdom we will be given all the wealth that is Christ's, therefore we should sell what we now have and give to the poor (Lk. 12:33 cp. 44 NIV). But more than this, in a sense God *has now* given us the Kingdom (Lk. 12:32 NIV), and therefore we should in natural response to this give of our blessings (in whatever form) to make the poor rich, just as Christ did to us (2 Cor. 8:9 alludes here). Basically, according to this, generosity (both of spirit and material giving) is proportionate to our faith that we both have now and will receive the matchless riches of God's grace in Christ. "Grace" is used by Paul in 2 Cor. to refer to both the grace God has given us and the grace of giving which the Corinthians ought to respond to it with; as God had reached into their lives, so they should reach into the lives of their poverty stricken brethren.

In appealing for the Corinthians to be generous, Paul points out that the Lord Jesus became a pauper for our sakes, and therefore, because of the riches of salvation He has given to us, the *least* we can do is to reach out into the lives of others with what riches we may have (2 Cor. 8:9 Gk.). This is why in 2 Cor. 8:1,19; 9:14, Paul uses the word "grace" to mean both the grace of God and also our grace (gifts) in works of response. Thus he talks of bringing the "grace" of the money collected for the poor saints; he is talking about the gift they had made; but in the same context he speaks of God's grace in Christ. If we have received the grace of God's forgiveness and salvation (and so much more) in Christ, we must show that grace, that gift, by giving. Our heart tells us to give, our heart is in our giving, it's a natural outcome of a believing mind (2 Cor. 9:5-8, J.B. Phillips). Our giving is a quite natural outcome of our faith in and experience of the cross.

The suggestion has been made that because Jesus increased in favour with men, He may have gotten on quite well in His secular life. Paul speaks about how although Jesus was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor [a pauper, Gk.] that we through His poverty might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9). I find those words hard to conclusively interpret. Clearly the reference is to the 'poverty' of the cross, that we might be spiritually rich- for He doesn't enable us to get materially rich through following Him. And yet the context of Paul's words is about the need to give up our material riches for Christ's people, and he cites the example of Jesus to inspire us in this.

8:10 Paul pleads with Corinth to see the similarities between them and the ecclesia in the wilderness; he wants them to personalize it all. He sees their gathering and redistribution of wealth as exactly analogous to Israel's gathering of manna (2 Cor. 8:15)- and he so wishes his Corinthians to think themselves into Israel's shoes. For then they would realize that as Israel had to have a willing heart to give back to God the wealth of Egypt which He had given them, so they were to

have a willing heart in being generous to their poorer brethren (Ex. 35:5 = 2 Cor. 8:12). And they would have realized that as “last year” they had made this offer (2 Cor. 8:10 Gk.), so the year before, Israel had received Egypt’s wealth with a similar undertaking to use it for the Lord’s cause. As Moses had to remind them a second time of their obligations in Ex. 35, so Paul had to bring it again before Corinth. And if they had seen these similarities, they would have got the sense of Paul’s lament that there was not one wise hearted man amongst them- for the “wise hearted” were to convert Israel’s gold and silver into tools for Yahweh’s service (Ex. 35:10 = 1 Cor. 6:5; 2 Cor. 10:12).

8:11 Paul’s focus upon the positive is really tremendous, especially coming from a man so far spiritually ahead of the weak Corinthians. He commends their “readiness” to donate, whilst pointing out they are more talk than action; and later speaks to others of “*our* readiness”, identifying himself with the Corinthian brethren whose lack of actual action had got him into so many problems in fulfilling what he had confidently promised on their behalf (2 Cor. 8:11,12,19). He even gloried to others of their “readiness” (2 Cor. 9:2), whilst clearly not turning a blind eye to their failure to actually produce anything concrete.

8:11,12 Mk. 12:43 = 2 Cor. 8:12. Paul saw those generous ecclesias as the widow with one mite, and also as rich Mary giving what she had (Mk. 14:8 = 2 Cor. 8:11). This reveals his sensitivity; he knew some of them were poor, some rich. Yet he saw they were all making a real effort. And he understood this in terms of characters in the Gospels.

8:12 The Lord taught men to give alms of such things as they had (Lk. 11:41); as we have opportunity / ability, we must be generous to all men (Gal. 6:10). These passages are teaching a *spirit* of generosity; and even a sister with literally *no* money can have a generous spirit. The key passage is 2 Cor. 8:12: "If there be first (i.e. most importantly) *a willing mind*, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not". *Every man* was to contribute to the building of the tabernacle (cp. the ecclesia) *with a willing heart* (Ex. 25:2- Paul surely alludes here). They weren't told: 'Whoever is willing and able to contribute, please do so'. And yet the majority of us have at least *something* materially; and as we have been blessed, so let us give. "*Every man* according as he *purposeth in his heart* (generosity is a mental attitude), so let him give; *not grudgingly*, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver". See on Acts 11:29.

Our intentions to do good can be counted as if they were performed. Thus if we have a generous spirit, and would love to be generous to the needy, but just can't do it – it's counted as if we've done it. The generous poor at Corinth are the parade example: "For if there first be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has [to give], and not according to that he hasn't got [to give]" (2 Cor. 8:12).

8:15 They were fed with manna one day at a time- this is so stressed (Ex. 16:4,19,20). There was to be no hoarding of manna- anything extra was to be shared with others (Ex. 16:8; 2 Cor. 8:15). But we live in a world where the financial challenges of retirement, housing, small family size [if any family at all]... mean that there appears no other option but to 'hoard manna' for the future. To some extent this may be a reflection of the way that life in these very last days is indeed quite different to anything previously known in history; but all the same, we face a very real challenge. Are we going to hoard manna, for our retirement, for our unknown futures? Or will we rise up to the challenge to trust in God's day by day provision, and share what's left over? "Give us this day our bread-for-today" really needs to be prayed by us daily. Let's give full weight to the Lord's command to pray for only "our daily bread", the daily rations granted to a soldier on active duty. It's almost impossible to translate this term adequately in English. In the former USSR and Communist East Germany (DDR), there was the idea that nobody in a Socialist state should go hungry. And so if you were hungry in a restaurant after eating, you had the right to ask for some food, beyond what you paid for. In the former East Germany, the term *Sättigungsbeilage* was used for this in restaurants- the portion of necessity. It's this food we should ask God for- the food to keep us alive, the food which a Socialist restaurant would give you for free. We shouldn't be thinking in terms of anything more than this. It's an eloquent essay in what our attitude to wealth, materialism and long term self-provision ought to be.

8:16 There is an urgency in the mediation of mercy towards others. When Paul thanks God that Titus has a heart of "earnest care" for the Corinthians, he uses a Greek word [*spoude*] which literally means "speed", and is elsewhere translated "haste" – as well as "haste" and "business" (2 Cor. 8:16). The heart that really cares will be characterized by a speedy and quick response, not a careful weighing up of a situation, nor a resignation of responsibilities to ponderous committees. See on Lk. 14:5.

8:24 Paul dealt with a very difficult situation in Corinth by being totally open hearted, when his natural sense must have been to be very cagey with them (2 Cor. 6:11). Indeed, some of his most revealing autobiographical passages are found in 2 Corinthians, as he opens his heart to them. And he encouraged them to likewise *openly show before the ecclesias* their love for others (2 Cor. 8:24 s.w.). He surely had in mind the Lord's teaching that our light should shine before others, because all things will ultimately be brought into the open (Lk. 8:16,17). This doesn't just refer to preaching; it refers to an open shining out of whatever spirituality we have, to everyone.

9:2- see on Jn. 19:39; Rom. 11:14; 2 Cor. 8:11.

Paul could bid men follow him, that they might follow Christ. And the inspired word does bid us go down the road of comparing our behaviour with that of others. Paul boasted of the Corinthians' enthusiasm in planning to make donations in order to provoke the ecclesias in Macedonia to a like generosity. Their zeal "provoked very many" (2 Cor. 9:2). We should provoke one another to love and good works, by example (Heb. 10:24).

9:5- see on 2 Cor. 8:9.

Paul exhorted the Corinthians to give money to the Jerusalem Poor Fund, "as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness" (2 Cor. 9:5). We can give money generously, apparently, but do so from a motive of *covetousness*- the very opposite of true generosity and acceptable sacrifice. We can covet respect, admiration from our brethren... and not give as a pure and private reflection of the endless grace we have received.

9:7 Paul wrote of how the abounding joy of the poor brethren in Macedonia abounded unto a generosity which was actually beyond their means (2 Cor. 8:2). And when he goes on to speak of how God loves a "*cheerful giver*" (2 Cor. 9:7), he uses a word which James Strong defines as meaning 'hilarious'. And yet our giving tends to so often be a matter of phlegmatic planning, to salve an otherwise uneasy conscience. But the picture Paul paints is of a man or woman *hilarious* in

their giving to the poor. This isn't the giving which watches for the response, and is offended if it isn't what we expect. This is a picture of giving from the joy of giving, reflecting the Father's generosity to us. And this, Paul says, *God loves*. Quite simply. We touch the heart of Almighty God by such giving. And yet this hilarious giving isn't merely the emotion of a moment, the sort of thing played upon in many a Pentecostal gathering. It is to be a giving as a person 'purposes in their heart' (2 Cor. 9:7); and again, Strong challenges us with his definition of the Greek word translated 'purposes': "to *choose* for oneself *before* another thing (*prefer*), that is, (by implication) to *propose* (*intend*)". But having made this conscious decision, to put, say, Sister Svetlana's need before your preference for a new piece of furniture, we are to perform the actual giving with the hilarity of the cheerful giver. And as we know, Paul makes the point that such acts of generosity are acts of sowing, bringing forth fruits of righteousness; and the Lord will grant us yet more seed to sow in the same way. Forsaking all we have may not mean we are left with nothing.

9:8- see on 2 Cor. 8:7.

9:10 Paul wrote a telling comment about wealth in 2 Cor. 9:10. He likens generosity to sowing seed. If we do this for our poor brethren, then God will multiply our seed for sowing (RV); He will give us yet more with which to be generous with. We are "enriched unto all liberality" (2 Cor. 9:11 RV)- this is *why* we receive anything, to be liberal with it. And thus he writes in conclusion of "the proving of you by this ministration" (2 Cor. 9:13 RV). This brief but vital teaching of Paul here is a proof of our spirituality. Our response to ministering to others is a proving of us. It's as simple and as clear as that. And remember that Paul was writing these words to a *poor* ecclesia, amongst whom there were not many wealthy folk (1 Cor. 1:26-28). Paul speaks of joy as a motive for generosity.

9:11- see on 2 Cor. 6:10.

The manner in which Paul alludes to the Gospels also indicates that this was the result of the Spirit using Paul's human memory and absorption of the Gospels, rather than him just being used as a Fax machine by the Spirit. Thus if you analyze the data in our previous study, it is evident that there are *groups* of allusions to the Gospels in Paul's letters. Thus there may be several allusions in one chapter, none in the next, and then another group in the next chapter. This is the sort of pattern one would expect from a human memory. Sometimes 1 verse in the Gospels is alluded to by Paul in different ways in different letters. Thus Mt. 5:16 ("let your light shine before men") is applied by him to within the ecclesia (2 Cor. 9:11,13) and to among the world (1 Cor. 14:25). This has the ring of truth about it. I often take the same verse to mean different things, or I change my view concerning its application. This doesn't mean Paul wasn't inspired; it just indicates that his personal interpretation of the Gospels was used by God.

9:13 Initially, the Corinthians decided of their own volition to take up a collection for their poor Jewish brethren. Paul later encouraged them in this when their will to carry it out flagged, but the initial inspiration was from "the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 9:13 NIV). That Gospel doesn't state that to obey it, one must give money to the poor believers in Jerusalem. But Paul perceived that *effectively* it did; this was, in their context, part and parcel of confessing the Gospel.

9:19 Paul *made himself* a slave in order to save others (2 Cor. 9:19), just as the Lord *made himself a slave* on the cross to save us (Phil. 2:5-8). Our work of saving others is therefore part of our sharing in the Lord's cross.

9:20 He had to *become like a Jew* in order to save them, although he was Jewish (2 Cor. 9:20). He carefully kept parts of the law (Acts 18:18; 21:26; 1 Cor. 8:13). To the Jew he became [again] as a Jew; and to the Gentiles he became as a Gentile (1 Cor. 9:20). He acted "To them that are without law, as without law...". He was "dead to the law" (Gal. 2:19). He was a Jew but considered he had renounced it, but he became as a Jew to them to help them. He saw no difference between Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:27-29) but he consciously acted in a Jewish or Gentile way to help those who still

perceived themselves after the flesh. "... (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ)" (1 Cor 9:21). See on Acts 23:6.

10:1 "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" is surely a reference to the Lord's description of Himself as being, there and then, "meek and lowly of heart" (Mt. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1). Paul's point is that as the Lord was in His life, so He is now, in His heavenly glory.

10:3,4 See on Josh. 6:10.

10:5 Isaiah is full of references to the proud being 'made low' by judgment- the same Hebrew word is common: Is. 10:33; 13:11; 25:11; 26:5. Perhaps Paul had this in mind when he said that our preaching is a bringing down of every high thing that is exalted against God (2 Cor. 10:5). Our message is basically that we must be humbled one way or the other- either by our repentance and acceptance of the Gospel today, or through the experience of condemnation at the day of judgment. We're calling people to humility. And we must ask whether the content and style of our preaching really does that.

Like John, Paul makes a seamless connection between defending true doctrine, and spiritually minded living in practice. Through destroying arguments and "every pretension that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God", we can "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5 RV). This is because, as Neville Smart put it, "of the radical part played in the salvation of the individual by the ideas and beliefs he holds in his mind. They are in fact the roots from which his fixed attitudes and his daily actions spring, and from which they take their particular tone and colouring".

"Though we walk in the flesh (cp. Paul's recognition of his fleshly side in Rom. 7)... the weapons of our (mental) warfare are not carnal (of our fleshly man), but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds". These strong holds which are pulled down are defined in v.5 as "imagination... every thought" which have to be 'cast (cp. 'pulled') down'. Those strong holds exist in the recesses of our natural minds. Rom. 6:13 encourages us not to yield our minds as weapons of sin, but as weapons of God (Rom. 6:13 AVmg.). Our thinking is a weapon, which both sides in this conflict can use. The sinful man within us is "warring against the law of my (spiritual) mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23). Yet 2 Cor. 10:5 describes our spiritual man as overthrowing our carnal man, and bringing those thoughts into captivity to the Christ man. The impression is created of constant attrition, with victories for both sides. In Rom. 7 the impression is given that the carnal man is winning; whilst 2 Cor. 10:2-5 paints the picture of the Christ man triumphant. To get this picture over, perhaps the Spirit used a spiritually depressed Paul in Rom. 7, and a triumphant Paul at the time of writing 2 Cor. 10?

10:6 The more God's word abides in us, the more we will know our sinfulness (1 Jn. 1:10). Thus Paul speaks as if when Corinth are more obedient, he will reveal further to them the extent of their weakness (2 Cor. 10:6).

Paul speaks of how he had received, as it were, a measuring line which enabled him to preach in certain areas, including Corinth. When the spiritual growth of the Corinthian converts was complete, then his measuring line would be extended, and the Lord would allow him "to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you" (this is how I would interpret 2 Cor. 10:6,13-16 RV). This teaches what many of us have observed in practice in the work of the Gospel: the Lord's blessing only attends our efforts to further the Gospel if real spiritual fruit is being brought forth in those already converted. Thus according to the freewill response of believers to the call of true spirituality, the call of others to the Gospel can be limited.

10:7 There's definitely a tendency to think that we can have a relationship with the Father and Son, and this is all that matters. John countered this tendency, by arguing that "If a man say [and apparently this *was* being said by some brethren], "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen" (1

Jn. 4:20). Paul foresaw this same tendency in 2 Cor. 10:7: "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him *of himself* think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's". "Of himself" suggests that our internal thinking, our self-perception, of ourselves as "in Christ" cannot be valid unless we perceive "Christ" as having our brethren "in Him" also. And Paul's own example showed what he meant; for in all his hardships he was comforted not just by the Father and Son directly, but by the faith of his brethren- even if that faith was weak (e.g. 1 Thess. 3:7).

"If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's" (2 Cor. 10:7). If we are sure we are the Lord's, let's remember that we aren't the *only* person He died for. Therefore we *must* receive one another, as Christ received us, with all our inadequacies of understanding and behaviour (Rom. 15:7). We are thereby taught of God to love one another; we must forgive and forbear each other, as the Lord did and does with us (1 Thess. 4:9; Eph. 4:32).

Any serious study of a Bible passage requires us to look at it in different translations and make some effort to understand the real meaning of the original- for sometimes the sense of a passage can completely change, depending on translation (especially in Job). Thus in the AV of 2 Cor. 10:7, Paul is made to ask a question: "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?". In the RV, this becomes an affirmation: "Ye look at the things that are before your face". But in other versions, it becomes a blunt demand from Paul that the Corinthians should open their eyes to the true facts: "Look at things which stare you in the face!" (J.B. Phillips).

10:10 The Roman Governor Felix *trembled* at Paul's incisive logic- even in his prison uniform (Acts 24:25). Hardened Agrippa was almost persuaded by Paul, on his own public admission, to become a Christian (Acts 26:28). The Galatian converts would have pulled out their eyes from their sockets and given them to partially sighted Paul (Gal. 4:15). The aggressive crowd, baying for Paul's blood, were held in one of history's most uncanny silences by the sheer personality of that preacher. He beckoned with his hand, and "there was made a great silence...and when they heard how (Gk.) he spake... they kept the more silence" (Acts 21:39-22:2). Pagans at Lystra were so overcome by his oratory that they were convinced he was the god Mercury come down to earth; it took Paul quite some effort to persuade them that he was an ordinary man (Acts 14:12). This was the man Paul. He had undoubted ability as a preacher. In passing, the Corinthians mocked his weak physical presence; and yet Paul had undoubted charisma and power of personality, right up to the end. Was it not that he consciously suppressed the power of his personality when he visited Corinth? This was humility and self-knowledge indeed. Indeed, his reasoning in 2 Cor. 10,11 is that he could present himself to Corinth as quite a different brother Paul than what he did.

2 Cor. 10:10: "His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible". Yet this is hardly how Paul comes over at his trials. The conclusion surely is that Paul made himself a weak person in his dealings with Corinth. He could truly be all things to all people, he wasn't constrained by his natural personality type as so many of us allow ourselves to be. This is why Paul could go on in v. 11 to warn Corinth that the next time he visits them, he won't be weak. He will 'be' as he is in his letters. In all this we see the full import of the sacrifice and crucifixion of self of which the Lord repeatedly speaks. Putting meaning into words, this means that we will genuinely 'be' the person we need to be in order to help others.

"His letters, say they (Paul's detractors in the new Israel) are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible... though I be rude in speech... Christ sent me... to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words (mg. speech)" (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:17). This is all the language of Moses, Paul's hero. Paul would have remembered Stephen saying how Moses was formerly full of worldly wisdom and "mighty in words" (Acts 7:22), even though Moses felt "I am not eloquent (mg. a man of words)... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10). Maybe Paul likewise was mighty in words and wisdom, but felt like Moses that he wasn't. He

allowed Moses' legendary humility to personally inspire him, rather than just admire it from afar, ticking the box, saying yes, Moses was humble...

It was believed that nature and destiny had decreed your place, and there was to be no questioning of it. Thus according to the first century principle of 'physiognomics', a slave was born with a muscular, servile body, an upper class female Roman was born beautiful, etc. The idea of education was to train them up to be as they were intended to be by nature. The ancient world believed that all that was decreed and predestined by nature would have some sort of physical reality in the appearance of a person. Hence the challenging nature of Paul's command not to judge by the outward appearance; and again, Divine providence overturned all this by choosing Paul as such a "chosen vessel", when his outward appearance and manner of speaking were so weak and unimpressive, literally 'lacking strength' (2 Cor. 10:10).

10:15 Paul clearly had a purpose- to spread the Gospel in a semi circle around the Roman empire (2 Cor. 10:15), beginning from Jerusalem, through Asia and Italy, then Spain (Rom. 15:19), North Africa and back to Jerusalem. Speaking of how he planned his journeys, he comments in 2 Cor. 1:17: "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes yes, and no no?" Again we see a definite purpose, not the kind of human intention which vacillates between yes and no; for this is inimical to the person who has true purpose. The mission in our minds, the path ever before us, makes our decision making so much clearer than it is for those who dither over which flavour coffee to have tonight... Truly could Paul say at the end: "But you have followed my teaching, my conduct, and my purpose in life; you have observed my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance, my persecutions, and my sufferings" (2 Tim. 3:10,11). And he is set up as a model for each of us (1 Tim. 1:16).

10:16 Paul spoke of how both he and other brethren had their specific "line" or sphere in which they were intended to witness (2 Cor. 10:16 cp. Ps. 19:4 AVmg.; Am. 7:17). We each have ours, whether it be the people who live in our block of flats, an area of our own country or city; or another part of the world.

10:18 commends- see on Lk. 12:8; 1 Cor. 4:5.

11:2- see on Mt. 3:7; Acts 13:9; 1 Cor. 15:10.

Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 11:2 of 'presenting you' at the last day- he uses the same Greek work in a context of 'standing before' the judgment seat (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 4:14). Christ will present us to Himself at judgment day, as an unspotted bride / church (Eph. 5:27)- but Paul perceived that Christ will achieve this by working through people and pastors like himself. Paul aimed to "present" [s.w.] every man perfect in Christ by warning and exhorting them (Col. 1:28). We will present ourselves (2 Tim. 2:15 s.w.) to Him at the judgment; but He presents us, and others who have laboured for us will present us, because Christ will have worked through them to present us to Himself unspotted. The cross results in the suffering Lord being able to "*present* us holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight" at the day of judgment (Col. 1:22; Eph. 5:27). Having said that, Paul goes right on to say that his goal is to "*present* every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:22,28; 2 Cor. 11:2). The sufferings of Jesus were not lost on Paul. He understood that he likewise must share in them, in order to "present" his brethren acceptable at the last day. For Paul, the events of Calvary were not far away in time and place, a necessary piece of theology... They compelled him to act, to stay up late at night preparing something, to pray, to live the life of true concern for others, to warn, encourage, write, endlessly review his draft letters to get them right, search through Scripture for relevant guidance for his friends... this was the life begotten in him by the cross. As the Lord died to present us "perfect", so Paul laboured to present us perfect. And neither the Lord Jesus nor Paul are mere history for us. This is all our pattern... In one sense, we present ourselves before the judgment seat (Rom. 14:10 s.w.; AV "stand before"). In other ways, we are presented there by our

elders, e.g. Paul; and yet above all, we are presented there spotless by the Lord's matchless advocacy for us. And of course the essence of judgment is being worked out right now, as we daily present ourselves to the Lord, as the bodies of the animals were presented to the priest for inspection before being offered (Rom. 12:1). We are presenting ourselves to the judge right now.

11:5- see on 1 Tim. 1:16; Acts 23:6.

He "supposed", the same word translated "impute" as in 'imputed righteousness', that he was amongst the chiefest apostles (2 Cor. 11:5). He knew this was how his Lord counted him. But he felt himself as less than the least of all saints (Eph. 3:8). "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:9-10).

11:6 Paul can say that they surely know what "knowledge" he has, because he has been thoroughly manifested [Gk. *phaneroo*] to them in absolutely every way (2 Cor. 11:6 Gk.); there was nothing he knew which he hadn't shared with them. He is so open with them that he doesn't just write in a political, guarded way to them, watching every word.

11:7- see on Phil. 4:16; Lk. 3:5.

Paul told Corinth that he had abased himself so that *they* might be exalted (2 Cor. 11:7). This is one of Paul's many allusions to the Gospels; this time to Lk. 14:11; 18:14, which teach that he who abases himself will *himself* be exalted. But Paul was abasing himself so that Corinth could be exalted, so that they could share the exaltation he would receive on account of his humility. In all this, of course, he reflected to his brethren the very essence of the attitude of the Lord Jesus for toward us.

In refusing funding for his work from the Corinthians, he *abased* himself that they might be *exalted*-all language of the crucifixion (2 Cor. 11:7 cp. Phil. 2:8,9). Thus his refusing of legitimate help to make his way easier was an enactment in himself of the cross.

We live in a world which has made the fulfilment of personal aims of paramount importance. It has affected the fabric of every society, and become embedded in every mind. To *live to serve*, to put oneself down that others may rise... this is strange indeed. John the Baptist had this spirit, for he rejoiced that he decreased whilst the Lord's cause increased. Paul abased himself that others might be exalted (2 Cor. 11:7), after the pattern of the cross. God's gentleness, His humility / bowing down (Heb.) has made us great, lifted us up (Ps. 18:35). And we respond to it by humbling *ourselves*.

11:9- see on 2 Cor. 13:4.

11:14

An Angel of Light

Comments

1. It is also commonly believed that Satan was originally an angel of light and then transformed himself into a serpent or became a sinful angel of darkness. This is the exact opposite of what this verse teaches. This transforming of Satan occurred in Paul's time – not in Eden, nor in 1914. The popular idea is that Satan was punished for rebellion by being turned from an Angel of light into some kind of 'dark Angel'. But this verse states that Satan transforms himself, in the time of Paul in the first century. Yet the orthodox view of Satan is that he was an Angel of light who was punished by God to become an Angel of darkness. Yet here Paul is saying that in the first century, in the city of Corinth, here on planet earth, 'Satan' transformed himself into an Angel of light. Transformed himself from what? From his fallen state back into his state before he fell? In this case God's supposed punishment of Satan has little meaning if Satan is able to transform himself back into his previous state.

2. An “angel” in some cases can refer to a man

3. Concerning Satan’s ministers, we are told “whose end shall be according to their works”. This recalls Paul’s words about false Christians in Philippians 3:19: “whose end is destruction”, and also Revelation 20:12–13, which speaks of the resurrected dead believers being “judged every man according to their works”. If Satan’s ministers are to be judged and destroyed, then they cannot be angels, seeing that angels cannot die or be destroyed (Lk. 20:35,36).

4. These verses speak as though the believers to whom Paul was writing were in contact, literally, with Satan’s ministers. The believers were being troubled by “false apostles”, not sinful angels.

Suggested Explanations

1. Verse 4 speaks of some who had entered the church preaching a wrong Gospel and another Jesus. This sets the context for the rest of the chapter. A comparison of verses 13 and 15 clearly shows that these “false apostles” are the “ministers of Satan” – thus they are men, not angels.

2. “Satan” often refers to the Jewish system, especially in its being opposed to Christianity (see section 2–4 “The Jewish Satan”). These ministers of Satan were therefore people working on behalf of the Jews who were infiltrating the Christian churches spreading wrong doctrine. There are frequent references to this infiltration and undermining:

– “False brethren (cp. “false apostles”) unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Gal. 2:4). “Bondage” in Galatians refers to the bondage of keeping the Law of Moses (Gal. 3:23; 4:3,9). “After my (Paul’s) departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29 – the leaders of apostate Israel are likened to wolves in Ez. 22:27 and Zeph. 2:3).

– As there were false Jewish prophets among Israel in the wilderness, so there would be the same types among the Christian Jews to whom Peter wrote (1 Pet. 1:1), “who privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1).

– “These are spots in your feasts of charity (i.e. the love–feasts; the Breaking of Bread), when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear...these speak evil of those things which they know not” (Jude 12,10), i.e. they spoke falsely about Christianity, which they really knew little about.

– “His (Paul’s) letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak” (2 Cor. 10:10). Thus Paul showed that he was “not ignorant of (Satan’s) devices” (2 Cor. 2:11) to undermine Christianity.

– “Him whose coming in (Greek) is after the working of Satan” (2 Thess. 2:9) probably refers to these people too. Their possession of “all power and signs” was due may be to some of the apostate Jewish Christians still possessing the miraculous Spirit gifts (as in Heb. 6:4–6; 1 Cor. 14).

3. The apostles or ministers of John are called his “angels” – Lk. 7:19,24 (cp. 2 Cor. 11:14–15). Thus we can understand the parallel between the apostles of Christ and the angel (apostle) of light. Remember, too, that Christ is the light (Jn. 1:8; 8:12).

False apostles	transforming into Apostles of Christ
Satan	transforming into Angel (apostle) of light (Christ)
His ministers	transforming into ministers (angels) of righteousness (Christ)

4. The application of these ministers of Satan to Jews infiltrating the Christians is confirmed by Paul saying in 2 Cor. 11:22 that he was also a Jew as they were.

5. That the ministers of righteousness are to be interpreted as ministers, or apostles, of Christ, is confirmed by Paul saying that he was also a minister of Christ, as they claimed to be (:23).

6. The individual “Satan” in the singular referred to in :14, can either be the Jewish system as a whole trying to give a Christian facade (an angel of light, i.e. a minister of Christ, the true light), or an individual leader of the Jewish system. Bearing in mind the reference of “the prince of this world” to the High Priest (see on Jn. 12:31), there may be a reference here to some unrecorded pronouncement by the High Priest concerning Christianity which would give the implication that a bridge could be built between Judaism and Christianity.

7. The “deceitful workers” of :13 who were ministers of the Satan are clearly defined in Philippians 3:2 as “evil workers... of the circumcision”, i.e. those who were teaching that Christians had to be circumcised and thus keep the Law of Moses to be saved. This faction of Jewish believers in the church is described as “them which were of the circumcision” (Gal. 2:12).

8. It needs to be recognized that Paul’s writings very often allude to extant Jewish and Gentile literature, sometimes quoting verbatim from them, in order to correct popular ideas. Thus Paul quotes Aratus (Acts 17:28), Menander (1 Corinthians 15:33) and Epimenides (Titus 1:12) – he uses odd phrases out of these uninspired writings by way of illustration. I’ve shown elsewhere ⁽¹⁾ that much of the Biblical literature does this kind of thing, e.g. the entire Pentateuch is alluding to the various myths and legends of creation and origins, showing what the truth is. The fact Paul’s 21st century readers are largely ignorant of that literature, coupled with Paul’s rabbinic writing style not using specific quotation rubric or quotation marks, means that this point is often missed. It’s rather like our reading of any historical literature – parts of it remain hard to understand because we simply don’t appreciate the historical and immediate context in which it was written. When Paul speaks of Satan being transformed as a bright Angel, he’s actually quoting from the first century AD *Life of Adam and Eve* (12–16) which speculated that ‘Satan’ refused to worship the image of God in Adam and therefore he came to earth as a bright Angel and deceived Eve: “Satan was wroth and transformed himself into the brightness of angels, and went away to the river” ⁽²⁾. Paul’s quoting from that document; although in the preceding verse (2 Cor. 11:3) he has stressed that “the *serpent* beguiled Eve by his subtilty”. He’s reaffirming the Genesis account, which doesn’t speak of a personal Satan, but rather simply of a serpent, created as one of the “beasts of the field”. So we could paraphrase Paul here: ‘I know that the Jewish writings say that the serpent wasn’t really a serpent, it was ‘Satan’, and was actually in the form of a bright Angel. Now that’s not the case – let’s stick with Genesis, which speaks of a literal serpent. But OK, in the same way as in the Jewish myth Satan became a bright, persuasive Angel, well, these false teachers from the Jews appear as wonderful, spiritual people – but following them will lead you to the same catastrophe as fell upon Eve as a result of being deceived’.

9. The way Paul uses the word *metaschematizo* [“transform”] three times is interesting – “the stress is so heavy here because Paul is turning their own word against his opponents” ⁽³⁾. If this is the case, then we would yet another example [of which there are so many in Corinthians] of Paul using a term used by his enemies in order to answer them – which would mean that he is not necessarily agreeing with it. Indeed the apocryphal Jewish *Apocalypse of Moses* claims that because Satan appeared as such a dazzling, shining Angel, Eve was inevitably deceived by him. Paul here would thus be alluding to this idea – not that his allusion means that he supported the idea.

Notes

(1) See my *The Real Devil* Digressions 2, 3 and 4: *Jude and the Book of Enoch, Romans and the Wisdom of Solomon*, and *The Intention and Context of Genesis 1–3*.

(2) For references, see Susan Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) p. 45. *The Life of Adam and Eve* was apparently widely quoted and alluded to in the first century – see throughout M. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1992).

(3) Neil Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) p. 269.

11:15 The lazy servant was punished out of his own mouth (Lk. 19:22); and even in Job's time, this principle of Divine condemnation was known (Job 9:20; 15:6). The Judaizers too were to have an "end [that] will correspond to their deeds" (2 Cor. 11:14,15 RSV).

Jewish theories of the time accept that God punished the Satan figure, but the demons got around the punishment and tempt men to sin – as if God somehow was outwitted in the supposed struggle. The *Apocalypse of Adam* likewise minimizes human sin by claiming that 'Satan' in fact raped Eve, thus leading to the fall; the *Apocalypse of Moses* claims that because Satan appeared as such a dazzling, shining Angel, Eve was inevitably deceived by him. Note in passing that Paul alludes to this idea in 2 Cor. 11:15 – not that his allusion means that he supported the idea.

11:17- see on 1 Cor. 7:11.

11:21 A sarcasm about Paul's humanly impressive encomium [see on Gal. 1:10] is to be found at more length in 2 Cor. 11:21-12:10. All the classic elements of the encomium are there- his origin and birth, training, accomplishments, comparison with others etc. But then he says that those who compare themselves with others (*synkrinontes*) are fools (2 Cor. 10:12), and that he himself has been speaking as a fool, a raving madman. That was what he thought of an encomium after the flesh. This is all a needful lesson for our generation, surrounded as we are by pressure to trust in education, achievements, being humanly cool and impressive. Paul goes on to say that actually, he prefers as a Christian to "boast of things that show my weakness" (2 Cor. 11:30). Instead of speaking of glorious "deeds of the body", he speaks of his labours, imprisonments, beatings etc. And thus he draws out the paradox, incredible for the first century mind- his real strength and power is in his weakness, for it was this that made him trust in God and in the grace of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 12:10). Instead of impressing those around him, Paul sought to impress the Father and Son above. His strength was not, as society then thought, in what he had inherited and developed from the communities into which he was born- it was rather in the grace of God transforming his character. His patron, his teacher and elder, was the Lord Jesus, and the God who raised Jesus from the dead (Gal. 1:1; Rom. 8:11), rather than any visible 'elder' of his natural communities.

11:24 When the world reviled him, Paul saw himself as the beaten prophets Jesus had spoken about (2 Cor. 11:24,25 = Mt. 21:35).

The pattern of preaching which we see in the Father and in the Lord Jesus must be our model. He identified with us in order to 'get through' to us; the power of His personality and work rests in the fact that He was genuinely human. God Himself chose this method, of manifestation in a Son our nature, in order to redeem us. We can do likewise, in identifying with our audience; living as they do when in a mission field; learning their language, both literally and metaphorically; patient bearing with those suffering from depression, Aspergers, alcoholism, various neuroses... to win them. Thus to the Gentiles Paul became as a Gentile; and as a Jew in order that he might win them who were under the law (1 Cor. 9:20). This is exemplified by the fact that he underwent synagogue floggings (2 Cor. 11:24)- which were only administered to Jews who willingly submitted to the punishment because they were orthodox Jews. This was the extent to which Paul became as a Jew in the hope of winning the Jews. Fly by preachers, seeking to establish a colony of their home base, will never achieve much lasting success. Paul would pay any price in order to identify with his audience, in order to win them to Christ. He was living out the spirit of Jesus, who likewise identified Himself with us to the maximum extent in order to save us. It was a profitable exercise for me to research the background of Paul's statement that five times he received "forty lashes minus

one” at the hands of the Jews (2 Cor. 11:24). This was a synagogue punishment, based on Dt. 25:2,3, which could only be administered to members of the synagogue community- and apparently, the members had the right under local Roman law to resign from the synagogue and escape the punishment. It would’ve been far easier for Paul to disown Judaism and insist he was not a member of any synagogue. But he didn’t. Why? Surely because this was the extent to which he was willing to be all things to all men, to truly be a Jew in order to save the Jews. And we too can chose daily the extent to which we identify ourselves with those whom we seek to save. It’s not simply the case of a Western missionary suffering privations along with the impoverished local population to whom he or she seeks to preach. It’s about us each getting involved in the mess of others’ lives, at great personal cost, in order to show true solidarity with them, on which basis we can more effectively witness to them. This is surely the way in which we are to ‘love the world’; this inhuman world, this enormous collection of desperate, lonely people, into whose mundane experiences we can enter simply through genuine, caring, person-to-person encounter. And by doing this we will find ourselves. For it seems to me that the truly creative and original personalities, the Lord Jesus being the supremest, are those who give of themselves in order to enter into the lives and sufferings of others. And that, by the way, may explain why there are so few truly freethinking minds. Paul didn’t just love the Jewish people in theory, he didn’t draw a distinction between the Jews as persons, and their role or status before God. He loved them as persons, and so he suffered for them in order to save them.

11:25 Paul was ever aware of his own proneness to failure. He saw himself as tempted to be like the man in the parable who thought he should have more, because he had laboured more abundantly than the others (Mt. 20:12 Gk. = 2 Cor. 11:25).

Paul endured one of the most traumatic lives ever lived- beaten with rods, shipwrecked, sleepless, cold, naked, betrayed, robbed, beaten, and so much of this isn’t recorded (e.g. the three shipwrecks and two of the beatings with rods he speaks of in 2 Cor. 11 aren’t mentioned in Acts). And yet he implies that even more than all that, he felt the pressure of care for his brethren in the churches. His heart so bled for them... Paul lived a traumatic life, lived with weakness, fear, trembling, tears, distress, dying daily, burdened beyond measure, despairing of life, having the sentence of death, sleeplessness... and all this would have had quite some effect upon him nervously. Almost certainly it would have lead him to be depressive, and this may explain some of these flashes of anger. Yet these flecks of pride and anger reflect something of Paul’s former self. He is described as fuming out hatred against the Christians like an animal; he was driven by hate and anger. Stephen’s death sentence was against Pharisaic principles; and it was a studied rejection of the more gentle, tolerant attitude taught by Gamaliel, Paul’s early mentor (“though I distribute all my belonging to feed the poor...” is Paul virtually quoting Gamaliel- he clearly was aware of his stance). People like Paul who come from strict, authoritarian backgrounds can have a tendency to anger, and yet in Paul there seems also to have operated an inferiority complex, a longing for power, and a repressed inner guilt. Although Paul changed from an angry man to one dominated by love, to the extent that he could write hymns of love such as 1 Cor. 13, there were times when under provocation the old bitterness and anger flashed back. We too have these moments, and yet in the fact that Paul too experienced them even in spiritual maturity, we have some measure of comfort.

11:27 Paul loved Israel with the love of Christ: he describes his hunger, thirst, nakedness and loss of all things in the very language used about Israel’s condemnation (2 Cor. 11:27 alludes Dt. 28:48). In other words, he saw himself as somehow bearing their punishment for apostasy in his own life, as if he was some kind of suffering representative for them.

11:28 Paul identified his biggest pressure as "the care of all the churches" which he said 'came upon (Gk. to throng / mob) (him) daily' (2 Cor. 11:28)- as if he woke up each morning and had these anxieties thronging his mind.

11:29- see on 1 Cor. 8:9.

The word he uses for "weak" is one which features frequently in his writings, and it nearly always refers to the spiritually weak (Rom. 4:19; 14:1,2,21; 1 Cor. 8:9,11,12). He was so sensitive to his brethren that when he considered their spiritual weakness, he felt the same. He identified with them, he could put his arm round someone who was all slipping away and say "I'm with you" and so evidently mean it. He had a genuine and obvious sense of solidarity with them. He wasn't critical of them to the extent that he made a barrier between him and them. They knew his disapproval of their ways, but yet it was so evident that his heart bled for them. And when Paul saw a brother being offended, he burnt. His heart burnt and bled as he saw someone drifting away with a chip on their shoulder. He didn't just shrug and think Well that's up to them, their choice. He cared for them. That brother, that sister, and their future meant so much to him. If Paul had lived in the 21st century, he would have telephoned them, written to them, visited them, met with them week by week. To be weak and to be offended are bracketed in Rom. 14:21: "thy brother is offended, or is made weak" . And in 2 Cor. 11:29 we have the same idea: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?". The parallels imply that if the weak brother was offended, Paul himself was as it were offended, even though he himself didn't stumble. He could identify with the spiritual weakness of others to the point of feeling that he himself had committed it or was in the shoes of the sinner- even though he himself was innocent. Paul could share with the Corinthians that he 'burnt' every time a brother stumbled from the way, feeling weak with the weak (2 Cor. 11:29). He uses the same word he uses in 1 Cor. 7:9 about burning in unfulfilled sexual lust. Time and again Paul uses this 'agnostic' word .

11:33 Paul seems to take a certain pleasure in this inversion of values. He boasts of how his greatest moment was when he was let *down* a wall in a basket, in fear for his life (2 Cor. 11:30-33). "In antiquity a Roman soldier who was first up a wall and into a conquered city would win a special award called a wall crown. Paul says he will boast of being first *down* the wall"- running from the enemy (Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest* p. 124). He was the very reverse of the classical ancient warrior. This inversion of values is just as hard and counter-cultural to live by in our world.

12:1-4- see on Gal. 1:6.

12:1-5 Paul saw visions of God which were impossible for him to explain (2 Cor. 12:1-5). Alluding to how Moses saw the greatest visions of God of any man in the Old Testament; visions which he could not repeat; he only repeated the words of command which he was given. He did not tell Israel what he saw in Ex. 34.

12:2 We are real life men and women, only too aware that although yes, we are in Christ, we are also all too human still. We still sin the sins and think the thoughts and feel the feelings of those around us. We are only who we are, born in such a town, living in such a city, doing a job, trying to provide for a family. In our minds eye we see the spotless lamb of God, moving around Galilee 2000 years ago, doing good, healing the sick. But He was there, and we are here now, today, in all our weakness and worldly distraction. He was as He was, but *we* are as we are. Reading through his letters, it is apparent that Paul saw himself as two people: a natural man, a Jew from Tarsus, a Roman citizen living in the Mediterranean world... and also, a man in Christ. This is why in an autobiographical passage in 2 Cor. 12, he says of himself: "I knew a man in Christ", who had great visions 14 years previously (at the council of Jerusalem of Acts 15), and who was subsequently given a "thorn in the flesh". "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory", he writes (2 Cor 12:5), as if separating himself from this more spiritually exalted man who saw these visions. Paul is surely telling us that he sees himself as two people. He makes the point clearly: "I will not be a fool... I am become a fool" (:6,11). He was the greatest apostle; although he was nothing (:11). This language comes to a crisis in 12:10: "When I [i.e. the natural Paul] am weak, then am I [the spiritual Paul] strong".

The Corinthians were mainly Gentiles, but Paul speaks of them as "When ye were Gentiles..." (2 Cor. 12:2 RV). They had a new racial identity in Christ, and yet, he also reminded them at times that

they were Gentiles. We too cannot obliterate who we are or where we came from. But superimposed upon this must be the realisation that now, we are in Christ.

Paul is in many ways a working model of how we should be aware of the two people within us. In writing to Corinth, he was highly sensitive to the danger of sinning by justifying himself as he needed to. To overcome this problem, he speaks (through the Spirit) as if he is two quite different people; the fleshly man, and the spiritual man. 2 Cor. 11 is full of statements concerning himself, which he makes "as a fool". His frequent usage of this word "fool" points us back to the Proverbs, where a "fool" is the man of the flesh. Ecc. 10:2 says that a fool has a 'left handed' mind, which in Jewish thinking was a reference to the "man of the flesh" of the N.T. There are a number of apparent contradictions between passages in 2 Cor. 11, 12 which are explicable once it is appreciated that Paul is speaking firstly "in the flesh", and then concerning his spiritual man. Thus he insists that he is not a fool (11:16; 12:6), whilst saying that he is a fool (12:11). He says he will not boast about himself, but then he does just that. He claims to be among the greatest apostles, and in the same breath says he is nothing (12:11). His boasting was "not after the Lord", i.e. the man Christ Jesus within Him was not speaking, but the fool, the man of the flesh, was speaking (11:17). The supreme example of this separation of flesh and spirit in Paul's thinking is shown by 12:2: "I knew a man in Christ (who heard great revelations)... of such an one will I glory, but of myself will I not glory". But 12:7 clearly defines this "man" as Paul: "lest I should be exalted... through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh". The "man in Christ" of whom Paul spoke was his own spiritual man, who was "in Christ". It is interesting that here Paul defines "myself" as his natural man, whereas in Rom. 7:25 he speaks of "myself" as his spiritual man. The point is made that at different times we identify ourselves either with the man of the flesh, or with the spiritual man within us. In 2 Cor. 11, 12, Paul consciously chose to identify himself with the natural man, in order to boast to the Corinthians. It is worth noting that "fourteen years ago" takes us back to the Council at Jerusalem. The revelations given to Paul then were probably confirmation that the Gospel should indeed be preached to the Gentiles. This was the "third Heaven" dispensation. The wonder that Paul would be used to spread the Gospel world-wide so mentally exalted Paul that he needed a thorn in the flesh to bring Him down to earth. Yet, for the most part, we seem to shrug our shoulders at the wonder of our preaching commission.

12:5- see on 1 Cor. 8:9.

12:7

Paul's Thorn In The Flesh

There is fair evidence that Paul did suffer from a physical ailment in order to keep him humble. The wonder is that he only asked three times for it to be removed. He knew it was for his spiritual good, and he believed this. The two possibilities which seem most convincing are poor eyesight and (perhaps related) malaria.

Poor Eyesight

Gal. 4:10-13 speaks of an 'infirmity in the flesh' which would have led many to despise Paul's preaching; and yet the Galatians overlooked this when they first heard Paul's preaching. Speaking of the same period of time, Paul reminisces how they would have been willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to him (Gal. 4:15). This would seem to make a fairly firm connection between the "thorn in the flesh" of 2 Cor. 12:7 and the "infirmity in the flesh" of poor eyesight. Thus he concludes the Galatian letter with a reference to the large letter he had written with his own hand (Gal. 6:11); not "large" in the sense of long, but perhaps referring to his physically large and unimpressive handwriting. Paul "earnestly beholding the council" employs a Greek medical term for squinting as a result of poor eyesight (Acts 23:1).

Malaria

The description of Paul being with the Corinthians in "weakness and...trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3) uses a specific medical term describing the malaria shakes. This would explain why he was "in peril of waters" (Gk. rivers; 2 Cor. 11:26)- the breeding grounds of mosquitoes. Poor eyesight could be associated with malaria; although it is difficult to understand the malaria just beginning in mid-life as suddenly as the 'thorn in the flesh' passage seems to suggest. Paul may well have had malaria, as any such traveller was likely to- quite in addition to any physical 'thorn in the flesh'.

A Spiritual Struggle

However, there are reasons to think that whilst Paul may have had a physical ailment, the "thorn in the flesh" may have referred to a spiritual affliction. One would expect to read about a thorn in the *body* if Paul was only speaking of a physical weakness. But in Paul's thinking, "the flesh" so evidently refers to the more abstract things of human nature. The context of the "thorn in the flesh" passage would suggest that it was a spiritual weakness. Paul says that he will not boast of himself, "except in my infirmities" (2 Cor. 12:5). One of his "infirmities" was therefore his "thorn in the flesh". He is saying that he will not boast of his physical sufferings (which might include his weak eyesight) and achievements, rather he will exult in the fact that he, a man riddled with spiritual infirmity, especially one particular thorn in the flesh, had been used by God, and God's grace was sufficient to overcome all his spiritual weakness. Now this would fit in with the quintessence of Paul's belief: that by grace alone, not human achievement, God works through human weakness to bring about His purpose. Paul isn't adding to his list of physical glorying by saying 'And you know, on top of all this, I've had to struggle all my life with physical weakness'. This would only be continuing his boasting of 2 Cor. 11. But now he changes, and says that he wants to glory in his spiritual weakness, and how God has worked with him despite that.

Paul asked for the thorn to be taken away; but the answer was that God's *grace* was sufficient. Grace tends to be associated with forgiveness and justification, rather than with the ability to keep on living with a physical ailment. Likewise Moses, Paul's hero and prototype, asked a similar three times for entry to the land, and was basically given the same answer: that God's gracious forgiveness was sufficient for him.

Women?

When Paul talks about being buffeted by a thorn in the flesh, he is in fact almost quoting passages from the LXX of Num. 33:55 and Josh. 23:13, where "thorns" which would buffet the *eyes* of Israel were the Canaanite tribes (cp. Ez. 28:24); and especially, in the context, their women. If they intermarried, those women and what they brought with them would be made by God as thorns in Israel's flesh. The implication could be that Paul had not driven out his Canaanites earlier, and therefore God gave them to Him as a thorn in the flesh, just as He had done to Israel earlier. There is fair reason to think that Paul had been married; he could not have been a member of the Sannhedrin and thus had the power to vote for the murder of the early martyrs unless he had been married and had children (Acts 26:10). His comment that he wished all men to be in his marital position (1 Cor. 7:8) has another slant in this case: he wished them to have had the marriage experience, but be in the single state. As a leading Pharisee, his wife would have been from an appropriate background. "...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" would then have been written with a sideways glance back at his wife, children he never saw... all that might have been. In gripping autobiography, Paul relates the innocent days when (as a child) he lived without the knowledge of law and therefore sin. But then, the concept of commandments registered with him; and this "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (Rom. 7:8). "Concupiscence" is a conveniently archaic word for lust; and in the thinking and writing of Paul, the Greek *epithumia* is invariably used in a sexual context.

As an ardent Pharisee, with all the charisma of the unashamed extremist and evidently rising leader, it is almost certain that the inevitable interplay of sexuality and spirituality, of flesh and spirit,

would have played itself out. And after conversion, the inevitable attraction of the committed missionary would have been evident; not least in the charismatic preaching of a new and ultimately true religion which was largely comprised of young / middle aged females (according to contemporary historians). No wonder Paul's slanderers made him out to be immoral; it was the easiest slur to cast. At Thessalonika he was even accused of preaching solely in order to get the praise and financial support of women (so 1 Thess. 2:3-12 implies). And as a man, with the commandments of God producing in him all manner of concupiscence, he would not have lightly shrugged off all these temptations. If this "thorn in the flesh" became particularly strong at a certain time, this could be seen as reference to the beginning of some illicit relationship.

And yet it cannot be overlooked that as outlined above, there does seem to be an evident link between the thorn in the flesh and literal blindness (Gal. 4:10-13 = 2 Cor. 12:7). The explanation may be that because of Paul's wandering eyes and mind, his sight was severely impaired. He likens his ailment to a man plucking out his eyes with his own hands (Gal. 4:15), using language unmistakably recalling the Lord's command to pluck out, with ones' own hands, the eyes that offend, that we might enter the Kingdom. The command of Mt. 5:28,29 is in the very context of lustful thinking and looking. In His desire to save us, God has His way. Paul saw that his weakness for women would have cost him the Kingdom, and that therefore the Lord had plucked out his eyes. He had been given a thorn in his flesh spiritually; and so the Lord had given him a thorn in the flesh physically, that he might conquer that spiritual weakness. The other reference to plucking out the offending eye is in Mt. 18:9, in a context regarding the paramount need not to offend the little ones. Could it be that Paul's limitation was to protect some of his converts from stumbling? And so with us, the offending eye or limb must be plucked out or cut off; and if we will not do it, the Lord will: either now, by grace, or in the final destruction of condemnation. We either fall on the stone of the Lord and are broken now, or that stone will fall upon us, and grind us to powder. We either chose the baptism of fire now, or we will be consumed anyway by the fire of judgment. The logic of devotion, self-control and self-sacrifice is powerfully appealing.

Implications

God *gave* Paul his thorn in the flesh. Whilst God tempts no man- for temptation is a process internal to human nature- He may still have a hand in controlling the situations which lead to temptation. Hence the Lord bid us pray that the Father lead us not into temptation. Each of us has his own specific human weaknesses. When the apostle wrote of shedding *the* sin which doth so easily beset us (Heb. 12:1), he may have been suggesting that we each have our own specific weakness to overcome. This is certainly a comfort to us in our spiritual struggles. We aren't alone in them. They were given to us. We aren't alone with our nature. The purpose and plan of God for us is articulated even through the darkest nooks of our very essential being. Understanding this should make us the more patient with our brethren, whose evident areas of weakness are not ours.

The Messenger of Satan

Comments

1. The work of this messenger of Satan resulted in Paul developing the spiritual characteristic of humility. The Satan stopped Paul from being proud. Pride is produced by the Devil – 1 Timothy 3:6,7. So we have the situation where Satan stops the work of Satan. Again, this does not make sense under the traditional interpretation of Satan. Mark 7:20–23 says that pride is a result of our evil heart. Thus the trial brought on Paul by a person acting as a Satan to him stopped his evil desires – another use of the word “Satan” – from leading him into the sin of pride.

2. We have seen in chapter 2 that “Satan” can be used to describe a man (e.g. Mt. 16:23) and that the Greek word for messenger / angel can also apply to men (e.g. Mt. 11:10; Lk. 7:24; James 2:25).

“Satan” may also refer to the adversarial Jewish system, and thus the messenger of Satan is most likely a man acting on behalf of the Jews.

3. The passage can be translated “a messenger, an adversary...”.

4. Everywhere in Paul’s writings, as well as in Revelation, ‘Satan’ always has the definite article – apart from here. Likewise, this is the only time Paul uses the form *Satan* rather than his usual *satanas*. One reason for that could be that Paul is alluding to or quoting from known Jewish literature or ideas which mentioned a “messenger of Satan”. Another possibility is that he refers here to an Angel–Satan – for the Greek word translated “messenger” is also that for Angel. In this case, he saw himself as Job, suffering affliction from an Angel–adversary, in order to bring about his spiritual perfection. I have noted the similarities between Job and Paul elsewhere ⁽¹⁾.

Suggested Explanations

1. “The messenger of Satan” is probably the same as the ministers of Satan referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15, which we have interpreted as the Judaizers in the early church who were discrediting Paul and seeking to undermine Christianity. The buffeting done by this “messenger of Satan” is defined in v. 10: “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions...” (i.e. In my thorn in the flesh which God will not take away). Note the parallel between the thorn and those things it caused. The reproaches refer to the Jewish ministers of Satan saying things like, “his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10), as previously explained. The necessities and persecutions quite clearly refer to the constant waves of persecutions he received by the Jews which the book of Acts describe. This would fit the language of “buffeting” – implying physical discomfort that he experienced periodically. The infirmities would refer to the ill health which his persecutions by the Jews no doubt resulted in – being beaten until he appeared dead (Acts 14:19) must have done permanent damage, as would receiving “forty stripes save one” five times and thrice being “beaten with rods” because of the Jews (2 Cor. 11:24–25). Thus the passage probably refers to an organized program of persecution of Paul by the Jews which began after the vision of 2 Corinthians 12:1–4, from which time he dates his experience of the thorn in the flesh. It was from this time that Paul’s zealous preaching to the Gentiles no doubt stimulated the Jews to more violent opposition to him. Their complaint against him was often that he was adulterating the Jewish religion by allowing Gentiles the chance of salvation by what he preached.

2. There is the implication that one particular “messenger” of the Jewish Satan organized the persecution of Paul – Alexander (2 Tim. 4:14–15; 1 Tim. 1:20). The link between the messenger of Satan in 2 Corinthians 12:7 and those of 2 Corinthians 11:13–15 indicates that this person was a member of the ecclesia also. Whilst the prophecy about “the man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 has clear reference to the Papacy, a primary application of it may well be to this individual being in the temple (i.e. To church – 1 Tim. 3:15) of God, “whose coming is after the working of (the Jewish) Satan” (2 Thess. 2:9). This person could do miracles – same as v. 9 – and the Jewish Christians in the early church who brought the ideas of Judaism into the church could also do them (Heb. 6:4–6). These Jews thus crucified Christ a second time (Heb. 6:6) – the Jews having done it once already. This man of sin is “the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3), a phrase used to describe Judas (Jn. 17:12). This suggests an allusion back to Judas, and indicates that the man of sin might also be a Jew, who was within the ecclesia, as Judas was, but who betrayed Christ because he wanted the aims of Judaism to be fulfilled rather than those of Christ. The “day of Christ” referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3, before which time the man of sin must be developed, was primarily the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 – which again indicates a primary Jewish fulfilment of the “man of sin”.

Notice that organized Jewish opposition to Paul's preaching was very intense at Thessalonica – Acts 17:5–13.

3. “A thorn in the flesh”. The Greek word for “thorn” can mean a “stake” – as was used for crucifying. This was to buffet Paul, as Christ was buffeted at the crucifixion (Mt. 26:67). Like Christ in His last hours, Paul prayed for the buffeting of Satan to be removed (2 Cor. 12:8 cp. Lk. 22:42). Paul “besought the Lord thrice” for this and so did Jesus in the Garden (Mt. 26:39, 42, 44). Also like Christ, Paul's prayer for release was not granted, ultimately for his spiritual good. Thus it is implied that because of Paul's sufferings at the hands of the Jewish Satan throughout his life, his whole life was “crucified with Christ” in that he experienced constantly the sufferings Christ had in His last few hours. This is exactly what we see in Acts 26:18.

4. There are several other references to the idea of a “thorn in the flesh” in the Old Testament. Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:13; Judges 2:3; and Ezekiel 28:24, all use this figure of speech to describe the nations surrounding Israel who were eventually the reason for their rejection and their failure to fully inherit the kingdom – Israel failed to destroy them during their initial conquest of the land as they were commanded. These nations are the Arab nations, and the Arabs are figurative of apostate Israel who still trusted in the. Thus it is understandable that Paul should use this figure of a thorn in the flesh to describe the apostate Jews who were persecuting him. The figure of the thorns in the flesh is always used in the Old Testament in the context of something that hinders the chances of God's people of entering the kingdom. Thus this thorn of Jewish opposition to Paul was a big temptation to keep Paul out of the Kingdom. Paul implies that for him to stop making the effort to preach was an especial temptation that would keep him from the Kingdom (1 Cor. 9:16; Eph. 6:20; Col. 4:4; Acts 18:9), therefore at the end of his life he could thankfully say that he had finished his ministry of preaching (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7). He was tempted not to preach because of the Jewish opposition – the Jewish thorn in the flesh. So the Old Testament figure of a thorn in the flesh tempting a man not to be in the kingdom was being used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7.

5. Joshua 23:13 describes the nations as “thorns” to Israel – “nails in your heel” in the Septuagint version. This is alluding back to Genesis 3:15, where the seed of the serpent was to bruise the seed of the woman in the heel. Thus the “thorns in the flesh” are linked with the seed of the serpent. Romans 16:17–20 describes the Judaizers as a Satan who would be shortly bruised under the feet of the Christians, again using the language of Genesis 3:15. Therefore it is fitting for Paul to call the “messenger” of the Jewish Satan a “thorn in the flesh”.

Note

(1) See my *Bible Lives* Section 3-3-8.

12:8- see on Mt. 26:39.

12:9 Paul earnestly asked three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed (2 Cor. 12:9). The wonder is that he only asked three times. He knew it was for his spiritual good, and he believed this. Moses asked at least twice (maybe three times?) for him to be allowed to enter the land (Dt. 3:25; Ps. 90); but the answer was basically the same as to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee". The fact Moses had been forgiven and was at one with his God was so great that his physical entering the land was irrelevant. And for Paul likewise, temporal blessings in this life are nothing compared to the grace of forgiveness which we have received (Ex. 34:9).

12:10 2 Cor. 12:10 states that it is in our very weakness, the weakness of the man made to realize the weight of his own mediocrity and failure to achieve as described above, that *the power of God breaks forth*.

Reading through his letters, it is apparent that Paul saw himself as two people: a natural man, a Jew from Tarsus, a Roman citizen living in the Mediterranean world... and also, a man in Christ. He speaks of how "I bruise myself", as if the one Paul was boxing against the other Paul (1 Cor. 9:27 RVmg.). This is why in an autobiographical passage in 2 Cor. 12, he says of himself: "I knew a man in Christ", who had great visions 14 years previously (at the council of Jerusalem of Acts 15), and who was subsequently given a "thorn in the flesh". "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory", he writes (2 Cor. 12:5), as if separating himself from this more spiritually exalted man who saw these visions. Paul is surely telling us that he sees himself as two people. He makes the point clearly: "I will not be a fool... I am become a fool" (:6,11). He was the greatest apostle; although he was nothing (:11). This language comes to a crisis in 12:10: "When I [i.e. the natural Paul] am weak, then am I [the spiritual Paul] strong".

12:11- see on 2 Cor. 11:5.

12:15- see on Lk. 15:24; Rom. 9:3.

Paul had enough self-knowledge to say that his love for Corinth was growing more and more (although this was expressed in an ever-increasing concern for their doctrinal soundness); he told the Thessalonians that his love for them was increasing and abounding (2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Thess. 3:12). And Paul could therefore exhort the Philippians and Thessalonians to also increase and abound in their love for each other, after Paul's example (Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:12). Paul's love for his brethren grew and grew, *even though they didn't notice this*. The 'you don't know just how much I love you' syndrome is surely one of the cruellest in human experience. A growth in true love, true concern, isn't always apparent to our brethren. But if our growth is after Paul's pattern (and surely it can be on no other pattern); then this will be our experience too.

12:16 Throughout Corinthians Paul is quoting phrases from their allegations and questions, but it is not always exactly apparent. Consider 2 Cor. 12:16. Perhaps using quotation marks we could translate: "Nevertheless, "being crafty", I "caught you with guile"". The New Testament so often seems to mix interpretation with Old Testament quotation; here especially we need to imagine the use of quotation marks.

13:1 The principles of Mt. 18:16,17 concerning dealing with personal offences are applied by Paul to dealing with moral and doctrinal problems at Corinth (= 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Cor. 5:4,5,9; 6:1-6).

13:2- see on 1 Cor. 15:10.

13:4 Because we are in Christ, His death was not an isolated historical event. We also are weak with Him (2 Cor. 13:4 RV), such is the identity between us and Him. When Paul reflected upon his own sickness [which the RVmg. calls his stake / cross in the flesh], he could say in all sober truth that he gloried in his weakness, because his identity with the weakness of Christ crucified also thereby identified him with the strength and power of the risen Lord (2 Cor. 11:9).

13:5- see on 2 Tim. 4:6.

If we cannot examine ourselves and know that Christ is really in us, then we are reprobate; we "have failed" (2 Cor. 13:5 G.N.B.). Self-examination is therefore one of those barriers across our path in life which makes us turn to the Kingdom or to the flesh. If we can't examine ourselves and see that Christ is in us and that we have therefore that great salvation in Him; we've failed. I wouldn't be so bold as to throw down this challenge to any of us in exhortation. But Paul does. It's a powerful, even terrible, logic.

The NT speaks of "the faith in Christ" or "the doctrine of Christ". "The faith", the body of doctrine comprising the Gospel, is all epitomized in a real person. To know we are "in the faith" is to know that Christ is in us (2 Cor. 13:5). "The faith", the set of doctrines we must continue believing, is paralleled with the man Christ Jesus. Jesus was "the word made flesh", and "the word" very often refers to the word of the Gospel rather than the whole Bible. The life which the corpus of doctrine

brings forth is essentially the life and living of the man Christ Jesus. He was and is the supreme and living example of the living out of all the doctrines. It has been well said by Frank Birch that "Faith is not simply the intellectual acceptance of a body of doctrine. Faith is ultimately shown in a person, the man, Christ Jesus".

There is a question which cuts right to the bone of each of us; right through the debates and semantics which increasingly shroud our Christian lives. 'Can we be completely certain that should Christ return now, we will be in the Kingdom?'. Posing this question provokes widely different response- from 'Of course not! How presumptuous!', to that of the present writer: 'By God's grace-yes!'. We can't say ultimately because we may fall away in the future- but we should be able to assess the spiritual state we are in at this present point in time. If we cannot do this, then our salvation is very much at risk; as Paul bluntly told Corinth: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5). They sought proof that Christ was in Paul (2 Cor. 13:3), yet he challenges them to know whether Christ is in them personally. The implication was that if they could not judge that, they were in no position to ask whether Christ was in Paul- or any other. This is vintage Paul; the logic is irresistible.

13:6- see on Mt. 3:11.

13:7 We must find a true, self-condemning humility now, unless it will be forced upon us at the judgment. And thus Paul can say that "we be *as* reprobates" (2 Cor. 13:7), using a Greek word elsewhere translated "castaway", "rejected", in the context of being rejected at the judgment seat (1 Cor. 9:27; Heb. 6:8). Yet he says in the preceding verse that he is most definitely *not* reprobate (2 Cor. 13:6). Here we have the paradox: knowing that we are not and by grace will not be rejected, and yet feeling and reasoning as if we are.

The above analysis reveals that David's requests in areas apart from forgiveness and salvation largely centred around his desire for God to grant spiritual help to others. There are many examples of praying for God to help others spiritually: 2 Kings 19:4; 2 Chron. 30:18; Job 42:10; Rom. 10:1; 2 Cor. 13:7; Phil. 1:9,19; Col. 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:10; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Jn. 5:16. Surely this was also the spirit behind Abraham's intercession for Lot to be saved out of Sodom. Granted a certain modicum of spirituality in those being prayed for, Noah, Daniel and Job all delivered the souls of others by their prayerful righteousness (Ez. 14:14). When we pray for others, God sees it as them praying (if they have a modicum of spirituality), in the same way as when the Lord Jesus prays for us, He interprets what He knows to be our spirit to God, recognizing that we don't know how to pray in words as we should (Jer. 11:14). The Lord Jesus prayed for us concerning spiritual issues which at the time we did not understand (Lk. 22:32; Jn. 17:9,15,20), and Paul especially seems to have grasped this example.

13:10 Paul seems to have recognized the hard exterior which he had: "I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness" (2 Cor. 13:10).

13:11- see on 1 Cor. 11:18.

There are times when Paul's inspired commentary opens up some of the Lord's more difficult sayings. "Be you therefore perfect" has always been hard to understand (Mt. 5:48). Paul's comment is: "Be perfected" (2 Cor. 13:11). This is quite different to how many may take it- 'Let God perfect you' is the message.

13:12- see on Rom. 16:16.

13:14 There is a fellowship of the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14) in the sense that all who live the same spiritually-centred life will thereby be bound together in a powerful and inevitable fellowship. When, for example, two Christian mothers strike up conversation about the difficulty of raising children in this present evil world, when two brethren talk about the difficulties of living as Christ

would in today's business world... there is, right there, in those almost casual conversations, the fellowship of the spirit. It isn't just a social connection because we belong to the same denomination.

GALATIANS

1:1 Consider how in Galatians Paul uses so many negatives, as if his passion and almost rage at the false teachers is coming out: “an apostle *not* from men... the gospel preached by me is *not* man’s gospel... *nor* was I taught it... I did *not* confer with flesh and blood, I did *not* go up to Jerusalem... I do *not* lie... Titus was *not* compelled... to *false* brethren we did *not* yield... those ‘of repute’ added *nothing*” (Gal. 1:1,11,12,16,20; 2:3,4,6). The way he says “Ye have known God, or rather, are known of God” (Gal. 4:9) seems to indicate [through the “or rather...”] a very human and passionate touch in his writing, as if he was thinking out loud as he wrote.

1:4 The purpose of the cross was so that we might be separated out from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). To remain in the world, to stay in the crowd that faced the cross rather than walk through the no man’s land between, this is a denial of the Lord’s death for us. See on Gal. 6:14.

Paul had his inspired mind on this phrase of the Lord’s prayer when he commented that the Lord Jesus died in order “that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God” (Gal. 1:4; 2 Thess. 3:3). Clearly enough, Paul didn’t understand “the evil” to be a personal Satan, but rather the “evil” of this world and those who seek to persecute believers.

Much of Paul’s writing is understandable on various levels. In some places he makes allusions to contemporary Jewish writings and ideas – with which he was obviously very familiar given his background – in order to correct or deconstruct them. This is especially true with reference to Jewish ideas about Satan and supposedly sinful Angels ruling over this present world. As more and more Jewish writings of the time become more widely available, it becomes increasingly apparent that this is a major feature of Paul’s writing. The Jewish writings all held to the teaching of the two ages, whereby this current age was supposed to be under the control of Satan and his angels, who would be destroyed in the future age, when Messiah would reign and Paradise would be restored on earth (see 1 Enoch 16:1; 18:16; 21:6; Jubilees 1:29; T. Moses 1:18; 12:4). Paul frequently uses terms used in the Jewish writings concerning the Kingdom age, the eschatological age, and applies them to the experience of Christian believers *right now*. When Heb. 2:14 states that Christ killed the Devil in His death on the cross, this is effectively saying that the future age has come. For the Jews expected the Devil to be destroyed only at the changeover to the future Kingdom age. In 4 Ezra, “This age” (4:27; 6:9; 7:12), also known as the “corrupt age” (4:11) stands in contrast to the “future age” (6:9; 8:1), the “greater age”, the “immortal time” (7:119), the future time (8:52). 4 Enoch even claims that the changeover from this age to the future age occurs at the time of the final judgment, following the death of the Messiah and seven days of silence (7:29–44, 113). So we can see why Paul would plug in to these ideas. He taught that Christ died “in order to rescue us from this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4; Rom 8:38; 1 Cor. 3:22). Therefore if the old age has finished, that means Satan is no longer controlling things as the Jews believed. For they believed that Satan’s spirits “will corrupt until the day of the great conclusion, until the great age is consummated, until everything is concluded (upon) the Watchers and the wicked ones” (1 Enoch 16:1, cf. 72:1). And Paul was pronouncing that the great age had been consummated in Christ, that the first century believers were those upon whom the end of the *aion* had come (1 Cor. 10:11).

1:6 Paul describes himself as having been called by God, by grace; and in this context he comments how *he* called the Galatians to the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6 cp. 15). His response to his calling of grace was to go out and preach, thereby calling men to that same grace, replicating in his preaching what God had done for him.

True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. Likewise Paul writes of his preaching to the Galatians in the third person: “him [Paul] that called you into the grace of Christ” (Gal. 1:6). And likewise he talks about himself while at the Jerusalem conference, where he was given so clearly the ministry of converting the Gentiles, as if he hardly identifies himself with himself: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... I knew such a man... of such an one will I glory, yet of myself I

will not glory” (2 Cor. 12:1-4- the context makes it clear that Paul refers to himself, seeing that he was the one given the thorn in the flesh as a result of the revelations given to this “man”). In 1 Thess. 1:5 Paul could have written: ‘We came with the Gospel’, but instead he uses the more awkward construction: ‘Our Gospel came...’. He, Paul, was subsumed beneath the essence of his life work- the preaching of the Gospel.

1:8- see on Ez. 14:9.

1:10 Although Paul made himself all things to all men, he didn’t just seek to please men (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4). He sought their salvation and approached them in appropriate terms, but he didn’t just seek to please them from a human viewpoint. He didn’t cheapen the Gospel.

1:10

Galatians: An Encomium

Cultured, educated people in the first century presented themselves to others by means of an 'encomium'. This was a document or major speech which included five sections, clearly defined in the various manuals of rhetoric which survive, and which surely Paul would have been taught. The purpose of the encomium was to demonstrate how the person was an upright member of the community and worthy of honour within it. Students of the letter to the Galatians have detected these five sections of the encomium followed in an almost classic manner by Paul in Galatians 1:10-2:21:

1. Opening (*prooimion*) 1:10-12: Paul's Gospel
2. Lifestyle (*anastrophe*) 1:13-17: Paul as persecutor of the church and preacher of the Gospel. Gal. 1:13 uses the very word *anastrophe* ("way of life")
3. Achievements (*praxeis*) or "deeds of the body" 1:18-2:10- Paul's work in Jerusalem, Syria and again in Jerusalem
4. Comparison with others (*synkrisis*) 2:11-21- Paul and Peter; Paul and the Jews
5. Conclusion (*epilogos*)- 2:21 Paul and grace.

The encomium was essentially self-praise and self-justification within society. Paul almost mocks the encomium, by using its elements to show how radically different are the standards of thinking and behaviour for the Christian. In Gal. 1:15 Paul speaks of his birth (*genesis*), which in the usual encomiums would've been a reference to his family of origin, which as we've shown was all important in a collectivist society. Paul never speaks of his parents, as would've been normal in an encomium- and seeing he was born as a free man, he could've made an impressive point at this stage had he wished. But the birth he speaks of is that which came from God, who gave Paul birth by grace. His place in God's invisible household was all important, rather than what family he belonged to naturally. An encomium would typically have a reference to a man's education- and Paul could've made an impressive case for himself here. But rather he speaks of how God Himself revealed Christ to him, and how his spiritual education was not through interaction with any other men of standing in the Christian community, but rather in his three years alone in Arabia (Gal. 1:18). It has been suggested that Paul actually coined a new Greek term in 1 Thess. 4:9, when he spoke of how he had been taught-by-God (*theodidaktos*). To claim an education 'not by flesh and blood' (Gal. 1:16) was foolishness to 1st century society. In the description of his "deeds", Paul could've made a fair case both as a Jew and as a Christian. But instead he spends Gal. 2:1-10 speaking of how he had laboured so hard to avoid division in the church of Christ, to teach grace, avoid legalistic obedience to the norms of Jewish society, and to help the poor. *These* were the works he counted as significant. It was usual in an encomium to speak of your courage (*andreia*) and fortitude. Paul uses the word *andreia*, again in conscious imitation of an encomium, but he relates it to how he courageously refused to "yield submission even for a moment" to the pressures to conform to Jewish societal expectations (Gal. 2:5). When it comes to the *synkrisis*, the comparison with others, he chooses to compare himself with Peter, who caved in to the pressures from the Jews, agreeing to act smart

before men rather than God, whereas Paul says he withstood this and insisted upon a life of radical grace which paid no attention to what others thought of his appearances.

1:10 Paul sees one application of serving mammon as acting in a hypocritical way in order to please some in the ecclesia (Mt. 6:24 = Gal. 1:10).

1:12 - see on Gal. 1:1.

1:14- see on Mt. 15:2.

Paul could have been such a high flyer; he profited (materially, the Greek could imply) in the Jews' religion above any one else (Gal. 1:14). But he resigned it all. He wrote some majestic words which ought to become the goal of every one of us: "But what things were gain to me [materially?], those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss *for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:7,8).

1:15- see on Acts 18:18.

Paul seems to have admired the humility John the Baptist manifested in his preaching. He knew he had been chosen from the womb for his mission, as John had been (Gal. 1:15 = Lk. 1:15).

Paul felt he had been "separated unto the [preaching of the] gospel of God" (Gal. 1:15); and he uses a word which the LXX uses for the separation of part of a sacrifice to be consumed (Ex. 29:24,26). The Greek word for "witness" is *martus*, from whence 'martyr'. To witness to Christ is to live the life of the martyr; to preach Him is to live out His cross in daily life.

The Lord's servant being called from the womb (Is. 49:1) was applied by Paul to himself (Gal. 1:15)- see on Rom. 8:31.

In Gal. 1:15,16, Paul speaks as if his calling to preach the Gospel and his conversion co-incided. He clearly understood that he had been called so as to spread the word to others. Paul uses the word *kaleo* to describe both our call to the Gospel, and the call to preach that Gospel (Gal. 1:15 cp. Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; 7:15; Gal. 1:6; 5:13; 2 Tim. 1:9). He doesn't separate his call from that of ours; he speaks of how God called "us" (Rom. 9:24; 1 Thess. 4:7). We may not all be able to live the life of itinerant preaching and spreading the word geographically which Paul did. And yet clearly enough Paul sets himself up as our pattern in the context of his attitude to preaching. Our lamps were lit, in the Lord's figure, so as to give light to others. We are mirrors, reflecting to others the glory of God as far as we ourselves behold it in the face of Jesus Christ.

Choice from birth, calling, ministry to the Gentiles = The servant known from birth (Is. 49:1,5). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ.

Our salvation was "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by... renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit.3:5). Thus in Paul's case "it pleased (lit. 'willed') God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (Gal.1:15) - not Paul's works. Thus our obedience to the truth was "through (on account of) the Spirit" (1 Pet.1:22). Against this must be balanced Rom.10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing... the word of God". God's Spirit was involved in bringing about our calling, and is also present in the word by which we are called.

Chronology of Paul's Life

Standard Chronology Of Paul's Life	John Robinson's Chronology Of Paul's Life (2)
AD 35 Paul's conversion	AD33 Conversion
36-38 In Arabia ⁽¹⁾	35 First visit to Jerusalem
38-43 Preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem	46 Second [famine-relief] visit to Jerusalem

44-46 Working in Antioch and Syria	47-48 First missionary journey
46-48 First missionary journey	48 Council of Jerusalem
49-50 Jerusalem Conference	49-51 Second missionary journey
50-52 Second missionary journey	52-57 Third missionary journey
53-57 Third missionary journey	57 Arrival in Jerusalem
57-59 Arrest- Jerusalem-Caesarea	57-59 Imprisonment in Caesarea
59-62 To Rome; first imprisonment	60-62 Imprisonment in Rome
63-66 Release; travels in Asia, Greece, Spain	
64-68 Nero's persecution of the Christians	
67 Arrest, imprisoned in a dungeon in Rome	
68 Final trial; executed.	

Notes

(1) "Arabia" is from the word 'Arabah', and occurs in the LXX in Dt. 2:8; 3:17; 4:49 to mean simply the wilderness. Since Paul went there from Damascus, it has been suggested that he mixed with the Damascene Essene group. There are extensive parallels between the Qumran texts and the letter to the Hebrews, which could lend support to this suggestion- as if Paul wrote to an audience he knew.
(2) J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating The New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976) pp. 52,53.

1:16- see on Acts 9:20.

Saul of Tarsus must've seemed the most unlikely of men to convert to Christ. But he later refers to how God chose "to *reveal* his son in me" (Gal. 1:16). The Greek word *apokalupto* means literally 'to take the cover off'. The implication is that Christ is passively within each person, but has to be revealed in them, through response to the Gospel. The cover can be taken off every single man or women with whom we come into contact! The Galatians passage could equally mean that Paul was called as an apostle to 'take the cover off' Christ to others; and yet Paul felt his calling was to all people on earth, to the ends of the world (Acts 13:47)- to every single person of all the Gentile nations (Rom. 15:11; 2 Tim. 4:17).

Paul's attitude to his brethren seems to have changed markedly over the years. He begins as being somewhat detached from them; perhaps as all new converts are initially. We see the Truth for what it is, we realize we had to make the commitment we did, and we are happy to do our own bit in preaching the Truth. But often a real concern and care for our brethren takes years to develop. Paul seems to tell the Galatians that the Gospel he preached had not been given to him by men, because in the early days after his conversion he was rather indifferent towards other Christian believers; " (Paul) conferred not with flesh and blood" after his conversion, neither did he go to see the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss how to preach to Israel; instead, Paul says, he pushed off to Arabia for three years in isolation. He was unknown by face to the Judaeans ecclesias, and even after his return from Arabia, he made no special effort to meet up with the Apostles (Gal. 1). The early Paul comes over as self-motivated, a maverick, all too ready to fall out with Barnabas, all too critical of Mark for failing to rise up to Paul's level of fearless devotion (Acts 15:39).

God "was pleased to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him" (Gal. 1:16). To preach Christ is to reveal Him to men through ourselves- this is the purpose for which we are called, that our lamp was lit, to reveal Christ to others through us. And thus Paul could conclude by saying that he bore in his body [perhaps an idiom for his life, cp. the 'broken body' of the Lord we remember] the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17).

1:17- see on Acts 26:16-19; 1 Cor. 9:17.

1:20- see on Gal. 1:1.

2:1-10 This agreement need not be identical with the council of Acts 15. It could've occurred at the visit of Acts 11:30.

2:2 Unity and avoiding division is vital. Paul even argues in Gal. 2:2 that all his colossal missionary effort would have been a 'running in vain' if the ecclesia divided into exclusive Jewish and Gentile sections. This may be hyperbole, but it is all the same a hyperbole which reflects the extent to which Paul felt that unity amongst believers was vital.

2:3 - see on Gal. 1:1.

2:5 Paul in Gal. 2:5 speaks of how he refused to “give place by subjection” to some who claimed to be elders, even though they “seemed to be somewhat” and were [in the eyes of some] “in repute” (Gal. 2:6 ASV). The same Greek word translated “subjection” is found in 1 Cor. 16:16; Tit. 3:1 and 1 Pet. 5:5 about submission to elders in the ecclesia. Paul’s example shows that merely because an elder demands subjection, this doesn’t mean we should automatically give it- even if others do. We should be “subject” to those who are in our judgment *qualified* to demand our subjection (1 Cor. 16:16); and “subjection” in Paul’s writings usually refers to our subjection to the Lordship of Jesus. Our subjection must be to Him first before any human elders.

We enter the one body of Christ by baptism into the one body of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 12:13). We therefore have a duty to fellowship all who remain in the body (1 Cor. 10:16). Paul describes Peter as not walking according to the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2:14) by effectively saying there were two bodies, of Jews and Gentiles, and only fellowshipping one of these groups rather than the entire one body. Paul put all the ecclesial politics behind him and withstood Peter "to his face". If we know "the truth" of Christ's Gospel, we will fellowship all those in Him and in that Truth. If we don't, Paul foresaw that ultimately "the truth of the Gospel" would be lost (Gal. 2:5). Tragically, in man-made attempts to preserve the Gospel's Truth the rest of the body has often been disfellowshipped. But by fellowshipping all the body, the "Truth" is kept!

Peter And The Judaizers (Gal. 2:6-11)

Led Away...

The Peter who had come so so far, from the headstrong days of Galilee to the shame of the denials, and then on to the wondrous new life of forgiveness and preaching that grace to others, leading the early community that developed upon that basis...that Peter almost went wrong later in life. Peter and the Judaizers makes a sad story. And as always, it was a most unlikely form of temptation that arose and almost blew him right off course. As often, the problem arose from his own brethren rather than from the hostile world outside. There was strong resistance in the Jewish mind to the idea that Gentiles could be saved without keeping the Mosaic law. And more than this, there was the feeling that any Jewish believer who advocated that they could was selling out and cheapening the message of God to men. Paul has to write about this whole shameful episode in Gal. 2. It becomes apparent that Peter very nearly denied the Lord that bought him once again, by placing on one side all the evidence of salvation by pure grace, for *all* men whether they be Jew or Gentile, which he had progressively built up over the past years. Paul, using Peter’s old name, comments how Cephas seemed to be a pillar- but wasn’t (Gal. 2:9). Paul “withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (2:11). Peter and some other Jewish believers “dissembled” and along with Barnabas “was carried away with their dissimulation”, with the result that they “walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” (2:12-14). Paul’s whole speech to Peter seems to be recorded in Gal. 2:15-21. He concludes by saying that if Peter’s toleration of justification by works rather than by Christ was really so, then Christ was dead in vain. Paul spoke of how for him, he is crucified with Christ, and lives only for Him, “who loved me and gave himself for me”. These were exactly the sentiments which Peter held so dear, and Paul knew they would touch a chord with him.

The Denial Of Grace

Yet Peter very nearly walked away from it all, because he was caught up in the legalism of his weaker brethren, and lacked the courage to stand up to the pressure of the Judaizers on him. Peter had earlier stayed with a tanner, a man involved in a ritually unclean trade (Acts 9:43). This would indicate that Peter was a liberal Jew, hardly a hard-liner. His caving in to the Judaist brethren was therefore all the more an act of weakness rather than something he personally believed in. For it was Peter, too, who had gone through the whole Cornelius experience too! And many a humble, sincere man in Christ since has lost his fine appreciation of the Lord's death *for him* and the whole message of grace, through similar sophistry and a desire to please 'the brethren'. In some of his very last words, facing certain death, Peter alludes to this great failure of his- his second denial of the Lord. He pleads with his sheep to hold on to the true grace of God, lest "ye *also*, being led away (s.w. Gal. 2:13 "carried away") with the error of the lawless, fall..." (2 Pet. 3:17). Ye *also* invites the connection with Peter himself, who was led away by the error of the lawyers, the legalists- whereas his sheep had the error of the lawless to contend with. The point surely is that to go the way of legalism, of denying the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is every bit as bad as going to the lawless ways of the world. Peter was carried away with the "dissimulation" of the Judaizers (Gal. 2:13), and he uses the same word when he appeals to the brethren to lay aside "all hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1); he was asking them to do what he himself had had to do. He had been a hypocrite, in living the life of legalism within the ecclesia whilst having the knowledge of grace. We may so easily pass this off as a mere peccadillo compared to the hypocrisy of living the life of the world 6 days / week and coming to do one's religious devotions at a Christian church on a Sunday. But Peter draws a parallel between his own hypocrisy and that of such brethren; this is how serious it is to bow to the sophistry of legalism. It may be that an unjust disfellowship ought to be contended, and we say nothing. Or that a sincere, spiritual brother who places his honest doubts on the table is elbowed out of being able to make the contribution to the community he needs to. In our after the meeting conversations and in our Sunday afternoon chats we can go along with such things, depending on the company we are in. And it seems just part of Christian life. The important thing, it can seem, is to stay within the community and keep separate from the world. But not so, is Peter's message. His ecclesial hypocrisy was just as bad as that of the worldly believer whom Peter wrote to warn. Paul seems to go even further and consciously link Peter's behaviour with his earlier denials that he had ever known the Lord Jesus. He writes of how he had to reveal Peter's denial of the Lord's grace "before them all" (Gal. 2:14), using the very same Greek phrase of Mt. 26:70, where "before them all" Peter made the same essential denial.

Unlearning

The sad thing about Peter's reversion to the Judaist perspective was that it was an almost studied undoing of all the Lord had taught him in the Cornelius incident. There he had learnt that the Lordship of Jesus, which had so deeply impressed him in his early preaching, was in fact universal- because "He is Lord *of all*", therefore men from *all* (s.w.) nations were to be accepted in Him (Acts 10:35,36). God shewed him that he was not to call any man common or unclean on account of his race (Acts 10:28). But now he was upholding the very opposite. And he wasn't just passively going along with it, although that's how it doubtless started, in the presence of brethren of greater bearing and education than himself. He "compelled" the Gentile believers to adopt the Jewish ways, as if Peter was a Judaizer; and every time that word is used in Galatians it is in the context of compelling believers to be circumcised (Gal. 2:14 cp. 2:3; 6:12). So it seems Peter actually compelled brethren to be circumcised. And the Galatian epistle gives the answer as to *why* this was done; brethren chose to be circumcised and to preach it lest they suffer persecution for the sake of the cross of Christ (Gal. 5:11; 6:12-14). Consistently this letter points an antithesis between the cross and circumcision. The body marks of Christ's cross are set off against the marks of circumcision (Gal. 6:17); and the essence of the Christian life is said to be crucifying the flesh nature, rather than just cutting off bits of skin (Gal. 5:24). Peter's capitulation to the Judaizers, Peter's reversion to circumcision, was effectively a denial of the cross, yet once again in his life. There was something he found almost

offensive about the cross, an ability to sustainedly accept its message. And he turned back to circumcision as he had earlier turned to look at John's weaknesses when told he must carry the cross. And we turn to all manner of pseudo-spiritual things to excuse our similar inability to focus upon it too.

Eventually Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:12). But he had learnt to eat with Gentile brethren in Acts 11:3; he had justified doing so to his brethren and persuaded them of its rightness, and had been taught and showed, so patiently, by his Lord that he should not make such distinctions. But now, all that teaching was undone. There's a lesson here for many a slow-to-speak brother or sister- what you start by passively going along with in ecclesial life, against your better judgment, you may well end up by actively advocating. It can be fairly conclusively proven that Mark's Gospel is in fact Peter's. Yet it is there in Mk. 7:19 that Mark / Peter makes the point that the Lord Jesus had declared all foods clean. He knew the incident, recalled the words, had perhaps preached and written them; and yet Peter acted and reasoned as if he was totally unaware of them.

Paul gently guided Peter back to the Cornelius incident, which he doubtless would have deeply meditated upon as the inspired record of it became available. Peter had been taught that God *accepted whoever* believed in Him, regardless of their race. But now Paul had to remind Peter that truly, God "*accepteth* no man's person" (Gal. 2:6). The same Greek word was a feature of the Cornelius incident: whoever believes *receives*, accepts, remission of sins (Acts 10:43), and they *received*, accepted, the Holy Spirit as well as the Jewish brethren (Acts 10:47). With his matchless humility, Peter accepted Paul's words. His perceptive mind picked up these references (and in so doing we have a working model of how to seek to correct our brethren, although the success of it will depend on their sensitivity to the word which we both quote and allude to). But so easily, a lifetime of spiritual learning could have been lost by the sophistry of legalistic brethren. It's a sober lesson. And yet Peter in his pastoral letters (which were probably transcripts of his words / addresses) makes these references back to his own failure, and on the basis of having now even more powerfully learnt his lesson, he can appeal to his brethren. And so it should be in our endeavours for our brethren. Paul warned him that by adopting the Judaist stance, he was *building again* what had been destroyed (Gal. 2:18). And Peter with that in mind can urge the brethren to *build up* the things of Christ and His ecclesia (1 Peter 2:5,7 s.w.), rather, by implication, that the things of the world and its philosophy.

2:7 "The gospel of the circumcision" being given to Peter and that of the Gentiles to Paul evidently means 'the duty of preaching the gospel' (Gal. 2:7). The Gospel is in itself the duty of preaching it.

2:8 In Gal. 2:7,8, we read that Peter was given a ministry to preach to Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. But in Acts 15:7 Peter says that God used him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles- and the implication of 1 Peter is that he had made many converts in Gentile areas of Asia Minor. The reconcillation of these statements may be that God changed things around- Peter's ministry to the Gentiles was handed over to Paul, and Paul's initial work amongst the Jews was not for him to continue but for Peter. And so the Father may work with us, too. My simple point is that we are each given our group or area of potential responsibility for preaching, and we should be workers together with the Father and Son to achieve what they have potentially made possible for us. And we each, in God's master plan, have an area of opportunity opened up to us for us to preach in, and this area may be changed, reduced, moved or expanded according to our freewill response to God's desire to use us.

2:9 James, the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, got Peter and John to join him in making Paul to agree to preach only to Gentiles, whilst they would teach the Jews (Gal. 2:9 NIV). This was contrary to what the Lord had told Paul in Acts 9:15- that he had been converted so as to preach to both Jews and Gentiles. And Paul took no notice of the 'agreement' they tried to force him into- he always made a priority of preaching first of all in the Jewish synagogues and to the Jews, and only secondarily to Gentiles. He did this right up to the end of the Acts record. Paul got drawn into

politics in the church. Although he went along with the Acts 15 decree and even agreed to propagate it, he never mentions it in his writing or speaking, and later he writes about food regulations and the whole question of Gentiles and the Law as if he disagreed with it. Perhaps as he matured, he saw the need to speak out against legalism in the ecclesias rather than go along with it for the sake of peace.

We can ourselves so easily form into groups of brethren and ecclesias, papering over our differences as happened in Acts 15, adopting a hard line (as Jerusalem ecclesia did in Gal. 2:9 over Gentile believers), then a softer line in order to win political support (as in Acts 15), then back to a hard line (as in Acts 21). We ought to be men and women of principle. We look back at the senior brethren of those days arguing so strongly about whether or not it was right to break bread with Gentile believers, “much disputing” whether or not we should be circumcised... and it all seems to us such an elemental disregard of the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus and so many clear Old Testament implications. But there were background factors which clouded their perceptions, although they themselves didn’t realise this at the time. And so it can be with us, if we were to see ourselves from outside our own historical time, place and culture, it would probably be obvious that we are disregarding some most basic teachings of the Word which we know so well. Like them, our blindness is because the environment we live in blinds us to simple Bible truth.

2:11 There is a *direct* relationship, in God's judgment, between how we treat others and what will happen to us. This is to the extent that what we do to others, we do to ourselves. If we condemn others, we really and truly do condemn ourselves. Thus when Peter refused to fellowship Gentiles, Paul “withstood him to the face, because he stood condemned” (Gal. 2:11 RV). Just as Peter had condemned himself by denying the Lord, so he had done again in refusing to fellowship the Lord's brethren. Realizing the seriousness of all this, Paul didn't just let it go, as many of us would have done in such an ecclesial situation. He realized a man was condemning himself; and so he risked causing a lot of upset in order to save him from this. Many of us could take a lesson from this.

2:12 The whole nature of the agreement in Gal. 2:6-10 could be read as smacking of dirty politics- Paul could continue to convert Gentiles and not force them to be circumcised, but James and Peter would continue their ministry to the Jews, and Paul would get his Gentile converts to donate money to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. It all could be read as having the ring of a 'deal' rather than an agreement strictly guided by spiritual principles. James [not necessarily the same James who wrote the epistle] seems to have acted very ‘politically’. He sent his followers to pressurise Peter not to break bread with Gentiles in Antioch (Gal. 2:12). Then there was a conference called at Jerusalem to discuss the matter. There was “much disputing”, there wasn’t the clear cut acceptance of Gentiles which one would have expected if the words of Jesus had been taken at face value, and then James said ‘Nobody ever came from me telling any Gentile they must be circumcised and keep the Law. They are all welcome, just that they must respect some of the Mosaic laws about blood etc., and keep away from fornication’. This contradicts Paul’s inspired teaching that the Mosaic Law was totally finished. Gal. 2:12 records that James *had* sent brethren to Antioch trying to enforce the Law upon Gentiles! And then later, the Jerusalem ecclesia boasted of how many thousand members they had, “and they are all zealous of the law”. They then asked Paul to make it clear that he supported circumcision and keeping the Law (Acts 21:19-24). In passing, we note how hurtful this must have been, since Paul was bringing funds for their ecclesia which he had collected at the cost of damaging his relationship with the likes of Corinth. He meekly obeyed, perhaps it was playing a part in the politics in the church, although he had written to the Colossians and others that there was no need for any to be circumcised nor keep the Law, indeed these things were a denial of faith in Jesus.

2:13- see on Mt. 23:28.

Paul withstood the pressures of the ‘circumcision party’ within the early church, and rebuked Peter for caving in to them (Gal. 2:12,13). But then he himself caved in under pressure from the same

group, and obeyed their suggestion that he show himself to be not opposed to the keeping of the Mosaic Law by paying the expenses for the sacrifices of four brethren.

2:14 We must walk "uprightly (Gk. 'with straight feet', like the cherubim) according to the true Gospel" (Gal. 2:14 Gk.). Correct walk / behaviour is therefore related to the fact we have believed the *true* Gospel, i.e. we hold the right doctrines rather than the wrong ones. In this lies the importance of doctrine. This is why Is. 29:13,24 speaks of repentance as 'learning doctrine'; Israel went astray morally because they allowed themselves to be taught wrong doctrine.

2:15- see on Acts 23:6.

2:16 There is an intended ambiguity in the phrase "the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16); this 'ambiguous genitive' can mean those who share "the (doctrinal) faith" , which Abraham also believed; or those who have the kind of belief which Abraham had. Like Abraham, we are justified by *the* faith in Christ; not faith in Christ, but more specifically *the* faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16). The use of the definite article surely suggests that it is our possession of the same doctrinal truths (the Faith) which Abraham had, which is what leads to faith in Christ and thereby our justification. The *life* Paul lived was by *the* Faith of Christ; not simply by faith, as a verb, which is how grammatically it should be expressed if this is what was meant; but by *the* Faith (Gal. 2:20).

2:19-21 Galatians was one of Paul's earlier letters. In it, he speaks of his own baptism: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live" (Gal. 2:19-21). Years later he writes to the Romans about *their* baptisms, in exactly the same language: "All of us who have been baptized... our old self was crucified with him... the life he lives he lives to God" (Rom. 6:1-10). He clearly seeks to forge an identity between his readers and himself; their baptisms were [and are] as radical as his in their import. Note how in many of his letters, especially Galatians and Corinthians, he switches so easily between "you" and "we", as if to drive home the fact that there was to be no perception of distance between him the writer and us the readers.

2:20- see on Mt. 27:26; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:16.

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus isn't a collection of ideas and theologies bound together in a statement of faith. It is, rather, a proclamation of facts (and the Greek words used about the preaching of the Gospel support that view of it) concerning a flesh and blood historical person, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. The focus is all upon a concrete and actual person. Paul in Gal. 2:20 doesn't say: 'I live by faith in the idea that the Son of God loved me'. Rather: "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (RV). Faith is centred in a person- hence the utterly central importance of our correctly understanding the Lord Jesus. We are clearly bidden see the man Jesus as the focus of everything.

"I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not *my* life, but the life which *Christ lives* in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" . The spirit of the risen Christ lived out in our lives is the witness of His resurrection. We are Him to this world.

His cross affects our whole life, our deepest thought and action, to the extent that we can say with Paul, in the silence of our own deepest and most personal reflection: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

There is the sustained implication that the personal relationship between Jesus and each of His followers is totally personal and unique. The Abrahamic covenant is made personally with every member of the seed "in their generations" (Gen. 17:7). The records of the renewing of the covenant to Isaac and Jacob are but indicators that this is the experience of each one of the seed. This means that the covenant love of God and the promise of personal inheritance of the land is made personally, and confirmed by the shedding of Christ's blood, to each of us. Paul appreciated this

when he spoke of how the Son of God had loved him and died for him personally, even though that act of death was performed for many others (Gal. 2:20). This is one of the most essential mysteries of our redemption; that Christ gave Himself *for me*, so that He might make *me* His very own; and therefore I wish to respond in total devotion to Him and His cause, to make Him the Man I fain would follow to the end. And yet He did it for *you* and for *you*; for *all* of us His people. All the emphasis on fellowship and family life, good as it is, must never blind us to this ultimately *personal* relationship with the One who gave Himself for us. Each time a believer enters into covenant with Christ through baptism, blood is in a sense shed; the Lord dies again as the believer dies again in the waters of baptism. The Hebrew word translated 'to cut a covenant' is also translated 'cut off' in the sense of death (Gen. 9:11; Lev. 20:2,3; Is. 48:9; Prov. 2:21). Death and blood shedding are essential parts of covenant making.

In Gal. 2:20, Paul wrote of "the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me"; and yet some years later he wrote in conscious allusion to this statement: "Christ loved *the church* and gave himself *for it*" (Eph. 5:25). He looked out from beyond his personal salvation to rejoice in the salvation of others. He learnt that it was God's manifestation in a multitude, not individual human salvation, that was and is of the essence. And we follow a like path, from that day when we were asked 'why do you want to be baptized', and we replied something to the effect 'because I want to be in the Kingdom'.

3:1- see on Rom. 1:18; Gal. 4:16.

Paul speaks to the Galatians in human terms, alluding to the pagan concept of "the evil eye": "Who cast the evil eye on you?" (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). He rejected the superstitions of "the evil eye", and yet he uses the phrase in writing to them. Clearly Paul and the inspired writers wrote with a certain freedom, not scared that they might be misinterpreted, but using contemporary language freely.

When Paul preached to the Galatians, he placarded forth Jesus Christ crucified in front of them: his preaching of the Gospel involved a repeated and graphic portrayal of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as a historical event (Gal. 3:1). We are "in Christ" to the extent that we *are* Christ to this world. In this sense He has in this world no arms or legs or face than us. Paul was a placarding of Christ crucified before the Galatians; to the Corinthians he was "the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:10 RSV). It was this marred visage of Paul which had impressed the Galatians with how much Paul was Christ-manifest: "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus" (Gal. 4). He could truly say in Gal 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ", and that before their eyes "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth ['placarded'], crucified among you... for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 3:1; 6:17). Thus to preach through cross carrying means sharing in the Lord's sufferings. It may mean being crucified by our brethren for it as He was, physical hardship and pain... but this is the ground of credibility for our witness.

It seems that Paul had gone through the process of crucifixion with them so realistically, that it was as if Christ had suffered before their eyes. If you have seen that, Paul says, and the vision remains with you, how can you turn away? And this is a powerful motivator for us too. The man who sees, really sees, something of the Lord's agony, simply won't turn away, doctrinally or practically. But if we turn away from the consideration, the motivation will not be there to keep on responding. In this sense the crucifixion record *almost* has a mystical power in it, if it is properly apprehended.

3:5 Even in the first century, the work of the Spirit was not just confined to the miraculous gifts; thus "He that ministereth to you the Spirit *and* worketh miracles among you" (Gal.3:5) suggests that there was a non-miraculous work of the Spirit then. It seems clear that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were not possessed by all first century believers; and yet the epistles often imply that all believers had received the Spirit (e.g. 2 Cor.1:22). The resolution of this is in the fact that all

believers then and now receive the non-miraculous effect of the Spirit. Indeed, Jude 19 suggests that 'having the spirit' could just refer to someone who is not "sensual", i.e. of the flesh. John was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb... (going) in the Spirit and power of Elias... waxed strong in spirit" (Lk.1:15,17,80); but "John did no miracle" (Jn.10:41). David associated having God's holy Spirit with having free fellowship with Him due to sins being forgiven, paralleling the holy Spirit with "a right spirit within me... a clean heart" (Ps.51:10,12); and Paul spoke of God's willingness to forgive us as "the spirit of grace" (Heb.10:29), i.e. His spiritual gift. Paul's reasoning in Gal.3:5,6 is similar- the Spirit is ministered to us by faith, in the same way as Abraham's faith resulted in righteousness being imputed ('ministered') to him. Thus imputed righteousness is made parallel to the gift of the Spirit.

3:6- see on Phil. 3:6.

3:8- see on Rom. 9:17.

3:9 Verses 10-13 are a parenthesis concerning the curse of the Law. If read without the parenthesis, the flow of thought goes straight on: "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (v.9)... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles" (v.14).

3:13- see on Acts 5:30.

The idea of the cross having been lived out throughout the Lord's life explains why Paul likens the Lord on the cross to the body of the criminal lifted up *after* death, not in order to lead to death (Gal. 3:13; Dt. 21:23)- as if he understood the Lord to have been effectively dead unto sin at the time the body was lifted up on the cross.

3:14 "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit (a reference to the Comforter?) through faith... that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ (what Jesus Christ promised: the Comforter?) might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3:14,22).

3:15- see on 1 Cor. 15:57.

3:15-20 Gal. 3:15-20 stresses how the Law came after the promises to Abraham, and cannot disannul them. Reasoning back from Paul's writing, we can arrive at some understanding of what the Judaists were saying. Their position was that baptism of Gentiles into the Abrahamic covenant was fine, but they must keep the Law for salvation. Paul is pointing out that the promises to Abraham offer eternal inheritance in the Kingdom on the basis of faith and grace, and neither the Law of Moses nor any other form of legalism can change that fundamental basis. An appreciation of the promises will therefore root us in the wonder of salvation by grace, to the point that we will reject all forms of legalism whenever they are proposed in the ecclesia, and whenever our own flesh seeks to justify itself by works achieved rather than by humbly accepting forgiveness of sins. That the Lord's death took away the Law can be assented to us and passed by. But the RV of Romans draws a difference between "*the* law" and "law" without the article, i.e. legality. Because we are saved by grace, no legal code, of Moses or anyone else, can save us. Therefore we are free- but that freedom is so wonderful that we are under "the law of Christ", the rigid principle of always seeking to act as this Man would do, who freed us from law. Otherwise, we end up replacing one form of legalism [under Moses] with another, a set of laws given by Jesus. He *has* saved us in prospect, outside of any law. And we are to rejoice in this and yet respond to it. Dostoevsky's epic *The Brothers Karamazov* is really a parable of the terrible burden of this freedom and the forgiveness of sins. In it, Jesus returns to earth. He is arrested, and the Inquisitor visits Him in the middle of the night. He tries to explain to Jesus that people do not want freedom. They want security. He argues with Jesus, that if one really loves people, then you make them happy- but not free. Freedom is dangerous. People want law, not responsibility; they want the neurotic comfort of rules, not the danger of decision making and the burdens it brings. Christ, says the Inquisitor, must not start up this business about freedom and grace and the commitment and responsibility it demands. Let things be; let the church have its laws. And will Jesus please go away. The life of grace to the extent that it

must be lived is a radical confrontation- it creates the necessity of making pure freewill decisions to do and think acts of grace in response to God's grace. Grace has been presented as the easy way out. It isn't. It is far, far more demanding than legalism.

3:16 A case can be made that the whole New Testament is a form of *Midrash* on the Old Testament, re-interpreting it in the light of Christ. Paul so often employs the same literary devices found in the rabbinic *Midrashim*, e.g. *al tiqra* [read not thus, but thus- Gal. 3:16 is a classic example].

3:19 The descendants of Jacob / Israel were not righteous, although they were God's people. The law of Moses was given to them "because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19). And yet the very existence of the Mosaic Law generated sin, and thereby the experience of God's wrath upon His people (Rom. 4:15). So why were Israel given the Law? In some ways (and this isn't the only reason) to confirm them in their sinfulness. The original Mosaic Law was "holy, just and good" in itself (Rom. 7:12). But later, God gave Israel "laws that were not good" (referring to the Halachas of the Scribes?) so that they would go further away from Him (Ez. 20:25). He must have done this by inspiring men to say things which were genuinely communicated by God, but which were false.

3:20 Reflect a moment upon the sheer power and import of the fact that the Father *promised* things to us, who are Abraham's seed by faith and baptism. The Law of Moses was a conditional promise, because there were two parties; but the promises to us are in some sense unconditional, as God is the only "one" party (Gal. 3:19,20). And as if God's own unconditional promise isn't enough, He confirmed those promises to us with the blood of His very own son. Bearing this in mind, it's not surprising that Ps. 111:5 states that God "will *ever* be mindful of His covenant". This means that He's thinking about the covenant made with us *all* the time! And yet how often in daily life do we reflect upon the fact that we really are in covenant relationship with God... how often do we recollect the part we share in the promises to Abraham, how frequently do we feel that we really are in a personal covenant with God Almighty?

3:22-see on Gal. 3:14.

Sin occurs as a major theme in Paul's writings – not just in Romans, where he speaks so much about sin without hinting that a supernatural 'Satan' figure is involved with it. He sees sin as playing an almost positive, creative role in the formation of the true Christian, both individually and in terms of salvation history. He speaks of how the Mosaic law was given to us as it were to highlight the power of sin; but through this it leads us to Christ, through our desperation and failure to obey, "that (Gk. *hina*, a purpose clause) we might be righteous by faith" (Gal. 3:24–26). The curses for disobedience were "*in order that* (Gk. *hina*) the blessing of Abraham would come upon the Gentiles" (Gal. 3:10–14); "the Scripture consigned all things to sin, *in order that* (Gk. *hina*) what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who have faith" (Gal. 3:22). Note that it was the Law, "the Scripture", which consigned things to sin – not a personal Satan. My point is that sin was used by God, *hina*, 'in order that', there would be an ultimately positive spiritual outcome. Indeed this appears to be the genius of God, to work through human failure to His glory. This view of sin, which any mature believer will surely concur with from his or her life experience, is impossible to square with the ideas of dualism, whereby God and 'sin' are radically opposed, fighting a pitched battle ranging between Heaven and earth, with no common ground. No – God is truly Almighty in every sense, and this includes His power over sin. The life, death and resurrection of His Son were His way of dealing with it – to His glory.

3:23 In the first century, a person was defined not so much by their unique personal character, credit was not given for who they had become or stopped being... but rather by the place in society into which they were born. And so these group-oriented people came to live out the expectations of society- and so the whole process rolled on through the generations. It was continuity rather than change, tradition rather than transformation, which was valued. Change was seen as some kind of deviancy- whereas the Christian gospel is all about change! The past was seen as more glorious than

the present and the future, a pattern to be followed- whereas the Gospel of the future Kingdom of God on earth taught that the best time is *ahead*. And so often Paul compares the "past" of our lives with the much better "now" in Christ (Gal. 3:23-27; 4:8,9; Rom. 6:17-22; Eph. 2:11-22; 5:8).

Our attitude to the doctrines of the one Faith is our attitude to the body of Christ. Paul recounts how he destroyed "the faith" and also destroyed (same Greek word) "the church of God" (Gal. 3:13,23).

On one level, the Mosaic Law was a set of such intricate regulations that was almost impossible to keep. And yet it led men to Christ as a gentle slave leading the children to the teacher. I don't think that the Law of Moses led people to Christ in the sense that they cracked the various types and worked it all out. There's not one example that I can think of where an Old Testament character did this. Indeed it could appear from Gal. 3:23 and other New Testament passages that until Christ actually came, the Old Testament believers were "shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed". Therefore the types etc. of the Law of Moses couldn't have been perceived by them in the same way as we understand them. Hence the Lord's comment that many righteous men had longed to understand the things of Jesus which the disciples saw and heard in reality. "In other ages" those things of Christ were not made known to men as they were revealed in the New Testament by the preaching of the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph. 3:5). The Old Testament prophets even seemed to understand that the things they saw and wrote were not so much for themselves as for us (1 Pet. 1:12). Or reflect on the implications of Gal. 3:23: "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith [in Jesus] which should afterwards be revealed". The Law was a shadow created as it were by the concrete reality of Christ. We can look back and see it all now, but I don't think the types predicted anything to the people of the time. So how then did the Law lead people to Christ? Was it not that they were convicted of guilt, and cried out for a Saviour? "The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that... grace might reign... unto eternal life by Jesus" (Rom. 5:20,21). This was the purpose of the Law. And thus Paul quotes David's rejoicing in the righteousness imputed to him when he had sinned and had no works left to do- and changes the pronoun from "he" to "they" (Rom. 4:6-8). David's personal experience became typical of that of each of us. It was *through* the experience of that wretched and hopeless position that David and all believers come to know the true 'blessedness' of imputed righteousness and sin forgiven by grace. Perhaps Gal. 3:22 sums up what we have been saying: "The Scripture [in the context, this refers to the Mosaic Law] hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe". And Paul goes on to say in this very context that the law brings us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). It brings us- not those who lived under the law. How does it do that? By convicting us of sin, 'concluding' us as being under the control of sin.

3:24 The ultimate teacher must be the Lord Himself, not the pastor or speaking brother. The Law was a *paidagogos*, a slave who lead the children to the school teacher. And the teacher, Paul says, is Christ (Gal. 3:23-25). He uses the whole body to make increase of itself in love- not just the elders.

3:26 By being baptized into Christ, all that is true of Him becomes true of us. Entering the body of Christ carries this implication. We must aspire to be united, with neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female etc., because "ye are all one man in Christ" (Gal. 3:28 RV). We "are all sons of God" (3:26 RV) because of our baptism into the Son of God. And so Paul goes on to reason that just as Christ was "the heir" (cp. "this is the heir..."), who is "lord of all", "even so we..." were kept under the law for a time (Gal. 4:1-3). The basis of our unity is that there is only one Jesus, and by being in Him we are living lives committed to the imitation of that same man. It's painless enough to read Gal. 3:27-29- that all those baptized "in Christ" therefore are in a status where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, no human barriers between us. But this is actually something we have to live out in life in order for it to become reality.

3:27 Baptism is a putting on of the Lord Jesus, a union with Him; which is something essentially ongoing (Gal. 3:27). The Lord Himself spoke of sharing His baptism as being the same as drinking

His cup, sharing His cross (Mk. 10:39); which, again, is a process. Likewise Peter saw baptism as not only the one off act, but more importantly a pledge to live a life in good conscience with God (1 Pet. 3:21). 'Obeying the truth' is not only at baptism, but a lifelong pursuit (Gal. 5:7). The whole body of believers in Christ are being baptized into the body of the Lord Jesus in an ongoing sense (1 Cor. 12:13 Gk.), in that collectively and individually we are growing up into Him who is the Head (Eph. 4:15). See on Col. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:23.

3:27-29 Gal. 3:27-29 teaches that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male nor female... consciously alluding to the Jewish morning prayer of the male Jew, which thanked God that he was nor born a Gentile, a slave nor a woman.

3:28 For Paul to calmly teach in Gal. 3:28 that baptism into Christ meant that there was now no longer differentiation between male and female, slave and free, Jew, Greek or any other ethnic group, called all the first century understandings of society into total question. Indeed, the idea that Gentiles could become spiritual "Jews", and that the Jews weren't the *real* children of Abraham, was an intentional reversal of the categories around which society had been built. Much of the early 'geography' of the first century involved stereotypical descriptions of ethnic and geographical groups, usually ending up with praising the Greco-Roman peoples as being superior in every way to all others. Yet this worldview, which was accepted even by the despised ethnic groups about themselves, had to be ended for those in Christ. Being in *Him* was to be their defining feature. This was equally radical for the Jews, who held themselves above these stereotypes about themselves.

This made it hard psychologically for Jews to convert to Christianity. There were elements of Christian teaching which were a direct affront to Judaism. Part of being a Christian was to expect to be treated by the Jews in just the same way as they had treated Jesus. The Sabbath was replaced with keeping the first day of the week for worship; the food laws were reduced by Paul's inspired teaching to parts of "the weak and beggarly elements". The Jewish hatred of the Christians is revealed by the riots that ensued when the Gospel was preached in the synagogues, and in the persecution of the Christians at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem, Damascus and in the Asian cities (according to the letters in Rev. 2,3). The insistence that Jewish converts be baptized would have been hard of acceptance; for Gentiles took just such a ritual bath when they converted to Judaism. For orthodox Jews to submit to baptism demanded a lot- for it implied they were not by birth part of the true Israel as they had once proudly thought. The Jews thought of Israel in the very terms which Paul applies to Jesus: "We Thy people whom Thou hast honoured and hast called the Firstborn and Only-Begotten, Near and Beloved One". The New Testament uses these titles to describe the Lord Jesus Christ- and we must be baptized into Him in order to be in His Name and titles. The Lord Jesus was thus portrayed as Israel idealized and personified, all that Israel the suffering servant should have been; thus only by baptism into Christ of Jew and Gentile could they become part of the true seed of Abraham, the Israel of God (Gal. 3:27-29). The act of baptism into Christ is no less radical for us in our contexts today than it was for first century Jews. All we once mentally held dear, we have to give up.

Gal. 3:27-29 explains that through baptism into the Abrahamic covenant, there is a special unity between all in that covenant. Slave and free, male and female, Jew and Gentile are all thereby united, as they were in the early church. David Bosch comments: "The revolutionary nature of the early Christian mission manifested itself, *inter alia*, in the new relationships that came into being in the community. Jew and Roman, Greek and barbarian, free and slave, rich and poor, woman and man, accepted one another as brothers and sisters. It was a movement without analogy, indeed a sociological impossibility". Likewise ecclesial life today can seem "a sociological impossibility", but through the power of the most basic facts of the Gospel preached to Abraham, this incredible unity is possible. As a nexus "without analogy", the true Christian community of itself ought to attract the attention of earnest men and women- just as the Lord predicted. Our unity should be the basis of our appeal to men. And yet our divided state is a tragic witness against us in this regard.

Because there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ means that in practice, amongst those that "have put on the new man [a reference to baptism into Christ]... there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman [clear allusion to Gal. 3:27-29]. But Christ is all, and in all. Put on *therefore*... a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another" (Col. 3:10-13 RV). *These things* are what the promises to Abraham are all about in practice! Because we are all now united in Christ in our status as Abraham's seed, *therefore* we must see to it that through kindness, patience etc. there really *is not* Jew and Greek, or division of any kind, between us.

3:29- see on Mt. 25:34.

Contrary to what is often claimed, Paul went out of his way to show that contemporary views of women were unacceptable for those in the Lord. His teaching in Gal. 3:27-29 that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male or female, is surely conscious allusion to the Jewish traditional morning prayer for men: "My God, I thank thee that I was not born a Gentile but a Jew, not a slave but a free man, not a woman but a man". He is surely saying that for those in Christ, the Jewish male world-view is unacceptable.

4:3 Paul says that the Galatians formerly lived as enslaved to the "elements of the cosmos" (Gal. 4:3), also a phrase used in the Jewish apostate writings; "what by nature are not gods" (*tois phusei mê ousin theois*; Gal. 4:8,9). They are "weak and powerless elements" (*ta asthenê kai ptocha stoicheia*; Gal. 4:9). The system of Satan, sinful Angels, demons etc. which the Jews believed in, Paul is showing to now be non-existent and at the best powerless. See on Col. 2:17.

4:6- see on Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Jude 20.

4:7- see on Mt. 25:34.

An advantage of reading versions that use "ye" and "thou" is that one can discern at a glance when 'you' plural and 'you' singular is being used. Gal. 3:26-29 speaks in the plural: "*Ye* are all the children of God by faith in Christ... and if *ye* be Christ's [by baptism into Him], then are *ye* Abraham's seed and heirs". The very same ideas are then repeated a few verses later, but with the singular 'you': "And because *ye* are sons... wherefore *thou* art no more a servant but a son; and if a son [not 'sons'], then an [singular] heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:6,7); and just to press the point home, he reverts to speaking of "you" [plural] in the subsequent verses. It's as if Paul is talking generally, in the plural, of us all as a baptized community, heirs together of the promises, all in covenant relationship with God; but then he as it were swirls in upon us each individually; these promises really apply to us each one personally. And the outcome of this must be a deep seated joy and gratitude for God's grace. The focus of Scripture and the Lord Jesus is upon individuals, not upon the building of a faceless and person-less social structure. Notice how often Paul talks of "you" or "ye", and then focuses down to "thee" or "thou"- from the you plural to the you singular. Take Gal. 4:6,7: "Your [plural] hearts... thou [singular] art..."; or "Ye [plural] are all sons of God... thou art... a son" (Gal. 3:26; 4:7 RV). It all comes down to us personally...

4:8 Paul challenges the Galatians: "You who were enslaved to those who were not really gods... How can you turn back again to those weak and beggarly spirits (*stoicheia*), whose slaves you want to be once more?" (Gal. 4:8,9). Here he parallels demonic spirits with 'gods who are not really gods'. But note how Paul argues [under Divine inspiration] – "*even if* there are" such demons / idols... *for us* there is to be only one God whom we fear and worship. This in fact is a continuation of the Psalmists' attitude. Time and again the gods / idols of the pagan nations are addressed *as if they exist*, but are ordered to bow down in shame before Yahweh of Israel (Ps. 29:1,2,10; 97:7). Whether they exist or not becomes irrelevant before the fact that they are powerless before the one true God – and therefore it is He whom we should fear, trusting that He alone engages with our lives for our eternal good in the end. "Yahweh is a great King above all gods" (Ps. 95:3) shows the Divine style – rather than overly stressing that the gods / idols / demons don't exist, the one true

God isn't so primitive. Neither were the authors and singers of Psalm 95. The greatness of His Kingship is what's focused upon – not the demerits and non-existence of other gods. To do so would be altogether too primitive for the one true God. And likewise with the Lord's miracles – God's gracious power to save was demonstrated, *this* was where the focus was; and its very magnitude shows the relative non-existence of 'demons'.

4:9- see on Gal. 1:1.

4:9,10 elements- the Greek for "elements" is always used concerning the elements of the Mosaic Law.

4:11 He feared he may have "laboured in vain" for some of them (Gal. 4:11), but he writes of his expectations in a totally positive way: "Christ hath redeemed us... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit [i.e. salvation]" (Gal. 3:13,14).

"I am afraid of you (i.e. what your position will result in for both you and me at the judgment?), lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:11).

4:12 The way Paul *begs* us to follow him (e.g. "I beseech you, be as I am", Gal. 4:12) indicates the degree of confidence he had in acceptance by his Lord, his certainty that his way to the Kingdom was valid (Surely he had been told this by some Divine revelation?). See on Phil. 1:10.

Paul plays powerfully upon the idea of the two selves when he appeals to the Galatians "be as I am; for I am as you are" (Gal. 4:12). At first hearing, this seems nonsensical- how can Paul beseech the Galatians to be like him, if he was already like them? Fact is, their behaviour was unlike him; yet he saw their spiritual selves as being like him. And he asks them to be that spiritual self which he perceived them to have. We likewise need to perceive our difficult brethren as having a spiritual self, which they need to live up to.

4:13 William Barclay comments: "Paul never saw a boat riding at anchor or moored at a quay but he wanted to board her and to preach the gospel to the lands beyond. He never saw a range of hills in the distance but he wanted to cross them and to preach the gospel to the lands beyond". When Paul was in Pamphylia, he decided to go on to Galatia, where on account of infirmity of the flesh he preached to the Galatians (Gal. 4:13). The suggestion has been made that the low-lying Pamphylia was a source of malaria, which may have been Paul's "thorn in the flesh", and he therefore sought the uplands of Galatia. And yet he could easily have returned to Antioch. But instead, he went on, up into the highlands, to spread the Gospel yet further. The way there led up precipitous roads to the plateau; the roads were cut by mountain streams, prone to flash floods which often carried travellers to their death. And these roads were the haunt of bandits, who would murder a man just for a copper coin. No wonder Mark went back. But as William Barclay observes, "the wonder is not so much that Mark went back as that Paul went on". Although a sick man, he was driven by that desire to spread the Gospel further. Surely this is why his Lord was so pleased to open the hearts of the Galatians to the Gospel. The way the Holy Spirit controlled Paul's missionary itineraries is an example of how mission work is almost purposefully made difficult at times. Thus Paul was forbidden to go north into Bithynia, and from going Southwest into coastal Asia Minor- and there were good roads leading to those places from where he was, and it would've seemed they were the logical places to go and expand the work of the Gospel. But instead Paul was told to go diagonally, cross country, through the rough roads and passes of central Asia Minor, to Troas- from where he was told to go to Macedonia. And on the way through that wild mountainous area, it seems Paul became sick (Gal. 4:13). And we follow similar paths in our witness, if it is truly God directed.

4:15- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

If we can rise up to all this, placarding forth the Lord's crucifixion sufferings in our lives, then there will be a power and credibility to our preaching which will be hard to resist. It was before the eyes

of the Galatians that they saw in Paul, Jesus Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1). But the only other reference to the eyes of the Galatians is in Gal. 4:15- where we read that they had been so transfixed by Paul's preaching that they had been ready to pluck out their eyes. And where's the only other reference to plucking out eyes? It's in the Lord's teaching, where He says that if our eye offends us, we should pluck it out [Mt. 5:29- same Greek words used]. The connection is surely this: Paul's personal reflection of the crucified Jesus was so powerful, so compellingly real and credible, that it motivated his hearers to rise up to the spirit of the very hardest demands of the moral teaching of that same Jesus. Insofar as we genuinely live out the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, our preaching of His radical moral demands will likewise be heeded. The crucified Christ that Paul placarded before their eyes was "the truth" (Gal. 3:1; 4:14-16); and the integrity and reality of that truth was confirmed by the congruence between the example of Paul, and the reality of the crucified Jesus whom he manifested to them. In Paul's body language, in his character, in his response to problems and frustrations great and small, in the way he coped with physical weakness, his audience somehow saw the crucified Christ. In the same letter, Paul reminds the Galatians how they had initially seen him preaching to them in a weak bodily state, and had seen Christ in him then (Gal. 4:13,14). He says in Gal. 3:1 that they saw Christ crucified in him. Perhaps the way Paul handled a sickness or bodily weakness which he then had, somehow reflected to his audience the spirit of Christ crucified.

4:16 Society and human existence was all about what others thought of you; appearances were all important, loss of face before your community was a fate worse than death, and the honour of your family or community was crucial. You had to be polite, say what was right in the ears of your hearers rather than what was true, never shame those in your 'group' by telling inconvenient truths, say what the others want to hear. Against this background, and it's a background not so strange for any of us today in essence, the commands to be truthful, even if it meant becoming the enemy of some because you told the truth (Gal. 4:16), take on a new challenge.

Gal. 3:1 remonstrates with the Galatians as to how they could not obey the truth when the crucified Christ had been so clearly displayed to them; clearly Paul saw obedience to the truth as obedience to the implications of the cross. There is a powerful parallel in Gal. 4:16: I am your enemy because I tell you the truth... you are enemies of the cross of Christ. Thus the parallel is made between the cross and the truth. We are sanctified by the truth (Jn. 17:19); but our sanctification is through cleansing in the Lord's blood. The same word is used of our sanctification through that blood (Heb. 9:13; 10:29; 13:12). Perhaps this is why Dan. 8:11,12 seems to describe the altar as "the truth". The cross of Jesus is the ultimate truth. There we see humanity for what we really are; there we see the real effect of sin. Yet above all, there we see the glorious reality of the fact that a Man with our nature overcame sin, and through His sacrifice we really can be forgiven the untruth of all our sin; and thus have a real, concrete, definite hope of the life eternal.

4:24-31 It can be argued that Paul's extended allegory in Gal. 4:24-31 about "Jerusalem which now is" has some reference to the Jewish Christian elders in Jerusalem who had made the deal with him about making the Gentile converts keep at least some of the Jewish laws. The heavenly Jerusalem which is "free" would then be a reference to the freedom Paul felt for his Gentile converts; and the persecution of those born after the spirit would then be a sideways reference to the trouble he was experiencing from the Jewish-Christian attacks upon him. Paul observes earlier that "I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto" (Gal. 3:15). His speaking humanly was perhaps because he was tongue in cheek alluding to the human covenant of Acts 15, to which he believed the Jewish Christian elders in Jerusalem had "added" by still demanding that Christian converts lived in a Jewish manner.

4:26 believed that "as the navel is found at the center of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the center of the world... Jerusalem is the center of the land of Israel, the temple is at center of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the center of the temple, the ark is at the center of the Holy of

Holies... which spot is the foundation of the world... the holy city... is also the mother city". This was all consciously countermanded in Hebrews, where each of these features of the temple is shown to have been surpassed in Christ; and it is the *Heavenly* Jerusalem which is now "the mother of us all" (Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26). And of course Gal. 4 drives home the point that it is the "Jerusalem which is above" which is the true Jerusalem, whereas the earthly Jerusalem and temple are in fact now to be associated with bondage and Abraham's illegitimate seed. This language of Hebrews and Galatians was just as tough on the Romans, who considered *Italia* as the "mother of all lands", and Rome to be the mother city.

4:27 Abraham's relationship with Hagar doesn't really sound like marriage. And yet she is called "she which hath an husband" (Gal. 4:27), as if God recognized the relationship even though it was less than ideal.

4:30 Paul warns that the Galatian Jews had suffered so much but in vain, seeing they were returning to the Law (Gal. 3:4). It is no accident that Gal. 4:25 draws the contrast between the two Jerusalems- perhaps a reference to the Jerusalem ecclesia, who had returned to the bondage of the law, and the spiritual Jerusalem. And now Paul goes so far as to say that the Legalists must be cast out of the true ecclesia (Gal. 4:30). Circumcision shielded from persecution in Galatia (Gal. 6:12) in that it was the Jews and their "false brethren" who infiltrated the ecclesias (Gal. 2:4), and who were responsible for the deaths of many of the first century apostles and prophets. This suggests that the circumcision party within the ecclesias was linked with the Roman and Jewish authorities, and therefore 'satan' is a term used for them all. It got beyond dirty politics in the church.

Sarah's screaming indignation can be well imagined. Consider which words were probably stressed most by her: "Cast out *this bondwoman* and her son: for the son of this bondwoman *shall not be heir* (just hear her voice!) with *my* son, even with *Isaac*" (Gen. 21:10). This is in harmony with her previous bitterness and aggression to Hagar and Abraham. Her attitude in implying that Ishmael was *not* the seed is gently rebuked by God in his subsequent words to Abraham concerning Ishmael: "He *is* thy seed" (Gen. 21:13). *And yet* Sarah's words are quoted in Gal. 4:30 as inspired Scripture! Here we see the wonder of the God with whom we deal, in the way in which He patiently bore with Sarah and Abraham. He saw through her anger, her jealousy, the pent up bitterness of a lifetime, and he saw her faith. And he worked through that screaming, angry woman to be His prophet. According to Gal. 4:30, God Himself spoke through her in those words, outlining a principle which has been true over the generations; that the son of the slave must be cast out, and that there must always be conflict between him and the true seed. Sarah in her time of child-birth is likened to us all as we enter the Kingdom, full of joy (Is. 54:1-4); and yet at that time she was eaten up with pride and joy that she could now triumph over her rival. And yet Sarah at that time is seen from a righteous perspective, in that she is a type of us as we enter the Kingdom. God's mercy to Sarah and Abraham is repeated to us daily. See on Heb. 11:11.

5:1- see on Gal. 5:11.

For freedom did Christ set us free (Gal. 5:1 RV). The new person, the essential you and me, is characterized by sudden, creative welling up to the Father's glory. "I am the life" (Jn. 11:25). This welling up of new life is a characteristic of true conversion. This is why the elderly, the infirm, the chronically shy, experience the flowering of the person, the sense of new life even in the face of the outward man perishing daily; because their inward man, their real self, is being so strongly infused with power (2 Cor. 4:16). This explains why the graph of spiritual growth in any person is not a smooth upward curve; it is a very jagged line. Our true person asserts itself in those moments of totally free choice to serve our Lord. But we so easily allow our lives to slip back into the automatisms which define our internet personas.

Romans 6 compares baptism to a change of masters. The point has been made that this is a reference to manumission, whereby a 'redeemer' gave a 'ransom' to a god, which meant that a slave was freed

from his master and became a free man, although he was counted as a slave to the god to whom the redeemer had paid the ransom. Indeed, *lutron*, one of the words translated "ransom" with regard to the blood of Christ, has this specific meaning. Deissmann comments: "When anybody heard the Greek word *lutron*, "ransom", in the first century, it was natural for him to think of the purchase money for manumitting slaves". This means that when we come to understand the atonement, we understand that the price has been paid to free us from slavery into the service of God. We are in the position of a slave who suddenly discovers some gracious benefactor has made the longed for payment of ransom. And so he goes free, but is willingly and eagerly in slavery to the god to whom his redeemer had paid the price. In our case this is none other than the One, Almighty God of Israel. And the ransom is the precious blood of Christ, which thereby compels our willing slavery to the new Master. There are other references to manumission in Gal. 5:1,13 RV: "For freedom did Christ set us free... ye have been called unto freedom" and in the references to our being bought with a price, i.e. the blood of Jesus (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). And this is the horror of 2 Pet. 2:1- "denying even the Master that bought them [out]". To turn against their gracious redeemer was the ultimate sick act for a slave freed through manumission. And this is the horror of turning away from the Lord. The death of Christ for us is thereby a warning to us of the end of sin and therefore the need to change.

The world, Paul told the Romans, seeks to push us into its mould (Rom. 12:2 J.B. Phillips). And this is increasingly true, as people crowded together catch the same bus each day to arrive at roughly the same time, reading the same newspapers, watching the same soap operas... automatic lives. Yet the real self created in the believer is ultimately *free*. For freedom did Christ set us free (Gal. 5:1 RV). The new person, the essential you and me, is characterized by sudden, creative welling up to the Father's glory. This doesn't mean that we have no habits- regular prayer, Bible study, meeting together etc. are all part of the new person.

The spirit of life in Christ sets us free from sin (Rom. 8:2); but Gal. 5:1 simply says that "Christ" has set us free [the same Greek phrase] from sin. The Man Christ Jesus is His "spirit of life"; the man and His way of life were in perfect congruence. They always were; for in Him the word was made flesh. There was 'truth' in His very person, in that the principles of the God of Truth were perfectly and totally lived out in His person and being. Back in 1964, Emil Brunner wrote a book, whose title speaks for itself: *Truth As Encounter*. Truth is essentially a person- the Lord Jesus. Truth is an experience, a way of life, a total assurance of forgiveness and salvation, a validation of the new man created within us, in a way so deep, and so strongly felt, that all else appears as falsehood compared to that surpassing 'truth'.

5:3 God uses language differently to how we do because He can read motives. Thus Galatians 5:3 says that "I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law". Paul and many other Jewish Christians were circumcised, but Paul is reasoning in the letter to the Galatians that the true Jewish believer was not under an obligation to keep the Law: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision" (Gal. 5:6). Therefore "every man that is circumcised" in Galatians 5:3 must mean 'every man who trusts in circumcision or wants to undergo it'. Some modern paraphrases support this, but the point is that what God actually said was that "every man that is circumcised... is a debtor to do the whole law" (see Greek text). Those words are just not true if taken out of context; we need to appreciate that God is speaking from the perspective of knowing men's motives.

5:4- see on Gal. 6:14.

5:6 "Faith is wrought by love" (Gal. 5:6 RVmg.) in that the fruits of the Spirit reinforce each other in an upward spiral. Faith leads to humility, and vice versa. Realizing we of ourselves are insufficient results in humility, which in turn develops faith. Hence Prov. 20:6 comments that a man of faith will not "proclaim his own goodness".

5:7 "Ye were running well; who did hinder you, that ye should not [keep on] obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7) suggests that obeying the Truth is not just in baptism; it is an ongoing motivation to keep running the race of practical life in Christ. See on 1 Pet. 1:22.

5:10 Recognizing others as being "in Christ" imparts an altogether higher quality to our relationships. The cynicism and negativity which we naturally bring to many inter-personal encounters is taken away by a deep recognition that our brethren are indeed in the Lord. Having noted that the Galatians did not any longer "believe the truth", Paul can say that he has "confidence to you-ward in the Lord" (Gal. 5:10 RV). Because they were "in the Lord", he could hope against all human indications, that they would indeed rise up to an imitation of the Lord in whom Paul believed them to be. And so we have to ask ourselves, whether we indeed have that "confidence" about others, because we know them to be "in the Lord"? Or do we judge them after the flesh...?

5:11- see on 1 Cor. 1:23; 9:17.

The more you read between the lines of Paul's letters, the more evident it is that his very own brethren almost unbelievably slandered him. Thus the Galatians whispered that Paul still preached circumcision (Gal. 5:11), probably basing that nasty rumour on the fact he had circumcised Timothy. See on 1 Tim. 5:19.

The cross is described as a *skandalon*, an offence (Gal. 5:11). Either we stumble (are offended) on it, or we stumble and are offended in the sense of spiritually falling away. Either we share the Lord's cross, shedding our blood with His "outside the gate" of this world; or we will share the condemnation of those whose blood is to be shed in destruction outside the city (Rev. 14:20). It's Golgotha now, or later. The cross makes men stumble; either falling on that stone and being broken into humility, or the uncommitted stumbling at the huge demand which the cross implies. Paul had all this in mind when he wrote of the lust / affections of the flesh (Gal. 5:1), using a word elsewhere translated "sufferings" in the context of Christ's cross. The sufferings, the lust, the cross of the flesh... or the cross of the Lord Jesus.

5:12 Galatians 5:12 contains a play on words which may seem quite inappropriate to us; so much so that many a Bible translator and expositor has had problems with it. The idea is that Paul wishes that the circumcision party would go further and fully emasculate themselves. This just isn't the way men would use language if they wrote the Bible uninspired by God. See on Lk. 17:37.

5:13- see on Jn. 8:32.

5:14 Mt. 5:17 = Gal. 5:14. Christ fulfilled the Law by His supreme love of His neighbour (us) as Himself.

The Old Covenant's command to love one's neighbour as oneself was in the context of life in Israel. One's "neighbour" referred to others belonging to the Covenant people; not to those in the 'world' of the surrounding nations. New Testament quotation of this command totally supports this view; under the New Covenant, we must love those *within the ecclesia* as we love ourselves (Gal. 5:14). 1 Cor. 6:1 (R.V.) speaks of brethren within the ecclesia as "neighbours". Again, this is not in itself proof that we should not give to (e.g.) famine relief. But it surely indicates that we are misguided in thinking that such action is fulfilling this command. However, there is copious evidence within the Law that Israel were to be considerate and concerned for the Gentile world around them. But there is no Biblical evidence that Israel preached a social Gospel to them.

To love one's neighbour as oneself is to fulfil the law (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:10); and yet the Lord's death was the supreme fulfilment of it (Mt. 5:18; Col. 2:14). Here was the definition of love for one's neighbour. Not a passing politeness and occasional seasonal gift, whilst secretly and essentially living the life of self-love and self-care; but the love and the death of the cross, for His neighbours as for Himself. In Him, in His time of dying, we see the definition of love, the fulfilment of the justice and unassuming kindness and thought for others which was taught in the Mosaic Law.

And we through bearing one another's burdens, through bearing with their moral and intellectual and spiritual failures, must likewise fulfil the law, in a voluntary laying down of our lives for each other (Gal. 6:2). And in this, as with the Lord, will be our personal salvation.

5:15 The surrounding world with whom they will then be associated will destroy themselves, brother against brother (Zech. 14:13); and they will have a part in this destruction. If we bite and devour each other, we may be consumed by each other (Gal. 5:15)- this is the same idea of brethren killing brethren. Israel were condemned to destruction by brother being dashed against brother (Jer. 13:14). Indeed, biting and devouring each other is a quotation from Is. 9:19,20 LXX (although not apparent in the AV), where Israel in their judgment for unfaithfulness would bite and devour each others' bodies in the siege. Paul is saying that if we bite and devour each other with our words (and we are all guilty of this at times), we are acting as the condemned. If we do this, we may well be consumed of each other- and this *may* have a terribly literal fulfillment, in that as the world destroys every man his neighbour in the confusion of the last day, so the rejected may do the same, living out the bigotry and passive anger they felt towards each other in their ecclesial life. This all needs some meditation. For there are very few of us not caught up in some division, personality clash, biting or devouring.

5:16 If we walk in the spirit (another way of describing the spiritual 'way of life') we will not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). The Galatians found that their flesh lusted against the spirit to the extent that they just couldn't do the things they knew they should- because they were not led of the spirit, they were still under law (Gal. 5:18). They didn't have a spiritual way of life, instead they were just trying to keep certain specific commandments, and they found they just couldn't live a victorious spiritual life. They didn't give their hearts to the things of the Truth, and so their spirit couldn't give rise to love, joy, peace, patience- the fruits of the spiritual life.

Paul expressed his concept of the 'upward' and 'downward' spirals in two words: "the spirit" and "the flesh". "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (this doesn't mean the Spiritual believer won't sin; but he won't be on the downward spiral at the same time as he's on the upward spiral). For (in some of the early believers in Galatia) the flesh lusteth against the Spirit... and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye (weak believers) cannot do the things that ye would (this isn't a sympathetic lament from Paul, because of what follows:). But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law... they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (i.e. they shouldn't have been experiencing the "lust" between the flesh and spirit which they were). If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk (live each moment) in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16-25). It is apparent that in the early church, there were those who had slid back from the upward spiral (life in "the Spirit") to the downward spiral of "the flesh". The tragedy is that mainstream Christianity today has so morally retreated that it effectively teaches that the way of "the flesh", this downward spiral of justifying sexual immorality as acceptable, is in fact the way of the "Spirit", in that they believe that their newfound moral 'freedom' is part of a more mature spiritual level which they have reached.

5:18 There are clear parallels between Col. 3:16 and Gal. 5:18,19: "Let the **word of Christ** dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord... but be **filled with the Spirit**; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". Clearly the *Word of Christ* is equated with being "*filled with the Spirit*".

5:19 The greatest barrier against grace is our own psychology of works; our belief that even what is good about us, in our character and in our deeds, is a result of our own unaided effort. Not for nothing does Paul contrast the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:19,23). As William Barclay noted: "A work is something which a man produces for himself; a fruit is something which is produced by a power which he does not possess. Man cannot make a fruit". It's

because of this that works are so glorified in society; it's why the elderly and weak are somehow despised because they're not 'productive' of 'works'. Grace therefore cuts right across the way our rationalistic society, whether Marxist or capitalist, worships productivity. Our tendency to value, indeed to worship, human works leads to great frustration with ourselves. Only by realizing the extent of grace can we become free from this. So many struggle with accepting unfulfilment- coping with loss, with the fact we didn't make as good a job of something as we wanted, be it raising our kids or the website we work on or the book we write or the room we decorated... And as death approaches, this sense becomes stronger and more urgent. Young people tend to think that it's only a matter of time before they sort it out and achieve. But that time never comes. It's only by surrendering to grace, abandoning the trust in and glorying in our own works, that we can come to accept the uncompleted and unfulfilled in our lives, and to smile at those things and know that of course, I can never 'do' or achieve enough.

The works of the flesh are already manifest (Gal. 5:19)- although they will be manifested again at the day of judgment (Lk. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:13). The children of God and of the devil in the ecclesia are already manifest, in a sense (1 Jn. 3:10). See on Gal. 6:4.

5:20 Gal. 5:20,21 lists anger and divisiveness along with adultery and witchcraft- as all being sins which will exclude from the Kingdom. Indeed, the list in Gal. 5:19,20 seems to be in progressive order, as if one sin leads to another, and the final folly is division between brethren. See on 1 Cor. 11:18.

5:22 *Faith*- The influence of continually hearing *God's* word should be that *our* words are likewise truthful and trustworthy. The fact that the Bible as God's word is true has implications for our own truthfulness. *Pistos* is listed as a fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5; but the idea it can carry is not so much of faith in the sense of belief, but of faithfulness, loyalty, reliability, utter dependability. If this is how God's words are to us, then this is how we and our words should be to others.

5:22-26 The description of love in 1 Cor. 13, the outline of the fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-26, these are all portraits of the man Christ Jesus. The clearest witness to Him "therefore consists in human life in which his image is reproduced".

5:24 One of the major themes of Galatians is the need to leave the Law. "You have been called unto liberty... for all the Law is fulfilled... this I say then (therefore), Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit... so that you cannot do the things that you would". It was because of the Law being impossible for sinful man to keep that it was impossible to obey it as one would like. "But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the Law". This seems to clinch the association between the Law and the flesh (Gal. 5:13-18). The same contrast between the Spirit and the Law/flesh is seen in Rom. 8:2-3: "The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law (of Moses / sin) could not do...". The Law indirectly encouraged the "works of the flesh" listed in Gal. 5:19-21, shown in practice by the Jews becoming more morally degenerate than even the Canaanite nations, and calling forth Paul's expose of how renegade Israel were in Romans 1. Gal. 5:24-25 implies that in the same way as Jesus crucified the Law (Col. 2:14) by His death on the cross, so the early church should crucify the Law and the passions it generated by its specific denial of so many fleshly desires: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections (AV mg. "passions") and lusts". This seems to connect with Rom. 7:5: "When we were in the flesh the motions (same Greek word, 'affections' as in Gal. 5:24) of sins, which were by the Law, did work in our members". "When we were in the flesh" seems to refer to 'While we were under the Law'. For Paul implies he is no longer 'in the flesh', which he was if 'the flesh' only refers to human nature.

5:25 If we have God's spirit within us, we will keep in step with His spirit (Gal. 5:25 Gk.- an allusion to Ezekiel's vision of the wheels of the cherubim on earth being in step with the Angel-cherubim above them). Our spirit bears witness with God's Spirit- we know that our way of life is in

harmony with Him, our spirit is His, and thereby we know that we are His children and united with the eternal life and now eternal spirit of His Son (Rom. 8:16). The way of life we live in Christ is an eternal life, an eternal spirit; in this sense we are living the eternal life, the life we will eternally live. This is how crucially important it is to be living the truth as a way of life. Go through your life and see how you can construct this ambience within it.

6:2 If we understand 'the law of Christ' in the same sense as 'the law of Moses' then we have missed the crucial message that is in Christ; we have merely exchanged one legal code for another. His is a spirit of grace which specifically, legally demands nothing and yet by the same token demands our all. And so in all our living and thinking, we must constantly be asking 'What would Jesus do? Is this the way of God's Spirit? Is this how the law of love teaches me to act?'. To live the life of the Spirit, to construct in daily living an ambience of spiritual life, is therefore a binding law. Living according to the spirit / mind / example of Jesus will mean that we naturally find the answers to some of the practical dilemmas which may arise in our lives.

6:2-4 Self-examination brings us face to face with our essential loneliness in a healthy way: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:2-4). It is possible to have rejoicing in ourselves alone when we know we have a clear conscience before the Father. But this can only come through being genuinely in touch with oneself; the person who is subsumed within an organization, who is totally co-dependent rather than an individual freely standing before the Father... such a person can never reach this level of self-knowledge. The N.I.V. says: "Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else". We are treading a terrible tightrope here, between the deadly sin of pride on the one side, and the sin of devaluing our own God-formed personality on the other. Only a person in touch with him or herself can have the rejoicing or pride in one's clear conscience [cleansed, of course, by grace in Christ] of which Paul speaks here. Paul seems to have in mind the words of Job when he speaks of how he will in the very end behold God with his own eyes, "and not another" (Job 19:27).

6:4 Not only are we to perceive the value of others, but of ourselves too. Gal. 5:26; 6:4 RV make the point that we shouldn't be desirous of *vainglory*, but of "his glorying in regard of himself alone". Secured in Christ, justified in Him, we can even glory in who we are in His eyes. We can be so sure of His acceptance of us that there is such a thing as "the glorying of our hope" (Heb. 3:6)- all ours to explore and experience.

Whilst it may be hard to believe, Gal. 6: 4 says that we can prove / judge our own works, and thus have rejoicing in ourselves. Although self-examination is fraught with problems, and even our conscience can be deceptive at times (1 Cor. 4:4), there is a sense in which we can judge / discern ourselves now. We can judge brethren and find them blameless (1 Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:6,7)- all the language of the future judgment (1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22). We cannot personally condemn them, but we can judge their behaviour against the judgments of God as revealed in the word. Some know the judgments of God against certain sins, and yet still do them, in the blindness of human nature (Rom. 1:32). Israel chose to be oblivious of what they well knew; there was no (awareness of) God's judgment in their way of life (Is. 59:8; Jer. 5:4) and therefore they lacked that innate sense of judgment to come which they ought to have had, as surely as the stork knows the coming time for her migration (Jer. 8:7). Judas knew in advance of judgment day that he was condemned (Mt. 27:3).

Whilst it may be hard to believe, Gal. 6: 4 says that we can prove / judge our own works, and thus have rejoicing in ourselves. Although self-examination is fraught with problems, and even our conscience can be deceptive at times (1 Cor. 4:4), there is a sense in which we can judge / discern ourselves now.

6:5 By our words we will be justified or condemned. The false prophets were judged according to their words: "Every man's word shall be his burden" at the day of Babylonian judgment (Jer. 23:36).

Gal. 6:5 alludes here in saying that at the judgment, every man shall bear his own burden- i.e., that of his own words.

6:6 Even though some may be shepherds, they are still sheep; and they are leading others after the Lord Jesus, "the chief shepherd", not after themselves. And they should remember that Gal. 6:6 requires "him that is taught in the word" to share back his knowledge with his teacher. This is possibly the meaning behind the enigmatic Eph. 3:10- the converts of the church declare the wisdom of God to the 'principalities and powers in the heavenlies', phrases elsewhere used about the eldership of the church. The shepherd is to learn from his sheep- a concept totally out of step with the concept of leadership in 1st and 21st centuries alike. The flock isn't *theirs*; it is their Lord's. Any who teach others are themselves disciples, learners at the feet of the Master. It is simply so that some have more ability to organise than others; the Lord spoke of how each believer is given differing amounts of talent to use in His service. But before God, we are one in Christ.

6:7 Having spoken for six verses concerning our responsibilities for others in the ecclesia, Paul makes a statement which we would sooner apply to gross immorality than laziness to serve each other: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men..." (Gal. 6:7-10). Paul's sober warning is in the context of not loving and serving our brethren. To have an indifferent, irresponsible attitude to them *is to sow to the flesh*. Each of us, therefore, must live up to our serious responsibilities for each other if we are to sow to the Spirit.

Knowing the terror of the Lord at the judgment, knowing that Christ will come, Paul sought to use this to persuade men, including the believers at Corinth, to quit their sloppy attitude to God's Truth. Properly apprehending the reality of judgment to come makes us see the eye of the tiger, grasp the real issues of spiritual life, see the real essence of cross carrying Christianity. We will *believe* that whatever we sow, that we will reap (Gal. 6:7,8); and we will therefore live accordingly.

6:7,8 Gal.6:7,8 concerning sowing to the flesh is alluding to Eliphaz's description of Job in Job 4:8. However, the same passage also has connections with Job 13:9, where Job accuses the friends of mocking God. Gal.6 is saying that those who show themselves to be outwardly wise (v.3), "making a fair show in the flesh (constraining) you to be circumcised" (v.12), are mocking God. Thus the sweet-talking Judaizers infiltrating the believers in Galatia correspond to both Job and the friends.

6:10 They belonged to house churches, which were part of the *patria* of God (Eph. 3:15). They belonged to another household, a household which they perceived by faith- the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). No wonder Celsus complained that Christianity led its followers into rebellion against the heads of households. Doubtless he was exaggerating, but the idea of having another head of house, another *patria*, was indeed obnoxious to a slave owning society. This is why the language of slavery permeates so much of the New Testament letters; for according to Christianity's critics, it was largely a slave, female religion to start with. And of course, the unity between slave women and free women in the house churches was amazing; it cut across all accepted social boundaries of separation. The *Martyrdom Of Perpetua And Felicitas* tells the story of how a Christian mistress (Perpetua) and a slave girl (Felicitas) are thrown together into the nets to be devoured by wild animals, standing together as they faced death. This was the kind of unity which converted the world.

There was to be now the "household of faith" (Gal. 6:10), with people from all the 'other' groups now to be accepted as 'brother' and 'sister', which meant denying the natural ties to your family in the way that surrounding society expected- for to them, loyalty must be to family above all else. Denying this and putting our bonding with Christ and *His* family first was indeed equivalent to self-crucifixion (Mk. 8:34).

6:11- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

6:12- see on Gal. 4:30.

6:13 Galatians 6 warns those who think themselves to be something spiritually that they are nothing, deceiving themselves (v.13), and that by having such an attitude they are sowing to the flesh, and will reap corruption (v.8). Eliphaz interprets Job's downfall as an example of "they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4:8). The conscious connection between these passages again shows that Job was seen as a type of the Jewish, self-righteous, often Judaist-influenced, members of the ecclesia (Gal. 6:13).

6:14

The Shame And Glory Of The Cross

His death was *so that* He might deliver us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4); because of the Lord's crucifixion, Paul saw himself as crucified unto the world, and the world unto him (Gal. 6:14). The Lord Jesus looked out across the no man's land between the stake and the crowd; He faced the world which crucified Him. We simply *cannot* side with them. To not separate from them is to make the cross in vain for us; for He died to deliver us out of this present world. The pull of the world is insidious; and only sober reflection upon the cross will finally deliver us from it. It's a terrifying thought, that we can make the power of the cross invalid. It really is so, for Paul warned that preaching the Gospel with wisdom of words would make "the cross of Christ... of none effect" (1 Cor. 1:17). The effect of the cross, the power of it to save, is limited in its extent by our manner of preaching of it. And we can make "Christ", i.e. His cross, of "none effect" by trusting to our works rather than accepting the gracious salvation which He achieved (Gal. 5:4).

The life of self-crucifixion, daily carrying a stake of wood to the place where we will be nailed to it and left to die a tortuous death...day by day living in the intensity of a criminal's 'last walk' to his death; how radical and how demanding this really is can easily be lost upon us. And it can be overlooked how totally unacceptable was the idea of dying on a cross in the context of the first century. In Roman thought, the cross was something shocking; the very word 'cross' was repugnant to them. It was something only for slaves. Consider the following writings from the period.

- Cicero wrote: "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but... the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man... your honours [i.e. Roman citizenship] protect a man from... the *terror of the cross*".

- Seneca the Elder in the *Controversiae* records where a master's daughter marries a slave, and she is described as having become related to *cruciarum*, 'the crucified'. Thus 'the crucified' was used by metonymy for slaves. The father of the girl is taunted: "If you want to find your son-in-law's relatives, **go to the cross**". It is hard for us to appreciate how slaves were seen as less than human in that society. There was a stigma and revulsion attached to the cross.

- Juvenal in his 6th *Satire* records how a wife ordered her husband: "Crucify this slave". "But what crime worthy of death has he committed?" asks the husband, "no delay can be too long when a man's life is at stake". She replies: "What a fool you are! Do you call a slave a man?".

The sense of shame attached to the cross was also there in Jewish perception of it. Whoever was hung on a tree was seen as having been cursed by God (Dt. 21:23). Justin Martyr, in *Dialogue with Trypho*, records Trypho (who was a Jew) objecting to Christianity: "We are aware that the Christ must suffer... but that he had to be *crucified*, that he had to die a death of such shame and dishonour- a death cursed by the Law- prove this to us, for we are totally unable to receive it". Justin Martyr in his *Apology* further records: "They say that our madness consists in the fact that we place a *crucified* man in second place after the eternal God". The Romans also mocked the idea of

following a crucified man. One caricature shows a crucified person with an ass's head. The ass was a symbol of servitude [note how the Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass]. The caption sarcastically says: "Alexamenos worships God".

Yet with this background, "the preaching of the cross" won many converts in the first century. "The Jews require a sign and the Greeks [Gentiles, e.g. Romans] seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:22,23). Paul exalts that Christ "became obedient to death- even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:8 NIV). Those brethren and sisters must have endured countless taunts, and many times must have reflected about changing their message. But the historical reality of the crucifixion, the eternal and weighty importance of the doctrine of the atonement, as we might express it today... this was of itself an imperative to preach it. We cannot change our message because it is apparently unattractive. The NT suggests that the cross was not just something shocking and terrible, but a victory, a triumph over sin and death which should be gloried in and thereby preached to the world in joy and hope (Gal. 6:14). We may look at the world around us and decide that really, there is no way at all our message will convert anyone. We are preaching something so radically different from their world-view. But the preaching of a crucified King and Saviour in the first century was just as radical- and that world was turned upside down by that message! People *are* potentially willing to respond, even though in the stream of faces waiting for transport or passing along a busy street, we might not think so. It will be our simple and unashamed witness which will be used by the Father to convert them; we needn't worry about making our message acceptable to them. There was nothing acceptable in the message of the cross in the first century- it was bizarre, repulsive and obnoxious. But the fact men and women gave their lives to take it throughout the known world shows the power of conviction which it has. And that same power is in the Gospel which we possess. If we believe it rather than merely know it, we will do the same with it.

6:16 The fact we are new creations should be the *rule* by which we live (Gal. 6:16). The reality that we are new beings means that we have to learn how to live all over again.

6:17 All through his life and witness, Paul was aware of how he had rebelled against his Lord. He wrote that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. He seems to be alluding to the practice of branding runaway slaves who had been caught with the letter F in their forehead, for *fugitivus*. His whole thinking was dominated by this awareness that like Jonah he had sought to run, and yet had by grace been received into his Master's service. Paul could conclude by saying that he bore in his body [perhaps an idiom for his life, cp. the 'broken body' of the Lord we remember] the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus. He was so clearly a slave belonging to the Lord Jesus that it was as if one could see the marks of the nails in his body. Hence all the connections Paul makes in his letters between the suffering servant / slave prophecies, and his own experience.

EPHESIANS

1:3 He wishes us to be like Him, to have *His* Spirit. In this sense, through having the spirit of Jesus, He comes and lives in the hearts of those who accept Him (Rom. 8:1-26; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20). There is a resultant joy in the heart of the convert after baptism, as a result of the Lord's work (1 Thess. 1:6). To this end, He blesses us with all the varied blessings of His Spirit (Eph. 1:3 Gk.).

1:4 Pre-eminently, our love of the brotherhood will be the basis upon which we find acceptance, and in this lies the reason why the life of love is a living out of an acceptance before the Lord now. If we live in love, we are right now holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4). "Before Him" is the language of judgment day (Mt. 25:32; Lk. 21:36; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:28; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5); and being holy and blameless before Him is exactly how we will be at the judgment seat (Jude 24). Yet right now, he who lives in love, a love unpretended and unfeigned, lives in the blamelessness and holiness of his Lord, whose righteousness is imputed to him. Paul so loved his Thessalonian brethren that he joyed "for your sakes before our God" (1 Thess. 3:9). "Before our God" is very much the language of judgment day; and he had earlier reflected: "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye *are* [right now] our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19,20). They were in this life his joy, as he lived out his life "before our God" and they would be again in the day of judgment.

Not only are paragraph and chapter breaks sometimes misleading, verse breaks can be too. Inserting punctuation into translation of Hebrew and Greek texts is very difficult. Thus Eph. 1:4,5 in the AV reads: "...that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us". Shift the colon and another emphasis is apparent: "...that we should be holy and without blame before him: in love having predestinated us". When stuck with a 'difficult' verse (and they all are in some ways!), don't be afraid to try re-jigging the punctuation a bit.

1:5 An understanding of predestination helps us towards true humility and appreciation of grace. This is the very context in which Paul introduces the idea in Romans; he wished his readers to appreciate grace by reflecting upon how predestination involves something far over and above anything we could 'do' or 'be' in our own rights. Further, Paul speaks of predestination in Eph. 1:5,6, and says that it is a sign of God's grace- and thus we are "predestinated... to the praise of the glory of His grace". Predestination also brings with it an appreciation of grace, and real praise for it. Predestination by grace doesn't motivate to lethargy and fatalism- if it's properly understood. When the Lord speaks of how we have been chosen, above and beyond any effort on our part, He goes on to teach that exactly because of this, we have a responsibility to produce fruit, to pray, to love one another (Jn. 15:16,17). Despite predestination, there are countless thousands of freewill decisions for us to make each day. Try to bear that in mind some mornings as you wake up. Whatever situation we're in, life takes on an excitement and meaning and challenge. The simple fact of predestination, of having been chosen by grace, should radically inspire us in every one of those freewill decisions. The true Biblical idea of predestination mustn't be confused with non-Biblical ones. The Romans, Greeks, Egyptians etc. all believed that they had been elected by the gods, predestined to be the special race that alone had true connection with the divine... but they assumed this predestination was because of their natural superiority. Biblical predestination is radically different- that the weak are chosen and the strong rejected, not because they are smart, beautiful, hard working, successful, lucky... but exactly because they are weak and just who they are. This is the grace of true predestination. And it's so wonderful that nobody can be passive to it. On this very basis, Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their differences because their names were written in the book of life (Phil. 4:2,3). That book was written from the foundation of the world, and the fact our names are written in it is a reference to the concept of predestination. This reality means that in practice we simply shouldn't be at loggerheads with others who share in that same grace of predestination!

1:6- see on Lk. 1:28.

1:7- see on Acts 20:28.

1:8 Eph. 1:8 speaks of “the riches of his grace, which He lavished on us”. God has been extravagant with His grace. And in dealing with those whom we consider to be hard, spiteful and unreasonable towards us in the brotherhood, we have the ideal opportunity to reflect such grace. It hurt God, to an extent we cannot fathom, to lavish that grace upon us in the death of the cross. And of course it must hurt us to show it to others. In the same way as we seem unable to focus our attention for very long on the ultimate issues of life, so we find it difficult to believe the extent of God's grace. He is extravagant with His grace- God “lavishes” grace upon us (Eph. 1:8). The covenant God made with Abraham was similar in style to covenants made between men at that time; and yet there was a glaring difference. Abraham was not required to do anything or take upon himself any obligations. Circumcision [cp. baptism] was to remember that this covenant of grace had been made. It isn't part of the covenant [thus we are under this same new, Abrahamic covenant, but don't require circumcision]. Perhaps this was why Yahweh but not Abraham passed between the pieces, whereas usually both parties would do so. The promises to Abraham are pure, pure grace

1:9,10 God's great desire is that all His people should be one. Eph. 1:9,10 makes it seem that God's subsequent desire to unify us and the Angels is a bigger part of His ultimate purpose than we often recognize: "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which he hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven (Angels) and which are on earth (us)". Isaiah 48 in describing the fullness of the new creation has the same idea- "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spanned the Heavens: when I call unto them they stand up together... they are created now and not from the beginning (i. e. a new creation)" (v. 13,7). When the "call" goes forth, Angels and saints will "stand up"-i. e. be glorified- together.

1:10- see on Col. 1:20.

1:11- see on Mt. 25:34.

We are God's portion / inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29; Eph. 1:18), and He is our inheritance (Ps. 16:5,6; 73:26; Lam. 3:22-24; Eph. 1:11 RV); we inherit each other.

1:12 Eph. 1:11 speaks of how we “have obtained an inheritance” through being “in Christ”. This is just another way of expressing the great truth of Gal. 3:27-29- that through baptism into Christ, we receive the promise of the inheritance promised to Abraham. But Paul continues in Eph. 1:12: “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in [Gk. ‘into’- through baptism] Christ”. The fact we are in Christ by baptism and thus have the Abrahamic promises leads to praise of God's grace. Yet we will only achieve this if we firmly grasp the real, pointed relevance of the promises to us; that we who are baptized are each one truly and absolutely in Christ, and the promises apply to *me* personally.

1:13 At our baptism we became "in Christ". Through that act we obeyed all the Lord's invitations to believe "in Him", or as the Greek means, to believe *into* Him. We believed *into* Him after we heard the Gospel, by baptism (Eph. 1:13). We are now connected with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; we are treated by God as if we are His Son.

1:15

Compare the following passages:

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Is. 62:6,7)

with

“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (Eph. 1:15-17).

The ideas of praying without ceasing and making mention occur in both passages. Surely Paul had the Isaiah passage in mind. It seems that he saw the ecclesia as the spiritual Zion. In the same way as Zion’s watchmen were exhorted to pray for her without ceasing until the Kingdom is established there, so Paul prayed for the spiritual growth of his brethren. The implication is surely that once a certain level of spirituality had been achieved, then the Lord will return to establish His Kingdom. When the harvest is ripe, then the sickle is put in. Jn. 17:23 speaks of how the church will “be perfected into one” (RV), as if this process is ongoing and comes to a finality at the Lord’s return. This is an urgent imperative to unity amongst us- and yet as these [apparently] “last days” wear on, we become increasingly *dis*united. This ought to be a true worry to us.

Paul heard of the spiritual development of the Ephesians (1:15-19), therefore he prayed that God would grant them more knowledge and understanding (v.16,17). The dynamic in this Divine confirmation of their freewill effort was God’s Spirit power. Paul repeats the prayer in Eph. 3:14-21: “...be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that... (ye) may be able to comprehend... to know... to be filled with all the fullness of God”. It is thus by God’s Spirit word acting on our “inner man” that this greater comprehension of our glorious calling is achieved. He tells them later to be “renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. 4:23), alluding to the Ezekiel passages which speak not only of Israel making themselves a new heart / spirit / mind, but of *God* giving this to them (Ez. 18:11; 36:26), in confirmation of their efforts. There are examples galore of God acting on the minds of men to give them a certain attitude which they would not otherwise have had (consider how He gave Saul another heart, or gave Israel favour in the eyes of the Egyptians so that they lent to them, Ex. 12:36).

1:16 One practical caveat needs to be mentioned in the context of praying for others. It is all too easy to slip into the habit (and slipping into bad prayer habits surely dogs every prayerful man) of reeling off a list of names each night, something like “Dear Father, be with David, and please be with the children, and with Sister Smith, and with Karen, and with...”. There’s nothing in itself wrong with this. But over time, it can become a kind of incantation, with us fearful that this evening we let one of those names slip. Paul writes often that he “makes mention” or ‘remembers’ his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the “memorial” of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 6:15; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar (Lev. 6:12,13). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man’s labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father. This is a high standard to keep up.

1:17- see on Jn. 6:27.

1:18 Our eyes have been enlightened, now we see (Eph. 1:18; 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9). And yet in many ways we are blind spiritually. We see through a glass “darkly” (Gk. ‘enigmatically’; 1 Cor. 13:12). The things of the Spirit are largely enigmas to us. Therefore Paul prays that his Ephesians would have “the eyes of their understanding” progressively enlightened, even though they had already been turned from darkness to light (Eph. 1:17,18). The disciples had been turned from darkness to light, but the Lord rebuked them for their blindness in not expecting His resurrection.

1:20- see on Eph. 3:9,10.

The Jews strongly believed that Satan had authority over the old / current age. Their writings speak of the rulers, powers, authorities, dominions etc. of this present age as all being within the supposed system of Satan and his various demons / Angels in Heaven. In Eph. 1:20–22 Paul says that Christ

is now “above every ruler (*archê*), authority (*exousia*), power (*dunamis*) and dominion (*kuriotês*) and any name that can be named not only in this age but the age to come... All things have been put in subjection under his feet”. Paul’s teaching that no spiritual being can oppose the exalted Christ. He’s using the very terms used in the Jewish writings for the rulers, powers etc. of Satan’s supposed system. So when in 2 Cor. 4:4 Paul speaks of Satan as “the god of this age”, he’s not necessarily claiming that this is now the case – rather is he merely quoting from the well known Jewish belief about this.

1:22 The body of Christ, the ecclesia, is one form of the personal self-revelation of the person of the Lord Jesus. We don’t only and solely receive His self-revelation through accepting dogma or doctrine. It comes to us also through the way He mediates His personality to us, His self-revelation, through His body. His fullness is to be found in the church, His body- He fills “all [believers / members of the church] in all” (Eph. 1:22,23). I take this to mean that the fullness of His personal character, person, spirit, truth... is to be found in His body on earth, i.e. the community of believers. Each of them manifest a different aspect of Him. Thus “you may all [not just the elders] be prophets in turn [i.e. not just one ‘pastor’ doing all the teaching] so that all may get knowledge and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:31 BBE). This is the Biblical “unity of the spirit”- whereby the body of Jesus reveals Him consistently, as a unity, thus binding together all who share that same one spirit of Christ. This is the way to unity- not enforcing intellectual assent to dogmatic propositions.

All things were put under the Lord’s feet because of His exaltation (Eph. 1:22); but now we see not yet all things put under Him (Heb. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). The “all things” matches with Col. 1:18 speaking of the Lord being placed over the church. We are the “all things”. The great commission has the same thought sequence- because of the Lord’s exaltation, therefore we must go and tell all men and bring them into subjection to the exalted Christ. In prospect His body is “all in all” (Eph. 1:23), but the “all in all” phase will only be realized in practice at the end of the Millennium (1 Cor. 15:28). It is for us to grasp the height of His exaltation and the fact that it means that potentially, all men, all of existence, is under Him. And then we respond to this by going out and seeking to bring all men under Him.

1:23 There is a clear connection between this idea of the fullness of God, and Ex. 34:6, where God proclaims His Name to be “Yahweh, a God *full* of compassion”, grace and His other characteristics (see R.V.). So by bearing God’s Name, we have His fullness counted to us. As Christ had the fullness of God dwelling in Him in a bodily form (Col. 2:9), so the church, as the body of Christ, “*is* (Christ’s) body, the fullness of him (God) that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22,23). So you see the intensity of our unity; we *are* the very body of Christ, He exists in and through us (although of course He still has a separate personality). Likewise, the *fullness* of God is in Christ and thereby in us. We are not just one part of God’s interest, our salvation is not just one of His many hobbies, as it were. He only has one beloved Son; He was sent to this earth for *our* salvation. The fullness of God, even though we scarcely begin to comprehend it, dwelt fully in Christ, and is counted to us. We really should have a sense of wonder, real wonder, at the greatness of our calling. See on Eph. 3:19.

Eph.1:23 describes the church as “His body, the fullness of Him (God?) that filleth all in all”. Thus we are “*the*” fullness of God and Christ. “We beheld His glory..full of grace and truth (alluding to Ex. 34).. and of His fullness have all we received” (John 1:14,16). The word “filleth” in Eph.1:23 is the same as ‘complete’ in Col.2:9,10: “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are *complete* in Him”. Christ is filled with God’s fullness of the righteous attributes of glory, and in Christ we are also filled. Seeing that we are the body of Christ it follows that the ecclesia in toto manifest the fulness of Christ’s and therefore God’s glory, through each of us manifesting a slightly different aspect of God’s glorious character to perfection. Thus Peter reasons that the quicker the ecclesia spiritually develops, manifesting those attributes, the earlier Christ can return (2 Pet.3:11-15). See on Phil. 1:11.

The body of Christ is His "fullness" through which He fills us all (Eph. 1:23). I take this to mean that each member of the body of Christ manifests something unique about Jesus, so that between us, we show all of Christ to the world- e.g. one may reveal His patience, another His zeal, etc. By limiting our definition of the body of Christ, we limit our perception and experience of Him; and thus we limit the extent we are filled with His fullness if we refuse to accept that which every member of the body supplies to us in order that we might grow up in Him (Eph. 4:16).

God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28), through the full expression of His Name. But Eph. 1:23 says that right now, all the fullness of God fills "all in all" in the church; in other words we should now be experiencing something of that total unity which will then be physically manifest throughout all creation.

2 Ephesians 2 has many allusions to the LXX of Isaiah: :1= 57:4; :12 "no hope"= 56:10; :2=57:5; :14=57:19; :5=57:10 (RV) ;:19= 56:1; :6= 57:15; :21= 56:7; :12= 56:7; :19=56:6 (RV) ;:22= 57:15.

2:2 Ephesians 2:2 speaks of "the prince of the power of the air". This clearly alludes to the mythological concepts of Zoroaster – the kind of thing which Paul's readers once believed. Paul says that they once lived under "the prince of the power of the air". In the same verse, Paul defines this as "the spirit (attitude of mind) that... works" in the natural man. Previously they had believed in the pagan concept of a heavenly spirit-prince; now Paul makes the point that actually the power which they were formally subject to was that of their own evil mind. Thus the pagan idea is alluded to and spoken of, without specifically rebuking it, whilst showing the truth concerning sin.

The Prince of the Air

Comments

1. The words "Satan" and "Devil" do not occur here.
2. "Walking", v. 2, (i.e. living) according to the prince of the power of the air, is defined in v. 3 as living according to the lust of our fleshly mind. The "lusts of our flesh" come from within us (Mk. 7:21–23; James 1:14) not from anything outside of us.
3. "The power of the air" is clearly a figurative expression – "the prince" probably is also.
4. "The prince" is "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience". The spirit frequently refers to an attitude of mind (e.g. Dt. 2:30; Prov. 25:28; Is. 54:6; 61:3; Ez. 18:31; Mk.14:38; Lk. 2:40; 2 Cor. 2:13; 12:18; Eph. 4:23). This is confirmed by v. 3 – such peoples' lives are controlled by "fulfilling the lusts of our flesh (which come from our heart – James 1:14), fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind". Fleshly people do not allow their lives to be controlled by a physical "prince" outside of them, but by following their fleshly desires which are internal to their minds. A physical being cannot exist as a "spirit" in the sense of an intangible essence. A spirit does not have flesh and bones, i.e. a physical body (Lk. 24:39); therefore because "the prince" is a "spirit", this must be a figurative expression, rather than referring to a physical being. The "spirit" or attitude of mind is a figurative prince, as sin is a figurative paymaster (Rom. 6:23).
5. This passage (and v. 11) speaks of their former Gentile lives. 1 Pet. 4:3 speaks of life before conversion as: "In the time past we wrought the will of the Gentiles... we walked in *lusts*". Their own flesh was their "prince". Thus walking according to the prince of the air (v.2) is parallel with walking in the flesh (v. 11). The more common antithesis to walking in spirit is walking after the *flesh* – here termed "the course of this world".

6. George Lamsa, a native speaker of Aramaic, understands “the prince of the power of the air” to be the dynamic equivalent of the Arabic / Aramaic *resh shultana*, which he claims would’ve been understood as meaning simply ‘the head of the government’, with no intended reference to the literal air ⁽¹⁾.

7. Athanasius argued that the death of Jesus cleansed the air where the demons / fallen angels now live, and therefore physically opened up a way for [supposed] immortal souls to find a way into Heaven ⁽²⁾. Not only was all this unBiblical, it reflects a literalism which reduces God to a being hopelessly bound by physicality. In short, this kind of thinking arose from a basic lack of faith in God as the Almighty, who doesn’t need to build bridges over problems which men have created for Him in their own minds. It should be noted that the idea of saying “Bless you!” when someone sneezes derives from Athanasius’ idea that demons can become so small that they enter a person from the literal air. This is what happens if we insist that the Devil was thrown out of heaven and some of his angels are still in the literal air – it’s literalism gone wrong.

Suggested Explanations

1. Verse 1 says that “you” – the faithful at Ephesus – were dead in sins. Verses 2 and 3 then express the reason for this in four parallel ways:

- (a) “...you walked according to the course of this world”
- (b) “...according to the prince of the power of the air”
- (c) “...the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience”
- (d) “...were by nature the children of wrath”.

The “whole world lays in wickedness (1 Jn. 5:19). “The children of disobedience” show this by their lives “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (vv. 1,3). Thus “the prince of the power of the air” is our evil, fleshly mind, i.e. the real Devil.

2. There are many links between Ephesians and Colossians. One of the clearest is between these verses and Colossians 3:3–7. Colossians 3:3 speaks of us having died to sin as Ephesians 2:1 does. Verses 5–7 amplify what are “the lusts of the flesh” which “the children of disobedience” fulfil:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which you also walked some time, when you walked in them”. These things of v. 5 are “the works of the flesh” mentioned in Galatians 5:19. These things come from within us, not from anything outside (Mk. 7:21–23). Therefore the prince of the power of the air, which causes these things, is again defined as our evil desires.

3. “The air” normally refers to the literal air around us which we breathe. It is a different word to that translated “air” in the sense of the heavens, e.g. “the birds of the air” (Lk. 9:58). The seven angels of Revelation 16 pour out their vials on people in various parts of the earth in preparation for the establishment of God’s Kingdom. “The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air” (Rev. 16:17) because his work affected the whole of the earth; it is as a result of this vial that the Kingdom of God is established on the earth and the kingdoms of men are ended. Thus the “power of the air” is a phrase which figuratively refers to a power which has influence over the people of the whole earth – and the power of sin, the fleshly mind, is worldwide.

Notes

(1) George Lamsa, *New Testament Light* (San Francisco Harper & Row) p. 248.

(2) See Nathan K. Ng, *The Spirituality of Athanasius* (Bern: Lang, 2001).

2:3 We don't sense enough, perhaps, that this world is not just passively disinterested in God. All outside of Christ are active enemies towards Him, subjects of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3,15). This isn't how we tend to see the world around us. But to the first century believer, it was clearly so. The greatness of the gulf that divides was clearly felt. Our world is (overall) more tolerant than it has ever been; but let's not forget that the ruling powers are 'satan', an embodiment of the flesh. All around is subtly articulated enmity against true spirituality and the cause of Christ. The more we see that, the more we will realise how close we are to each other who are the other side of the great divide, "in Christ" along with us. What differences of emphasis and personality there may be between us we will more naturally overlook.

The world is therefore seen by God as actively sinful. For the man who does not accept salvation in Christ, "the wrath of God *abideth* on him" (Jn. 3:36)- it isn't lifted. We are therefore subject to the wrath of God until baptism (Eph. 2:3). It doesn't seem or feel like this. And yet God experiences this sense of anger with sin, albeit unexpressed to human eyes.

2:5 We who were dead in sins were "quickened together with Christ" (Eph. 2:5). If we believe in Christ Jesus' resurrection, we will therefore repent, confess our sins and know His forgiveness. Thus believing in His raising and making confession of sin are bracketed together in Rom. 10:9,10, as both being essential in gaining salvation.

2:6 We died, rose and in a spiritual sense even *ascended* with Him to heavenly places in Him, and even *sit with Him there* (Eph. 2:6).

Our difficulty in believing 'we will be there' is perhaps related to our difficulty in believing that in prospect, we 'are there' right now, through being "in Christ". This most basic truth, that we are "in Christ" through baptism, carries with it very challenging implications. We are well familiar with Paul's reasoning in Romans 6, that through being immersed in water at baptism, we share in the Lord's death and resurrection. As He rose from the dead, so we rise from the waters of baptism. But what happened to Him next? He ascended to Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God in glory. And each of those stages is true of us right now. Let Paul explain in Eph. 2:6: "He hath raised us up together [Strong: 'to rouse [from death] in company with'], and made us sit together [i.e. Christ and us] in heavenly places in Christ". We are now in 'the heavenlies'; and not only so, but we *sit together* there with Christ. And He now sits upon His throne of glory. Even now we in a sense sit with Him in His Heavenly throne, even though in another sense this is a future thing we await (Lk. 22:30; Rev. 3:21). No wonder Paul goes on to make a profound comment: "That in the ages to come [the aions of future eternity], He might show [Gk.- to indicate by words or act] the exceeding riches of his grace [which was shown through] his kindness toward us through Christ". Throughout the ages of eternity, God will demonstrate to others [the mortal population of the Millennium, and perhaps other future creations] how pure and wonderful His grace was to us in the few brief years of this life- in that, He will demonstrate, He counted us *right now in our mortality* as having resurrected, ascended to Heaven, and reigning / sitting with Christ in glory. The wonder of what we are experiencing now, the height of our present position, is something that will be marvelled at throughout eternity as an expression of God's grace and kindness. And we will be the living witnesses to it. And we can start that witness right now.

So often does Paul speak of life "in Christ". We become "in Christ" by entering into the body of Christ by baptism; yet the "body of Christ" refers to the body of believers. A fair case can be made for interpreting Paul's phrase "in Christ" as very often having some reference to life in the community of believers. "In Christ" appears to be often a shorthand way of saying "in the body of Christ". It's because we are of "the same body" that we are sharers in all that is "in Christ" - whatever is true of Him becomes true of us. If He is the seed of Abraham, then so we are we, etc. (Eph. 3:6; Gal. 3:27-29). Salvation was "given *us* in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:9) as a community, just as Israel were saved as a body, "the body of Moses", when they were baptized at the Red Sea. This

is why we usually read about "you" plural as being "in Christ", rather than of an individual alone being "in Christ". *We* were created "in Christ" (Eph. 2:10); "*all you* that are in Christ" (1 Pet. 5:14); *you* are now *all* made near "in Christ" (Eph. 2:13); *we* are in heavenly places "*together...* in Christ" (Eph. 2:6); *all* God's children are gathered *together in one* "in Christ" (Eph. 1:10; Gal. 3:28). God's whole purpose is "in Christ" (Eph. 3:11); His plan to save us was through our joining a community, the body of Christ, headed up in the person of Jesus. It can't really be so, therefore, that a believer can live "in Christ" with no association with the rest of the body of Christ. This is how important fellowship is

2:7 Just as God must've 'thought out' His wonderful plan of lavishing grace upon us [for 'the word' existed first and then 'became flesh'], we too will need to take time to think out our plans for showing grace and the 'Wow!' factor to others. Eph. 2:5-8 speaks of God working with us now, so that He can lavish His grace upon us for eternity. This is what He is all about. And it's what we should be all about; taking a Divine joy in forgiving, being generous, caring, showing grace.

2:8 Time and again, faith and works are bracketted together. Abraham was justified by faith, Paul argues in Romans; and by works, says James. Even within Genesis, his faith was counted for righteousness in Gen. 15:6; but Gen. 22:15-18 stress that because he had "done this thing" and been obedient, thereby was he justified. The Centurion meekly said to the Lord: "I am not worthy... neither thought I myself worthy"; but his *faith*, not his humility [as *we* might have expected] was commended by the Lord. That faith brought forth humility; just as John's letters see faith and love as parallel. The woman who washed the Lord's feet was likewise commended for her 'faith', although her actions were surely acts of devotion. But the Lord's analysis cut through to the essence that lay behind them: faith. There is a beauty to all this, in that salvation is by faith that it might be by grace (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8). And therefore Hab. 2:4 says that living by faith is the antithesis of being proud. The life of faith, trusting thereby in grace, is a life of humility. All the fruits of the Spirit thereby come together. In this sense, salvation is not by works. But if we can comprehend something of the purity of that grace, of God's willingness to save us regardless of our works; then we will *believe* it. And if we believe it, we will live a life of active and humble *working* for the Lord, not that we might be saved, but in thankful faith and gratitude for the magnitude of our experience of a grace, the height and depth of which, unfathomed, no man knows. We will "live", i.e. work through life, by faith (Hab. 2:4). If we truly accept God's ways, then we will walk in them; to not walk in them is to reject them (Ez. 5:6). This ultimately is the importance of doctrine.

2:11 The first century unity between Jew and Gentile must have been especially impressive. Philo records of Jamnia: "There lived a mixed population, the majority of them Jews but the rest a number of foreigners who had nested there as vermin from neighbouring territories". And there are many other such references to the bitter hatred between them. This "enmity" between them was taken away for those who were in Christ (Eph. 2:11; Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28). It must have made a startling and arresting witness. And yet sadly, it didn't continue; the old tensions and feelings rent apart that unity.

2:12 How hard it would be for Roman citizens, or those who aspired to it, to realize that the highest honour was to be part of "the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12), that pokey, undeveloped, despised corner of the great Roman empire. And the call of Christ to middle class 21st century citizens is just as radical.

2:14 The offerer put his hand on the head of the animal, thereby associating himself with it. In a sense, the animal therefore represented the offerer. But it had to be "without blemish" (Lev. 3:1), and to produce a "sweet savour" when burnt (Lev. 3:16). But how are we to offer ourselves as an unblemished sacrifice? We are surely each aware of our desperate sinfulness. The answer is in the fact that the language of the peace offering sacrifice is applied to Jesus. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), our peace offering by metonymy (in the same way as Christ was made "sin" for us, i.e. a sin offering). He is the unblemished animal (1 Pet. 1:19), and if we are in Christ, we too will be counted

as being without spot and blemish (Eph. 5:27). We ought to know whether we are in Christ. If we are, we will be seen by God as just as pure as He is. See on Eph. 5:2.

2:15- see on Lk. 11:22; Heb. 2:14.

Paul uses the fact that we are all "in Christ" as the basis of His appeal for true unity amongst the believers- with all the patience, forbearing etc. which this involves. By baptism into Christ, we are baptized into the same body of Christ as many others (Rom. 12:5). Therefore we "sit together... in Christ" (Eph. 2:6; 1:10). He has made in Himself one new man, so making peace between all those in Him (Eph. 2:15). This is why division between those in Christ is ultimately an impossibility. Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:10).

The body of Christ *is* Christ; the members of that body between them reflect every aspect of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:15,16). We may each be given a different aspect to reflect, and groups of believers in different historical periods may have been focused on different aspects, but the end result is that at the second coming, the body of believers will have reflected Christ fully.

We were redeemed in one body by the cross; and *therefore*, Paul reasons, we are "*fellowcitizens* with [*all*] the saints, and of [*all*] the household of God... in whom *all* the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded *together* for an habitation of God" (Eph. 2:16-22). Christ died for all of us in the one body, and therefore we who benefit from this are built up *together* into a temple in which God will eternally dwell. To refuse fellowship to other stones of the temple is surely a denial that they are part of that one body which was redeemed by the cross. He died to make us all one, to abolish all that humanly might keep us apart, "for to make in himself one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:13-15). To uphold division and disharmony within the "one new man" is well nigh a blasphemy against the body and blood of the Lord. From the Lord's pierced side came His bride, after the pattern of Eve from Adam, through the blood (memorial meeting?) and water (baptism?). The creation of the one body was a direct result of His death. The Greek word for "fellowship", *koinonia*, is used outside the New Testament to refer to peoples' joint sharing of a common property. We are "in fellowship" with each other by reason of our relation to a greater whole in which we have a part. And that 'property', the greater whole, is the person and work of the Lord Jesus- for our fellowship is "in Him". This background of the word shows that it's inappropriate to claim to have 'withdrawn fellowship' from anyone who is in Christ. They are joint sharers in Christ just as much as we are- so we cannot tell them that they don't share *koinonia* with us. To say that is to judge either them or ourselves to be not sharing in Christ- and according to the Lord's plain teaching, any such judgment will lead to our condemnation. It is the Lord's body, His work, and He invites who He wishes to have *koinonia* in Him. It's not for us to claim that *we* have withdrawn fellowship from anyone who has *koinonia* in Him.

2:16 Reconciliation with our separated brethren can be achieved; because potentially the enmity is slain, we are already reconciled in one body by the cross (Eph. 2:16). It's for us to live this out in practice. We can move away from the tribal, jungle mentality that 'my enemy's friend is my enemy' - if we see and believe how God loves them too as His dear children.

The Lord Jesus reconciled all true believers unto God "in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). All who are reconciled by the Lord's sacrifice are therefore in the one body, and therefore we have a duty to fellowship with others in the one body. If we refuse to do this, we in some way attempt to nullify the aim of the cross. He died in the way that He did in order that the love which He had showed might be manifested between us (Jn. 17:26). To break apart the body is to undo the work of the cross.

2:17 He could remind the Ephesians that Christ personally "came and preached peace to you" after His resurrection (Eph. 2:17 RV), when it was in fact Paul who did this, motivated as he was by the resurrection of Christ.

2:19 The Romans allowed the existence of the autonomous *politeia*, the city-state, so long as within its religion it featured the worship of the Emperor. And yet the NT writers speak of the ecclesia as a city which is independent, defiantly devoted to the worship of the one and only true God (Eph. 2:19; 3:20; Heb. 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 21). The writers must have nervously penned those inspired words, knowing the problems it would create. The Spirit of God could have chosen not to so directly challenge this world; and yet there is a chasmic difference between the community of God and the surrounding world, which the New Testament unashamedly triumphs in. The whole basis of this radical separation is the fact that Christ died for us. He died to unite us who believe in what the NT terms "*the unity*", without seeking to further define it (Jn. 11:52; 17:23; Eph. 1:10; 2:14; 4:3). We were reconciled to each other as well as to God "in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). His death unites us in that standing before His cross, all our pettiness disappears, and we are impressed again with the reality that if He so laid down His life for us, so we must lay down our lives for the brethren (1 Jn. 3:16). It really and truly is a case of one for all, and all for one.

2:21 Solomon built the temple of stone already prepared (1 Kings 6:7); Christ is the builder of the spiritual temple, in which the stones should fit together without strife (Eph. 2:21 alludes to 1 Kings 6:7).

3:1 Understanding the way Paul breaks off into another theme and then resumes is the key to understanding some of the more difficult passages in his writings: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare [*his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say*] at this time his righteousness" (Rom. 3:25,26). "For this cause I, Paul [*the prisoner of Jesus Christ...* there is a parenthesis of 13 verses, then he resumes: *For this cause*] I bow my knees" (Eph. 3:1,14). "But if I live in the flesh [*this is the fruit of my labour...nevertheless to abide in the flesh*] (this) is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22-24).

3:2- See on Eph. 4:7.

3:3 God's ways are described as a secret, a mystery; the Hebrew word used in this connection means 'A confidential plan revealed to intimate friends'; and yet they are revealed to the true believers (Am. 3:7-8; Jer. 23: 18,22 AV mg.; Ps. 25:14; Eph. 3:3-6). Therefore the congregation of true believers is called "the secret assembly of the saints" (Ps. 89:7 Heb.).

3:7 In Ephesians he coins a word to emphasise his humble status in contrast to the honour of being a preacher: "To me, who am the very least (*elachistotero*) of all the saints, is this grace given, to preach to the Gentiles" (Eph. 3:7). He was a preacher despite the fact he was chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15); only through mercy / forgiveness had he received the commission he had (2 Cor. 4:1).

3:8- see on 1 Tim. 1:16.

Paul felt he was "less than the least" of all saints, that he would be the least in the Kingdom (Eph. 3:8). He uses a closely related word to that used by John when he spoke of how he must "decrease" (Jn. 3:30). It was as if he felt like John at his most 'decreased', in prison at Machaerus, fearing death; and remember that Paul wrote Ephesians from prison too. But John was weak in prison; he doubted (momentarily) whether Jesus was the Messiah, "him that should come" (Lk. 7:19). Yet Paul seems to allude to this when he says that "he that shall come will come" (Heb. 10:37)- as if to say 'John, my hero, you had your weak moments too, but I've tried to learn the lesson from them'.

3:9 *All men*- see on Mt. 20:27.

3:9,10 It even appears that the Angels learn and increase their knowledge from watching our response to what knowledge they have already revealed to us. "Principalities and powers" is a phrase apposite to the Angels and it is clearly used regarding the Angels who gave the Law in Col 2:15. Eph. 3:9,10 makes the amazing statement: "To make all (both Angels and Christians- A. V. "Men" is not in the original) see what is the fellowship of the mystery (that both Jews and Gentiles can be saved), which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God (and therefore from the

Angels too)... to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the ecclesia the manifold wisdom of God". We share the heavenlies with the Angels- and in any case, why cannot 'the heavenlies' refer to literal Heaven also in a sense? As Christ was resurrected and ascended to literal Heaven, the Heavenlies of Eph. 1:20, so we are baptized and spiritually ascend to Heaven straight afterwards (Eph. 1:20). The principalities and powers to whom the mystery was made known cannot be the human rulers of the world- 1 Cor. 2:7,8,14 are conclusive on this score: "We speak the wisdom of God (cp. Eph. 1 "the manifold wisdom of God") in a mystery (cp. "the mystery... which hath been hid" in Eph. 1)... which none of the princes of this world knew (principalities and powers!)... the natural man (i. e. the princes of this world) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God (the "mystery" of v. 7), for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned". Because Angels control world rulers, "principalities and powers" can refer both to them and the Angels behind them.

3:10- see on Gal. 6:6.

"(God's) intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known" (Eph. 3:10). The church is the body of Christ; He is manifest only through us. We are Him, in that sense. Our bodies are members of His body (1 Cor. 6:15). All that we do, in word and deed, is in the Name of the Lord Jesus- i.e. as representing Him whose Name we called upon ourselves in baptism (Col. 3:17). We are the words of His epistle to both the world and the brotherhood; He has no other face or legs or arms than us (2 Cor. 3:3). We can thereby limit Him.

3:11 The unity in Christ, this fellowship between the redeemed which the cross enabled, had been God's original intention. The mystery of His will, His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, was that "in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). Thus the unity of the redeemed is not just an incidental product of our redemption and unity in Christ; it was the essential intention and goal of God from the beginning of the world, and was only revealed through the unity achieved by the cross (Eph. 3:9,10). This was His "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11). These passages in Ephesians need meditation; for it is easy to underestimate the tremendous emphasis given to how the mysterious unity of the body of believers, *together* glorifying His Name, was so *fundamentally* and *eternally* God's main purpose. And so Paul marvelled that *he* had been chosen to plainly reveal this, God's finest and most essential mystery, to all men; for it was not revealed at all in the OT, nor even (at least, not directly) by the Lord Jesus. And we may likewise marvel that we have a living part in it.

3:12 The "boldness" with which we come before the "throne of grace" right now, is the "boldness" with which we will come before that same throne at the final day of judgment (Heb. 4:16; Eph. 3:12 cp. 1 Jn. 4:17).

3:13- see on Lk. 18:1.

3:14- see on Eph. 1:15.

3:15 Paul chooses to use the word *patria* to describe the new "family in heaven and earth" to which we belong in Christ (Eph. 3:15). The word *patria* is defined by Strong as meaning "a group of families" that comprise a nation [s.w. Acts 3:25 "all kindreds of the earth"]. The various family units / house churches comprised the overall body of Christ, the nation of the new Israel. Eph. 3:15 takes on a new meaning in the light of the house-church nature of early Christianity. God is the *pater* [father- the head of the house] from whom every home [*patria*] in heaven and on earth is named". We're invited to see God as a family God, with us as "the household of God" (Eph. 2:19; 3:15). See on Acts 8:3; Col. 1:20.

To be aware of who Yahweh is, of the characteristics outlined in Ex. 34:5-7 that comprise His Name... this must surely affect *our* behaviour, seeing we bear that Name. It is an understanding of the Name that inspires our faith in forgiveness. "Though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many" (Jer. 14:7,9,21). The Name is called upon us in

baptism (Jer. 14:9 = Eph. 3:15), and this is why we urge men to be baptized into the Name to wash away their sins. See on Heb. 13:15.

3:17- see on Lk. 6:48.

If we are “rooted and grounded in love”, then we come to appreciate yet more “the love of Christ” (Eph. 3:17,18).

3:18 We cannot sit passively before the cross of the Lord. That “love of Christ” there passes our human knowledge, and yet our hearts can be opened, as Paul prayed, that we might know the length, breadth and height of it. The crucified Son of God was the full representation of God. The love of Christ was shown in His cross; and through the Spirit's enlightenment we can *know* the height, length, breadth of that love (Eph. 3:18,19). But this passage in Ephesians is building on Job 11:7-9: “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea”. The purpose of the connection is to show that through appreciating the love of Christ, unknowable to the unenlightened mind, we see the Almighty unto perfection, in a way which the Old Testament believers were unable to do. It was as high as Heaven, and what could they do? And yet it must be confessed that we do not in practice attain to such fullness of knowledge and vision. We look to the Kingdom, one of the excellencies of which will be the full grasp of the Almighty unto perfection, as manifest in the death of His Son. All we *now* know is that that cross was the fullness of God, it was “the Almighty unto perfection”. But then, we shall know, we shall find it out. And yet, paradoxically, in some sense even now we can *know* “the love of Christ” [a phrase often used about the cross] that *passes* human knowledge. Speaking of His upcoming death, the Lord warned that where he was going, the disciples could not then follow; but they would, afterwards. This doesn't necessarily mean they too were to die the death of the cross. Rather could it mean that they later would enter into what His death really meant; then they would see with some understanding, rather than run away from the vision of the cross. And for us, one of the Kingdom's riches will likewise be that we shall then understand that final climactic act the more fully. Yet we begin that discovery now.

God has more spiritual culture, for want of a better way of putting it, than to describe the love of Christ just with a string of superlative adjectives. Paul prayed that his Ephesians would be strengthened by the Spirit's working in the inner man, so that they would “be strong to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:18,19 RV). There is a paradox here; to know something that can't be known, that passes knowledge. We can only know that love by God working on our inner man, so that we realize the experience we have of the love of Christ, and by seeing it manifested in others.

3:19 It is surely apparent that it would be pointless to pray for our brethren if in fact those prayers have no power at all, and if ultimately we are all responsible for our own spiritual path. There is in all this an incredible and most urgent imperative. This is why Paul bowed his knees in prayer for the Ephesians, knowing that his words could really increase and enrich the quality of their relationship with God, if not their very salvation (Eph. 3:14-19). If my prayers can influence your eternal destiny, if they can lead you from condemnation to the eternity of God's Kingdom: then I must, if I have any gram of love and care within me, dedicate myself to prayer for you. And you, likewise, for me. Prayer for others' spiritual well-being becomes no longer something which is ‘tacked on’ to our tired, repetitious evening prayers.

All the fullness of God dwelt in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9); and of his fullness have *all* we received” (Jn. 1:16). God's fullness, the full extent of His character, dwelt in Christ, and through His Name which speaks fully of that character, that fullness of Christ is reckoned to us. And so, in line with all this, Eph. 3:19 makes the amazing statement. And it is amazing. We can *now* “be filled with *all* the

fullness of God". Let's underline that, really underline it, in our hearts. We can be *filled* with *all* the fullness of God. Filled with all the fullness of God's character. See on Eph. 1:23.

3:20 Answers to prayer are described as "great and mighty things, which you know not" (Jer. 33:3)- i.e. the very nature of answered prayer is that it is above all we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). It leads to a sense of wonderment with this God with whom we are in relationship. And answered prayer is indeed part and parcel of a living relationship with the Father and Son.

4:3- see on Jn. 17:23.

4:4 The order of things in the list of essential doctrines in Eph. 4:4-6 is marvellous: "One body" (us) comes first, and "One God" comes last. Behold here the humility of God.

4:5 It is possible to discern within the NT letters the beginnings of a body of teaching about moral behaviour. The same outline themes are discernible in Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and James:

Theme	Colossians	Ephesians	James	1 Peter
The new birth [baptism]	2:12	4:4-6	1:18	1:23
The things of the old life that must be left behind	3:9	4:22	1:21	2:1
The image of God and Jesus; the new life that must be put on	1:19	4:24	1:18	2:21
The theme of submission to Jesus as Lord of our lives	3:18	5:22	4:7	2:13; 5:19
Exhortation to stand strong against temptation / the 'devil'	4:12	6:11	4:7	5:8,9
Watch and pray, endure to the end	4:2	6:18	5:16	4:7

4:7 When Paul speaks of the stewardship of God's grace given to him (Eph. 3:2 RVmg.), he is alluding to the parable of the talents (see on Mt. 25:15). He saw the talents as the amount of grace shown, and for him, he knew this to amount to many talents; and he invested them, in response, through the preaching of the Gospel. And he carries on the allusion in Eph. 4:7, speaking of how unto every one of us Christ has given a gift, namely, grace.

4:8- see on 1 Cor. 15:28.

4:10 Paul's description of Christ 'ascending up far above all heavens' (Eph. 4:10) seems to be rooted in his vivid re-living and imagining of the scene in Lk. 24:51, where the record says that Christ was "parted from them, and carried up".

The risen Lord has filled "all things" with His spirituality, "the whole universe", i.e. the believers (Eph. 3:19; 4:10 NIV). This is based on God's attitude in the OT; that Israel were His people, His 'world', and the other nations were "not a people"; effectively, they weren't people, in God's eyes (Dt. 32:21). Is this Biblical evidence for a social Gospel? These words are true of all those who are out of covenant relationship with Him, including those who have fallen away. Thus Elisha told the

apostate king of Israel: "Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, *I would not look toward thee, nor see thee*" (2 Kings 3:14).

4:11- see on Lk. 11:22.

4:12 The ability to lead is only given in order to prepare the congregation for acts of service themselves (Eph. 4:12). "Christianity was no slick imitation of existing ecclesiastical organisations. It made no attempt to set up a hierarchy modelled on previously existing institutions. It preferred *diakonia*, lowly service, to the grandiose ideas of the Gentiles".

4:13- see on Heb. 2:10.

Eph. 4:12,13 speaks of how the body of Christ is built up until we come to "the unity [or, unanimity] of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". I understand this to be describing how the body of believers is progressively educated, matured, built up, until finally at the Lord's return we are all brought to be like Christ, to know Him fully, and to "the unity of the faith". The implication would therefore be that there will never be total understanding of "the faith" in its fullness, nor will there be "unanimity" amongst us on every point as a body, until the Lord is back.

Eph. 4:13 parallels the knowledge of the Son of God with "the unity of the faith". To know the one faith is to know Christ as a person. He *is* the essence of the one faith. Academic knowledge of a series of theological propositions in a 'statement of faith', no matter how accurate their formulation may be, is still not the same as 'knowing Christ'. To perceive those doctrines as they really are, to know the unity, the sum of the one faith, is to know Christ as a person and come to "the fullness of Christ". The *unity* of the faith thus parallels the *fullness* of Christ. Those doctrines as propositions are a means to an end; and unless that is perceived they are little worth. So very often men have argued over those propositions, and in their argument have revealed that they really 'don't get it'- they simply don't know Christ as a person. They got caught up on the means rather than perceiving the end- which is to know the Son of God.

4:14 Judah was condemned to being tossed to and fro (2 Chron. 29:8 RV; Is. 54:11); and yet the spiritually unstable also allow themselves to be tossed to and fro (Eph. 4:14; James 1:6), and thereby they effectively live out their condemnation now, ahead of the gnashing of teeth which awaits them. The type of natural Israel being rejected in the wilderness must be instructive as to the position of those who are the "goats" of spiritual Israel.

In Eph. 4:14,15, the point is made that because we are not blown around with every wind of doctrine, therefore we deal truly in love (RVmg.). Truthfulness with each other within the one body of Christ is related to our having known and deeply believed the truth of God. The implication is also that by speaking and preaching truth, we "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ", who is "the Truth" in every way. Notice how Eph. 4 stresses the need for true doctrine because this is related to truthfulness with each other; if we are not tossed to and fro by false doctrines, then we will speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:14,15); "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus... wherefore [because of this] put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" in the one body of Christ (Eph. 4:21,25).

4:15 Having true doctrine is related to "speaking the truth", "dealing truly" (Eph. 4:13-15 RVmg.) with each other- as if the sensitive, heartfelt preaching of truth should result in our own truthfulness. English does not have a verb "to truth," but Paul uses such a verb when he urges the Ephesians that " 'truthing' in love" they should grow in Christ in all things (Eph 4:15). We might understand this as "speaking the truth in love," but more probably we should see truth as a quality of action as well as of speech. Paul wants his converts to live the truth as well as to speak it. Real spiritual growth is only possible by a way of life that 'truths it'.

The state of perfection in the Kingdom is described as us (the complete church of all ages) having reached, "a perfect man... the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", having grown up into Christ, who is the head of the body (Eph. 4:13,15). When Christ comes, we will each individually be made ruler over *all* that He has (Mt. 24:47), we will each individually be fully righteous, fully manifesting the Lord Jesus. There seems to be marked connection with the fact (brought out in the parable of the talents) that we will each have *all* the Master's goods, and the description in the next parable of those goods being distributed between us in this life (Mt. 24:47; 25:15). In the Kingdom we will no longer know partially, as a result of seeing parts of the whole picture; we will see face to face (1 Cor. 13:9,12 Gk.). See on Lk. 19:13.

4:16 Each member of the body contributes to the overall strength and health of the body. No member can say they do not need the others. The body "makes increase of itself" and builds itself up in love, strengthened by the nourishment mediated by the other members (Eph. 4:16). There *is* therefore strength and power from outside of ourselves within the body of Christ. Tragically, the body of believers is perceived by many sinners to be judgmental, shaming, not understanding etc. The builder of God's house is ultimately God, the builder of all (Heb. 11:10). We are God's building (1 Cor. 2:9). But we are also Christ's building, in that God has delegated this work to Him. And yet we build each other up (Rom. 14:19; 15:2), Paul was a master-builder (1 Cor. 3:10), the body builds itself up (Eph. 4:16). As God has delegated the building to Christ, so He has delegated it to us. The Ephesians were built up on the foundations of the apostles' work- not that they are the foundation, for no other foundation can there be except Christ (Eph. 2:20 cp. 1 Cor. 3:11). The building up of those early brethren was on account of the work of the apostles. They were the foundation, they were 'Christ' to those brethren and converts. Hence they are called the foundation, whereas Christ is the only foundation. This is how far His work has been delegated to us. Without the work of the apostles, if they had been lazy or spiritually selfish, there would have been no Ephesus ecclesia, nor spirituality within it. Quite simply, we *are* a function of the efforts our brethren and sisters make to build us up. See on Col. 2:19.

The various parts of the one body *supply* strength to the rest of us (Eph. 4:16). But the very same Greek word rendered "supply" occurs in the Phil. 1:19, about the *supply* of the spirit of Jesus Christ. How does He *supply* our need and strengthen us? Through the very human members of the one body. Which is why we so desperately need them, and to walk away from them, reasoning that they 'give nothing', is in a sense to turn away from the supply of the spirit of Jesus.

Cyprian taught that "Whatever and whatsoever kind of man he is, he is not a Christian who is not in Christ's church... he cannot have God for his Father who has not the church for his mother". And Church membership depended upon "submission to the bishop... rebellion against him is rebellion against God... the schismatic, however correct his doctrine or virtuous his life, renounces Christ and bears arms against the church". Individual spirituality and correctness of faith meant nothing; obedience to the leaders was paramount. Cyprian even went so far as to say that "the church is founded on the bishops... held together by the glue of the mutual cohesion of the bishops". This is a glaring contradiction with the Biblical emphasis upon Christ as the only foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), and the body being held together on account of being "in Him", compacted and built up by what "every joint supplies" (Eph. 4:16). This shift from the internal, the spiritual, to the external and visible, the perception of Christianity as a human organization we belong to, has been seen in the lives of many individual Christians, churches, denominations, groups etc. over time. The warning is for us to remain disciples of the Lord Jesus, following Him as it were around Galilee, focused upon Him alone, and finding the unity with others doing the same which will naturally follow.

"The whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16 NIV). In the context, Paul is demonstrating the necessity of Jew and Gentile to work together in the ecclesia; they couldn't just run parallel ecclesial lives, even though there seems to have been temporary concessions to their humanity at the

beginning. The newly baptized, Old Testament-ignorant Gentiles had something to contribute to the Bible-saturated Jewish believers; and, of course, vice versa.

4:17 The way of the flesh, be it wanton immorality or simply living in the vanity of the mind, is not as the Ephesians had been taught the Gospel of Christ before their baptisms. That basic Gospel had very practical implications (Eph. 4:17-27). And more than this. The new wine of the Gospel will destroy a man who holds it unless he changes his life (cp. the bottle), so that it too is new. The new cloth of the Gospel will rip a man apart who doesn't change from his old clothing. Leaven is an apt symbol of the Gospel, in that it corrupts terribly *if it is left idle*. If the principles of the Truth lie dormant in our lives, they can only destroy us.

4:18 The world is alienated from God on account of their blindness (Eph. 4:18). There is no blindness in God (1 Jn. 1:5); He describes Himself as covered in eyes (Ez. 1:18; Rev. 4:8). God almost seems to poke fun at man's blindness, at our inability to perceive the most basic truths. The Lord's picture of a blind man feeling qualified to pull a splinter out of his brother's eye (with a superior, condescending air about him) is one such case (Mt. 7:3-5).

4:19 Remember that the hearts of all men have *become darkened* because of the way they consistently harden their hearts [in an ongoing sense] from childhood, resulting in them passing from having a religious conscience to a hardened state (Eph. 4:19). But somewhere deep down, that "feeling" is still there, and can easily be touched by our witness. I find it intriguing to observe how men who perceive themselves as confirmed 'atheists' find it almost irresistible to blaspheme. When they spill their coffee or forget something, almost involuntarily their thoughts fly to the God and the Jesus they so fiercely deny. I'd estimate that the everyday speech of the 'atheistic' USSR included more references to 'God' than in that of the 'Christian' West.

4:20 When the Ephesians learnt their first principles from the mouth of Paul and other preachers, they "heard Him (Christ), and (were) taught by Him" (Eph. 4:20,21); the preacher of Christ closely manifests his Lord.

4:22 We must "put off the old man" (Eph. 4:22); and yet "ye have put off the old man" (Col. 3:9). Have we, or haven't we? In God's eyes we have, in that the new man has been created, and the old man died in the waters of baptism. But of course we are still in the flesh; and the old man must yet be put off. What happened at our baptism must be an ongoing process; of laying the old man to rest in death, and rising again in the newness of life. The Gospel 'instructs us to the intent that, having once and for all put away ungodliness (i.e. in baptism) and worldly lusts, we should live in a holy manner' (Tit. 2:12 Gk.). Having put these things off in baptism, we must live a life of putting them off.

Our lusts are deceitful (Eph. 4:22), and so the Devil or 'deceiver' is an appropriate way of describing them. They are personified, and as such they can be spoken of as 'the Devil' – our enemy, a slanderer of the truth. This is what our natural 'man' is like – the 'very Devil'.

4:23- see on Eph. 1:15.

4:25 We are the body of Christ. We are counted righteous because we are baptized into Him. We are counted as Him; and we are parts of His body, hands, feet, eyes, internal organs. As such, we are inextricably linked in with the other members of the body. We cannot operate in isolation from them. "We are members one of another... we are members of his body" (Eph. 4:25; 5:30). Only insofar as we belong to each other do we belong to Him. We must perceive ourselves not so much as individual believers but as members of one body, both over space and over time.

Eph. 4:25 draws a practical conclusion from the one body of Christ: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: *for* we are members one of another". If we are one body, there should *therefore* be truthfulness between us. No white lying, no gross exaggeration, no gossiping, no presentation of facts in a distorted way. Why? Because "we are members one of

another". If we *do* behave like this, we are really saying that we are not members of the one body. The one body is Jesus; and all that is true of Him must be true of us. He is not divided, and neither should we be, either within our own beings, or as a community.

4:26 Anger in itself is a purely natural reaction, and is seen in both God and His Son. The issue is, how to "be angry and sin not" (Eph. 4:26)? God "made a path for His anger" with Egypt, by bringing plagues upon them and slaying their firstborn (Ps. 78:50 RV). Anger has to go somewhere, for otherwise it burns within us and rises up ultimately into extremely damaging and inappropriate forms of behaviour. I say 'inappropriate' because pent up anger has a way of bursting forth upon anyone in its way, who may likely be nothing to do with the cause or object of the initial anger. Anger is a form of energy, and as such it must be harnessed. Throughout the Old Testament, we often read of God being "provoked to wrath" by human sin, and His anger burning. There's very little said about this in the New Testament; and I wonder if this is because the ultimate path which God made for His anger was in giving His Son to die for human sin, rather than endlessly seeking to punish human sin and be hurt by it. Immediately let's take an obvious lesson: don't waste your anger energy on endlessly fighting those who provoke you, but use it positively. Throw it in to some project or other for the Lord. For anger is to some extent reflective; whilst we remain horns locked with a situation, both our opponent and ourselves are feeding off each others' anger. Hence the wise advice of Prov. 22:24,25: "with a wrathful man you shall not go: lest you learn his ways". Disengage from anger situations.

4:29- see on Mt. 12:33.

4:30 The "Holy Spirit" may refer to a specific Angel set apart for this purpose of strengthening us so that we might reach the Kingdom, like the wilderness Angel provided Israel with the manna (= the word of God, so Jesus reasons in Jn. 6) and every type of sustenance in order that they should get through the wilderness to the promised land. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is associated with our calling and choosing. The Angel was associated with the sealing of the believers (Rev. 7:2,3). We must not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God (cp. how Israel vexed the Holy Spirit Angel-Is. 63:10) whereby ye are sealed". Eph. 4:30 also links this grieving the Holy Spirit (referring to the Holy Spirit Angel of Is. 63:10) and abusing God's sealing of us, as if by the unspiritual behaviour Paul is speaking of in Eph. 4 we will truly grieve or sadden our Angel who has sealed us.

4:32 Mt. 6:14 = Eph. 4:32. Jesus said: "If you forgive, you'll be forgiven". Paul subtly changes the tenses: "You've been forgiven already, so forgive". It's as if Paul is saying: 'Think carefully about Mt. 6:14. Don't think it means 'If you do this, I'll do that for you'. No. God has forgiven you. But that forgiveness is conditional on the fact that in the future you will forgive people. If you don't, then that forgiveness you've already been given is cancelled. This is what Jesus really had in mind'. This would suggest a very very close analysis of those simple words of Jesus, using all the logic and knowledge of Biblical principles which Paul had.

Paul does not say we should forgive as Christ *is forgiving* us. Our forgiveness was granted at baptism; the power of sin in our lives was overcome by baptism into Christ's death, which destroyed the devil. Therefore anyone baptized into Christ is not a servant of sin, unless they leave Christ. Of course, we know that in practice we all keep on sinning. But our spiritual man is in Christ, God looks upon *that* side of us, not upon the devil within us. We cannot destroy the devil within us- his destruction is in death (Rom. 6:23). That natural man cannot be made subject to God's word (Rom. 8:7; Gal. 5:17,18; James 3:8). What God requires is a growth in the spiritual man, living in a way of life which on balance shows that the new man is more fundamentally 'us' than the old man. As God eagerly looks upon that new man within us, so we too should perceive the new man in our brethren. Too often extreme brethren look upon how bad the old man is in a brother, and how publicly he is manifested (e.g. in marital problems)- rather than assessing the new man, "the hidden man" which is surely to be found deep within all brethren and sisters.

5:2 Do we struggle to live the life of true love, to endure people, even our brethren; are we simply tired of people, and living the life of love towards them? Does the past exist within us as a constant fountain of bitterness and regret? "Let all bitterness, and wrath and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake [the sake of His cross] hath forgiven you... walk in love, *as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us*" (Eph. 4:31-5:2).

The peace offering was to make a sweet savour. Through His death on the cross, Christ was this: "Christ... hath given himself for us an offering (a peace offering?) and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). If we are in Christ, then God will see us too as a sweet savour. And this is exactly what 2 Cor. 2:15 says: "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ". Yet we must fellowship His sufferings if we are in Him, really fellowship them. The peace offering was to have the fat and rump "taken off hard by the backbone" (Lev. 3:9). The ruthless division of flesh and spirit within Christ (shown superbly in the way His wilderness temptations are recorded) must be seen in us too. We must ask if we are really taking off the fat hard by the backbone. Are we even prepared for the pain, the pain of self-knowledge and self denial which this will necessitate?

5:3- see on Josh. 23:7.

We need to let passages like Eph. 5:3-5 have their full weight with us. Fornication, covetousness, all uncleanness should not be "named amongst us", in the same way Israel were not to take even the names of the Gentile idols onto their lips (Ex. 23:13) – "but rather giving of thanks", knowing that those who do such things will not be in the Kingdom of God. A thankful attitude, thinking and speaking of those things with which we will eternally have to do, is to replace thinking and talking about all the things which shall not be our eternal sphere of thought in the Kingdom age. And yet our generation faces the temptation like none before it – to privately watch and read of those things, vicariously involved in them, whilst being under the illusion that we're not actually doing them ourselves. For this is what the entertainment industry is based around.

5:4 According to the New Testament, having a spirit of true thankfulness to God *in all things* should help swamp our tendency to sinfulness; the concept of praising God should get such a grip on our way of thinking that the thinking of the flesh is thereby suppressed. Eph. 5:3,4 states this in so many words. It reels off a list of forbidden sexual thoughts and actions; and then the antidote is stated: "Let (them) not once be named among you... *but rather giving of thanks*". A few verses later the same medicine is prescribed; this time as the antidote to an unsaintly abuse of alcohol: "Be not drunk with wine... *but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms... singing and making melody in your heart... giving thanks always for all things*" (Eph. 5:18-20). This is a laboured, triple emphasis on praise as being the antidote to drunkenness.

5:5 Eph. 5:3-5 has some surprises for the attentive reader; the black words on white paper have an uncanny power: "This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, *nor covetous man*, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ". These are the sort of words we whisk past, in the relieved confidence that *they* don't apply to us. But covetousness is there listed as a carnal sin, along with sexual perversions. That's how bad it is. No one who is covetous will be in the Kingdom. And therefore it's hard for a rich man to be in the Kingdom. In fact, the Lord says, it's humanly impossible for a rich man to get there; it's only through God's gracious working to make it possible that it can happen, that a rich man will scrape into the Kingdom (Mt. 19:23-26). *Every one of us has the elements of covetousness very close to the surface*. Materialism is perhaps the direct equivalent of idol worship under the old covenant. They were to not even desire "the silver and gold that is on them... for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God... thou shalt utterly detest it; and *thou* [like God] shalt utterly abhor it" (Dt. 7:25,26). God despises idolatry; and we also must go a step beyond merely avoiding materialism; we must despise it.

5:6- see on Mt. 24:4.

5:8 At times it seems Paul 'unconsciously' uses a phrase from the parables, out of context, but as an indication that they were running through his mind (e.g. "children of light" in Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5 is quarried from Lk. 16:8).

5:10 We *know* right now the principles on which God will judge us. We can judge what is acceptable to the Lord (Eph. 5:10- judgment day language). We can judge / discern those things which are excellent in His eyes (Phil. 1:10).

5:12 The sin of Ham in relation to Noah's drunkenness included the fact that he told his brothers about Noah's shame (Gen. 9:22). This incident seems to be alluded to by Paul when he says that it is a shame to speak of what sinners do in secret (Eph. 5:12). A large amount of the communication which would be called 'gossip' includes the communication of sinful things which would be better not entering the minds of saints in any case- one tends to gossip about a neighbour's adultery rather than his lost cat.

5:14 At baptism, we were "quickened together with Christ" (Col. 2:13). But Paul wrote to the baptized saints at Ephesus: "Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. 5:14). It is thought that Paul is quoting here from a first century baptism hymn; he is encouraging them to be as it were baptized again, spiritually, in coming to life in Christ. Note that the Ephesians were active in the outward work of the Truth (Rev. 2:2,3); but their real spiritual man was asleep.

5:15 In contexts regarding the evil of our surrounding world, Paul teaches us to 'redeem the time' (Eph. 5:15; Col. 4:5). This is a word classically used of the market place, in the sense of 'buying up' while the opportunity is there. Yet the context demands that this pressing need to buy up time be understood in the light of the evil world around us. Is it not that Paul is saying 'Buy up all the opportunities to gain back time from this world', in the same spirit as he told slaves "If thou mayest be made free, use it rather" (1 Cor. 7:21)? This means we shouldn't glorify the use of time for the necessary things of the world. If we *must* spend our time in the things of the world, as the NT slaves simply had to, then God will accept this as done in His service. But we shouldn't use this gracious concession to do all we can in the life of the world, justifying it by saying it is done 'unto the Lord'. This concession, in its context, only applies to those who by force of circumstances really must spend their time in the things of the world (Eph. 6:5-7; 1 Cor. 10:31). We must "break up our fallow ground" (Heb. 'plough the unploughed'), analyze ourselves from outside ourselves, and use our time and our "all things" to the utmost of their potential (Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12). We were created "unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); we were redeemed that we might be zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14)- not that we might drift through life playing with our hobbies and with the fascinations of our careers.

5:18 Paul was keen for others to copy John the Baptist, to find in him the inspiration which he too had found. So he encourages his Ephesians not to drink wine but instead be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)- the very language of John (Lk. 1:15). In other words, 'Be like that Spirit-filled zealot John rather than enjoying the sloppy pleasures of this life!'

5:19 Eph. 5:19 talks of speaking psalms and hymns "to yourselves... making melody *in your heart*". The Greek translated "to make melody" means 'to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument' (Strong)- evidently it's a musical term. The implication is that we should so know our own heart and spend time in communion with our own mind that we know how to rouse our own feelings in praise. Such self-knowledge is a sure antidote to fleshly thinking.

Get into Christian music; "speaking to yourselves (a reference to self-talk?) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19).

5:25- see on Gal. 2:20.

The Greek for "gave himself" is mainly used of the Lord Jesus giving up the spirit to the Father. We have shown elsewhere that His death was as an act of the will, He gave up His life rather than it being taken away from Him. This matchless peak of self-control and self-giving for us must somehow be replicated in the humdrum of daily domestic relationships.

Therefore, "husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it... so ought men to love their wives" (Eph. 5:25). The Greek for "gave himself" is mainly used of the Lord Jesus giving up the spirit to the Father. We have shown elsewhere that His death was as an act of the will, He gave up His life rather than it being taken away from Him. This matchless peak of self-control and self-giving for us must somehow be replicated in the humdrum of daily domestic relationships. He carried our sins "*that* we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes (Gk. Wheals- Peter saw them) ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). The husband should love his wife, "even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body" (Eph. 5:30 RV). Jesus loved us as much as He loves Himself; He "cannot be separated from the work which He came to do" (R.R.). He saved Himself so as to save us. And this isn't just atonement theology- this is to be lived out in married life. As Christ died for us and gave up His last breath for us, so as a supreme act of the will, the husband must give up his life for his woman. And she can only but respond to this. These are high ideals. But the very height of them can transform human life in practice.

5:26 We are presented with the possibility of being "slow to wrath" , being angry, and yet not sinning. However, these passages are both in the context of warnings against the wrath of man (James 1:19-21; Eph. 5:26). Surely the point is, that 'righteous anger' is not in itself wrong (witness the Lord's anger in the temple); but whilst this is allowable for us, the more sensible level for us frailer men is not to be angry *at all*.

5:29- see on Rom. 6:19.

The man represents Christ, and the woman the ecclesia. But the ecclesia, all of it, *is* the body of Christ; so in this sense husbands should love their wives "as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (5:28,29). The more we appreciate the strength and power of typology, the more we will realize the spiritual unity which there should be between brethren and sisters. The physical body of Christ is not divided- there is only one Jesus in Heaven. If brethren represent Christ and sisters typify His body, then there should be no division- either between husbands and wives, or amongst brethren and sisters within Christ's body. Thus marriage breakdowns and internal ecclesial strife are equally wrong- they both spoil the typology presented in Eph. 5. They effectively tear Christ's body apart, as men tried to do on the cross. We say "tried to" because ultimately Christ's body is indivisible- in the same way as in a sense His body was "broken" (as it is by division in the body), whilst in another sense it remained unbroken, in God's sight. Likewise, the ecclesial body in God's sight is even now not divided- we are one in Christ.

5:30 The figure of *being* somebody's body could not be more intense and personal. You touch your own body, feel your bones beneath your flesh- that's fundamentally *you*. Whilst of course Christ does have a separate bodily existence, we are fundamentally Christ. Without us and our sin, Christ would not have come into existence, nor would He now exist.

Joseph's brothers said: "He is our brother and our flesh" (Gen. 37:27). "We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30).

5:31 The radical value attached to every individual in Christ is brought out especially by the New Testament teaching about family life. There were many pagan 'household codes', which basically exhorted the slaves, children and women to be subordinate to the male leaders of the family. Paul frames his family teaching in exactly the terms of these 'household codes' in order to bring out the significant differences between God's way and the way of society in this vital area. The fact Paul

and Peter in their 'household codes' speak of the head of the house being submissive and having responsibilities to love, as an act of the will, was quite radical. But those male leaders had to learn that in Christ, everyone matters, and people can't be treated by their brethren as they are by society generally, as nothing and nobody, mere cogs in a machine. The *familia*, or extended family, was of itself devaluing to persons. A woman married into her husband's extended family, and effectively lost so much of her uniqueness as an individual- indeed women were so often treated as faceless. But Paul teaches, on the sure foundation of Genesis, that a man should *leave* his parents and *cleave* to his wife (Eph. 5:31). This was far more radical than may now appear. The man was being taught that merely perpetuating the extended family, using the woman you received in your arranged marriage in order to continue and expand the family, was not in fact God's way. He was to *leave* that extended family mindset and personally *cleave* to his wife in love- love which was an act of the will. He was to start a new family unity; to love his *wife* rather than his extended family "as himself". Likewise fathers are told to bring their children up in the instruction of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 6:4)- when the task of training up children was left to the women, older children and slaves (especially the *paidagogos*) in the extended family. The value of persons implicit here was thus a call to be essentially creative, independent, perceiving the personal [rather collectively-imposed] value in both oneself and others in ones' family.

"God hath *tempered* the (ecclesial) body together... that there should be no schism in the body" (1 Cor. 12:24,25) uses a related word as in Eph. 5:31 concerning how a man "shall be *joined* unto his wife... I speak concerning Christ and the church". Because both man and woman ultimately represent Christ, there should be no schism between either believers, nor husbands and wives. . Husbands and wives become "one flesh". But "flesh" is almost equivalent to "body" (see Eph. 2:15,16; Col. 1:22)- their union of "one flesh" is parallel to the union of the "one body" within the ecclesia. We should all be "perfectly *joined* together (marriage language) in the same mind" (1 Cor. 1:10). Recall how "Israel *joined* himself unto Baalpeor" (Num. 25:3) in a sexual context. Hos. 9:10 comments on this as meaning that Israel "Separated themselves unto" Baalpeor. We cannot be 'joined to' something unless we are 'separated from' something else. If we are truly joined to Christ and each other, we *must* be separated from idolatry. It is impossible to experience this 'joining' with believers who are not 'separated'- one cannot be 'joined' in intercourse to more than one person. We *cannot* serve two masters without *hating* God

6:1 Given the predominance of slaves, children and women in the early churches, we are to imagine the house church meetings with plenty of women, nursing mothers, kids running everywhere. Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20 seem to suppose that children would be present at the church gatherings and would listen attentively to what was said.

6:1-3 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord...honour thy father and mother, for this is the first commandment with promise; that it may *be well* with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3) is a strange allusion to Jacob; " Jacob obeyed his father and his mother" (28:7) by going to Padan Aram (actually he fled there, but the record frames it as if he did so purely out of obedience to his parents and from a desire to find a wife in the Faith). Because Jacob did this, God promised him at Bethel that it would *be well* with him (32:9), and he too was given the Abrahamic promises of living long on the earth / land. Thus Jacob's fleeing to Padan Aram is seen by the Spirit in Paul as a righteous act of obedience to faithful parents, which resulted in him receiving the promises. And yet his flight was rooted in fear, and at the time he did not accept the promises as relevant to him, neither did he believe Yahweh was his God (28:20). And yet the positive side of Jacob (i.e. his obedience to his parents) is seized on and held up as our example.

6:4- see on Eph. 5:31.

6:8 "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord" (Eph. 6:8)- at judgment day. Not in this life, when the righteous often suffer for their goodness. *Every* good deed will then have its recognition.

6:12 spirits- see on Dan. 10:20,21.

Eph. 6:11-13: An Account Of Paul's Battle With The Judaizers?

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places". The devil here is the Jewish system with its associated Angels. The same phrase "Principalities and powers" is used in Col. 2:15 concerning the Angels who gave the Law. The phrase "wiles" is only used again in 4:14 ("Lie in wait") regarding the Judaizer-devil circulating false doctrine. The rulers of the Jewish heavenlies were both literal Angels and the Judaizers whom they represented in the court of Heaven. Eph. 6:13 warns of a forthcoming battle: "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day"- the spiritual battle between the Law of Moses and that of Christ which is detailed in Rev. 12. Paul could see that in the final conflict against the Judaizers, he would need courage to speak out as he should: "Pray... for me... that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel" (v. 19)- a phrase often used in connection with Gentiles and Jews having equal standing with God through Christ.

The Greek for "wrestle" in Eph. 6:12 is the same word as "cast out". The battle of the Christians then was not to cast out men- "we wrestle not against flesh and blood". This is a real difficulty for any 'explanation of difficult passages' that tries to make this refer to human rulers alone. It was the Jewish devil that needed casting out, and the Angel principalities and powers which co-ordinated it. There is no doubt that "principalities and powers" does also refer to Jewish and Roman authorities (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; Mt. 7:29 etc). This is to be expected once we understand that the devil and satan of the New Testament often refers to both Jewish and Roman systems and the Angels behind them. Remember that the Angels rule the world. God's system of manifestation remains constant. In the same way as the "pattern of things in the Heavens" in the Angelic organization there was repeated on earth through the organization of the tabernacle and the "elohim" of Israel's judges and priests, so that Heavenly system is maybe also reflected through the judges and leaders of the world, every one of whom is controlled by an Angel. Hence the identical language used for both Angels and worldly rulers- in the same way as Angel-Cherubim language is used concerning both Angels and earthly armies, e. g. of Babylonians, who fulfilled their will.

This passage seems a footnote to the epistle: "Finally, my brethren..." (v. 10). This is similar to the footnotes begun in Phil. 3:1; Gal. 6:12 and 1 Tim. 6:20, all of which warn against the Judaizers - indicating the immense importance Paul attached to the coming struggle with the "Principalities and powers".

The Wiles of the Devil

Comments

1. Angels are not mentioned here.
2. This passage lists various things against which the Christian fights – it does not say that those things are trying to enter men and make them sin.
3. The world is under God's control, not that of evil beings in heaven (Dan. 4:32). "All power" in heaven and in earth has been given to Jesus (Mt. 28:18) by God (Rev. 3:21; Lk. 22:29), so it cannot also be possessed by wicked beings in heaven.
4. We have seen in chapter 2 that there can be no sinful being in Heaven itself (Ps. 5:4,5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10).

5. Verse 12 may be translated “For we wrestle not only against flesh and blood...” i.e., we do not only wrestle against individual men, but against organized systems.

6. There is much figurative language in vv. 11–17 – the armour of the Christian is figurative, as is the wrestling, seeing that “the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men” (2 Tim. 2:24); v. 12 should be similarly interpreted.

7. If the “Devil” was cast out of heaven in Eden, how could he and his followers still have been in the literal heavens in Paul’s time?

Suggested Explanations

1. The context is set in v. 13. The preparation was to be because the church was facing “the evil day”. This refers to a period of especial persecution of the church, which was to come at the hands of the Romans, seeing they were the only people with enough power to create an “evil day” for the Christian church at the time Paul was writing. (1 Pet. 4:12; 5:8–9). The wrestling was against “the rulers of this dark world”, who at the time were the Romans. Note that the wrestling is spiritual wrestling to keep the faith (2 Cor. 10:3–5). This time of evil had already begun as Paul was writing (Eph. 5:16) – “the days are evil”.

2. “Principalities” is translated “magistrate” in Luke 12:11; human “rule”, in the sense of human government, in 1 Corinthians 15:24, and the “power” of the Roman governor in Luke 20:20. So it does not necessarily have reference to any power or prince in heaven.

3. “Powers” is translated as the “authority” of the Roman governor in Luke 20:20, and regarding one having “authority” in Matthew 7:29. We must “be subject to principalities and powers” (Titus 3:1) in the sense of earthly governments, insofar as they do not ask us to do things which are contrary to the law of God (Acts 5:29; 4:19; Mt. 19:17). If “principalities and powers” are evil beings in heaven whom we must resist, why are we told to be subject to them? If we accept that they refer to human governors and authorities, then this is easily understandable.

4. “Wicked spirituals in high (heavenly) places”. We have shown that this cannot refer to wicked beings in heaven itself. The exalted position of the true believers in Christ is described as being “in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 2:6). “Spirituals” can be used to describe those in the church who had the gift of the spirit; having given a list of commands as to how the gifts of the spirit should be used, Paul concludes: “If any man (in the church) think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual (i.e. spiritually gifted, see N.I.V.), let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). 1 Corinthians 14 shows there was a big problem in the church of believers misusing the spirit gifts. Hebrews 6:4–6 describes some Jewish Christians in the first century who had the gift of the spirit, but who were leading the church away from true Christianity by their attitude. These would be a prime example of wicked spirituals in the heavenlies (i.e. in the church). The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25, cp. 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple. In the same way as wicked people could be in the temple, so, too, they could be in the heavenlies of the church. Possession of the Spirit did not mean that someone was necessarily acceptable in God’s sight, e.g. Saul possessed it for a time (1 Sam. 10:10) as did the judges of Israel (Num. 11:17) although they were not righteous; they did not believe the report of Joshua and Caleb and therefore were condemned to die like the other Israelites, despite their having the Spirit – Psalm 82:1–7 says as much. For a period the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 possessed the gifts despite their errors, until eventually their candlestick was removed (cp. Acts 20:28–29; Eph. 4:11; Rev. 2:5). Thus the wicked spirits in the heavenlies were apostate Christians within the church, leading the church into an “evil day” of temptation.

5. Thus the threat to the church was twofold: from the Roman/Jewish persecution and from the (often Judaist) “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13) within. Remember Ephesians 6:11–13 was written to the church at Ephesus. Paul had previously warned them about this threat from within: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30). Rotherham’s translation brings this out well: “Our struggle is against the principalities against the authorities against the world – rulers of this darkness, AND against spiritual wickedness in heavenlies”.

6. Thus, all these things are “the wiles of the Devil” (v. 11) in the sense of the evil desires of the flesh expressed through the system of world government and apostate Christians.

7. “Heavenly places” may also refer to positions of authority in the secular world. Thus the king of Babylon was a figurative “star” in heaven (Is. 14:12), i.e. a great ruler. Jesus is the “sun” (Mal. 4:2), the saints are the “stars” (Dan. 12:3) of the future order. The present “heavens” of man will be replaced by the new Heavens when the Kingdom is established on the earth (2 Pet. 3:13), i.e. the positions of power and rulership, now in the hands of sinful men, will be handed over to the true Christians. The saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdoms of men (Dan. 7:27). Thus wicked spirits in the “heavens” could refer to men of wicked minds in places of power in the world who were persecuting the Christians.

8. It is just possible to still interpret “the Devil” in v. 11, as having a certain degree of reference to the “Jewish Satan”. The “Heavenly places” of v. 12 may refer to the Jewish heavenlies; 2 Peter 3 and Deuteronomy 32:1 speak of the Jewish heavens. This is strengthened by the fact that the “sun, moon and stars” are sometimes figurative of the Jews (e.g. Genesis 22:17; 37:9; Dan. 8:9,10,24). We have shown that the wicked spirituals may have reference to the Jewish Christians who were spirit-gifted, but turned to apostasy. They would thus be in both the Christian and Jewish “heavenlies”. The threat from within the church posed by the Judaizers infiltrating the church, who were Jews. Thus “the Devil” was manifested in the Roman authorities *and* the Jews within the Christian church. The two entities were connected insofar as the Jewish synagogue powers often informed the Roman authorities against the Christians.

The “wiles of the Devil” offers support to the Jewish context in that the Greek word for “wiles” is elsewhere translated “to lie in wait to deceive”, in a verse which talks about the Judaizers subtly trying to introduce false doctrine into the church: the church was being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). If the “heavenly places” also represent the Jewish system, further meaning is given to Ephesians 3:3–10: “The mystery... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs (with the Jews), and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel... To make all men (both Jews and Gentiles) see what is the fellowship of the mystery... To the intent now that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”, i.e. that by the church showing the unity that existed between Jew and Gentile within it, the Jewish leaders (“principalities and powers in heavenlies”) might come to appreciate “the manifold wisdom of God”. This, in turn, opens up John 17:21: “That they all (Jews and Gentiles) may be one... that the world (this phrase almost always means the Jewish world in John’s Gospel) may believe that You have sent me”.

The “evil day” of v. 13 would be a result of the Judaizers, who were “evil men and seducers” (2 Tim. 3:13). For the links between 2 Timothy 3 and the Judaizers, see notes on 2 Timothy 2:26; between them and “seducers”, see “Suggested Explanation” No. 2 of 1 Timothy 5:14.

Another Approach

David Pitt-Francis expounded the view that many of the later New Testament documents are full commentary upon and critical allusion to popular ideas of false religion which were circulating at the time. His commentary on Ephesians 6 bears quoting at more length ⁽¹⁾:

“The object of the Christian message was to shake such imagined deities out of their places, so that men would give real glory to Christ, and to the God of Heaven alone. Paul describes the conflict of Christian witness as a struggle, not against flesh and blood but... “against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness; against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”. To many unacquainted with the real impact of the gospel, both sun and moon seemed to have personalities which they did not possess, as did the stars of heaven, heaven itself, and those exalted parts of nature such as mountains and islands. Thus Isaiah 2, which contains primarily a prophecy against idolatry in Israel and describes idol-worship in the context of ‘high mountains’ and ‘lofty hills’ contains a description of the flight of men into caves and holes of the rocks from the terror of God, and this description is borrowed in Revelation. The end of the worship of sun, moon and stars is also foretold by Isaiah in a later passage, where the imagined gods of heaven are described as being punished: “On that day, the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven – and the kings of the earth, on earth – they will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit... then the moon will be ashamed, and the sun confounded for the Lord of hosts will reign.”

Here the host of heaven cannot represent the kings of the earth, who are separately described in this passage. The kings imprison themselves in a pit, just like those of chapter 2 who enter the caves and holes of the earth and the chief men of the sixth seal. The effect of Christian testimony would be the downfall of the imagined gods of the ancient world who were all associated with the exalted things of nature. In a Graeco-Roman context, for example the sun would have been associated with Apollo, the moon with Artemis, the stars with many deities and heaven itself with Uranus. Mountains and islands were not only objects of worship, but often places of worship (compare the ‘high place’ worship of apostate Israel). Yet the Graeco-Roman context is a partial and deceptive one, and has resulted in a restricted and partial understanding of the prophecy.

The interpretation is the obvious one, and yet the most neglected one. In the Old Testament, the words ‘sun’ and ‘moon’ occur frequently as the objects of false worship. The phrase ‘host of heaven’ (i.e. the stars) is similarly used. The teaching that those things that are exalted in nature represented the gods that were then thought to exist, against whom Christianity made its onslaughts was plainly accepted by the early Church in its reading of passages such as: ‘every mountain and hill shall be made low’ – to prepare a highway for the progress of the Gospel. There are not, nor have there ever been ‘spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places’ in the sense in which the phrase may primarily have been understood by converted pagans, but the adoration of sun, moon and stars has dominated the religious cults of every nation under heaven, and every kind of evil has been associated with it. The Old Testament prophecies, such as those quoted from Isaiah, were taken to mean that the gods would lose their power, because of Christian testimony, for the bulk of people in the days of Isaiah and of John would have regarded sun, moon and stars as personalities in their own right, whether they worshipped them or not. Every nation worshipped its sun-god and moon-god. The light of sun and moon was equated by many with the supreme light of God Himself. The perverted worship of all nations was directed to the host of heaven, and Isaiah, in the passages quoted foresaw the time when the host of heaven would be ‘ashamed’ by the supreme light of Divine Truth. It would have been tedious in Revelation to have named specifically the deities of Greece and Rome, far less those of all other nations. The names of the sun-god, Apollo, Ra, Amon, Baal, Bel-Marduk... would have alone formed quite a catalogue. Add the names of the moon-god,

the host of heaven, the sky, island – and mountain–gods and the list would have been impossibly long. Further, this chapter does not, as does Isaiah, mention those associated with oaks and trees, but only the exalted obstacles to the progress of the Gospel, those in the sky, and those that project towards the sky. Jesus' words are even more concise, for He says that the 'powers of heaven' will be shaken. These powers are not natural phenomena (e.g. The 'order' or 'course' of nature). In its original context the word meant forces or armies. It is inconceivable that angelic armies should be shaken, hence the word must, using the language of Ephesians, mean those imaginary forces reputed to exist in the heavens, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. This collection of 'powers' was the pantheistic ragbag of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Babylon and the other ancient nations. These powers would lose their control over peoples' minds because of the boldness of the Church in its preaching. They would make way for the Lamb of God to occupy heaven, and much later human scientific knowledge would reveal them to be no more than sterile masses of matter. Thus, the 'principalities and powers', the 'powers of heaven', 'the host of heaven' would soon lose their influence. Shortly, Clement of Alexandria would be derisive in his 'Exhortation to the Gentiles' about the apparent impotence of those gods, who had once seemed to be so active".

Note

(1) David Pitt-Francis, *The Most Amazing Message Ever Written* (Irchester: Mark Saunders Books, 1984) chapter 4.

6:15 Eph. 6:15 speaks of our each being 'sandalled' with the preparation of the Gospel. Who prepared the way of the Lord by preaching, wearing sandals? John the Baptist. It seems Paul is alluding to John here, setting him up as the preacher's example. The reference to "loins girt" (Eph. 6:14) would also be a John allusion- the record twice (in Mt. 3:4; Mk. 1:6) stresses how John had his 'loins girded'. See on Mt. 10:32.

6:18- see on Mt. 26:41; Lk. 12:37.

6:19 Paul saw the Lord's "boldness" as an imperative to him to likewise be "bold" in preaching (Eph. 6:19). We all find it hard to be bold in witness, and yet in this as in all spiritual endeavour, 'thy fellowship shall make me strong'. A deeper sense of the presence of Jesus, a feeling for who He was and is, a being with Him, will make us bold too. Even Paul found it hard; he asked others to pray for him, that he would preach "boldly" [s.w.] as he ought to (Eph. 6:19); and their prayers were heard, for in his imprisonment during which he wrote Ephesians, he preached boldly (Acts 28:31 s.w.); indeed, boldness characterised his whole life (Phil. 1:20 s.w.). In passing, we note how Paul felt spiritually weaker than he was; he felt not bold, when he was bold; and we see how the admission of weakness to others and their prayers for it can grant us the victory we seek. The point is, who the Lord is, we are. Or, we must be. If He was bold, if He was apt to teach and patient, so must we be; indeed, so are we, if we are truly in Him. Likewise, all the Father is, we are to manifest if we bear His Name.

6:20- see on Mt. 26:35.

After his conversion, we sense from the record that the preaching Paul was in his element. The record of his early preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem is recorded with the same rubric: he preached "boldly", and on each occasion it seems he would have gone on, utterly oblivious of the fact he was heading for certain death, had not the other brethren "taken" him and quietly slipped him out of those cities (Acts 9:27). The same word translated "boldly" occurs later, years later, when Paul asks his converts to pray for him, that he would speak "boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:20). He has already asked them this in v.19; he asks for the same thing twice. And he confessed his same problem to the Colossians (Col. 4:4). As he got older, he found it harder to be bold. First of all, in those heady days in Jerusalem and Damascus, it was the most natural thing in the world for him. But as time went by, it became harder for him to do this.

PHILIPPIANS

1:1 We must respect elders (and indeed all people) for who they are as persons, and not for any 'office' they may appear to hold. Notice how in Phil. 1:1 Paul omits the definite article ("the") in addressing bishops and deacons. Those words indicate what they do for people, rather than any position in a hierarchy. Jesus seems to have outlawed the use of any official titles for His ecclesia (Mt. 23:8-12).

Paul never speaks of an ecclesial 'elder' but of *elders* in the plural. The same can be said of "bishops (overseers), see Phil.1:1; Acts 20:28. Our groups may have secretaries or teachers, but this individual must never be seen as *the* elder. There is only one author [Gk. 'pioneer'] of our faith: the Lord Himself, who worked in our lives to bring us to Himself. This is stressed in Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb. 2:10; 12:2.

1:4 There's nothing wrong with a Christian experiencing both joy and sorrow at the same time. The Lord's description of His 'joy' at the time of His being the ultimate 'man of sorrows' is an obvious example. But consider too Paul's language to the Philippians. On one hand he speaks insistently of his joy: "I pray always with joy... Christ is being preached, and I am glad... I will also continue to be happy... I am glad, and I share my joy... it made me very happy (Phil. 1:4,18; 2:17; 4:10). And yet on the other hand, he speaks of his sorrows at that very same time: "...that I may receive news about you that will cheer me up... keep me from having one sorrow after another" (Phil. 2:19,27).

1:5 "Your participation in the [preaching of the] gospel" is paralleled with "your faith" (Phil. 1:5). If we really believe, we will be involved in the preaching of what we believe.

1:7 Phil. 1:7 speaks of the "defence and confirmation of the gospel". These are legal terms- the Greek word translated "defence" means a plea entered in a court of law; and "confirmation" refers to supporting evidence offered to a judge. Paul's idea is that in our preaching, our audiences are the judge; and we are entering a plea for the case of none other than God Himself, and His Son. We have to ask whether our witness to the world is indeed a *plea*- or whether it's a case of merely getting people in our own social group to just drop by at *our* church rather than their usual one. The fact we are speaking on God's behalf, pleading for His case to be accepted in the hard hearts of men, should impart an urgency, a desire to penetrate minds, and persistence in our witness.

Paul had "fellowship in the Gospel" with the Philippians, "because... ye all are partakers with me of grace" (Phil. 1:5-7 RV). All those in the Lord Jesus by valid baptism, and who remain in Him by faithful continuance in His way, are partakers of His gracious pardon, salvation, and patient fellowship; and they will, naturally and inevitably, reflect this to their brethren as part of their gratitude to Him.

1:9-see on 2 Cor. 12:15.

Our love abounds more and more through "discernment, so that ye may prove the things that differ" (RVmg.). We grow by being given different situations to respond to, in order to develop our judgment- what Eph. 5:10 calls "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord". By reason of use our spiritual senses are exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14). This is why, be it in church or family or deeply personal life, our consciences are constantly being probed and exercised by the situations which Providence leads us into. And thus we grow in sensing more keenly right and wrong, more victoriously overcoming all the temptations whose strength lies in the fact that in the heat of the moment we waver as to what is right and wrong... and the end result of this increased and heightened discernment, Paul says, is a love which abounds "yet more and more" (Phil. 1:9).

1:10 Paul exhorts us to be "blameless" (Phil. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:23)- and yet uses the same word, in the same letters, to describe how he was "blameless" (Phil. 3:6; 1 Thess. 2:10). See on Gal. 4:12; 1 Tim. 1:15.

We *know* right now the principles on which God will judge us. We can judge what is acceptable to the Lord (Eph. 5:10- judgment day language). We can judge / discern those things which are excellent in His eyes (Phil. 1:10).

1:11 Philippians 1:11, which speaks of us being filled with the fruits of righteousness- i.e. the righteous characteristics of God of Ex.34- unto the *glory* of God. The R.V. of Ex.34:5-7 says that God is *full* of these attributes- hence Phil.1:11 talks of us being filled with these things too if we bear the Name, even in this life. The idea of fullness and being filled often occurs in the New Testament in the context of the glory. Eph.1:23 describes the church as "His body, the fullness of Him (God?) that filleth all in all". Thus we are "*the*" fullness of God and Christ. "We beheld His glory... full of grace and truth (alluding to Ex. 34)... and of His fullness have all we received" (John 1:14,16). See on Eph. 1:23.

1:12 Paul reflected: "the things that have happened to me have really helped the progress of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12). If we are truly focused on God's agenda, knowing we have His backing, then all setbacks, even our death itself, will be understood by us as all for the ultimate advancement of the aims we are working towards. It's a battle, a war, a campaign, a race, which we can't ultimately lose. With God on our side, we have to win. And we shall.

1:14- see on Acts 2:46.

1:19 supply- see on Zech. 4:14.

There seems reason to believe that the gift of the Spirit is a way of describing answered prayer. The giving of "good things to them that ask" in prayer is the same as the giving (gift) of the Holy Spirit (Mt.7:11 cp. Lk.11:13). Phil.1:19 parallels "Your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ". Similarly, 1 Jn.3:24 says that we are given the Spirit as a result of our obedience to the commands; verse 22 says that obedience to those commands leads to our prayers being answered. Thus our confidence is due to having our prayers heard (1 Jn.5:14) and also due to having the Spirit act in our lives (1 Jn.3:21,24; 4:13), seeing that prayer is answered by the Spirit's work.

Phil.1:19 is made a mess of in many translations. Moffat does better with "The outcome of all this, I know, will be my release". The Greek here is almost identical to Job 13:16 LXX: "Though he slay me... even that is to me an omen of salvation". The context is of Job speaking of the good conscience he had maintained with God; similarly Paul's good conscience made him fearless of approaching death, as he also made clear when on trial for his life (Acts 23:1; 24:16).

1:20- see on Eph. 6:19.

"Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil.1:20) seems to echo Job 13:13-15 (especially in RVmg.), where Job says he is willing to face every trial, but knows that death will be his lot; yet he is certain that God will still be glorified through this. All of this is very apposite to Paul's situation.

1:21 When he speaks of "...that I may win Christ....to live is Christ", his idea seems to be of attaining a spirituality even in this life where the life we live is Christ living in us, totally reflected in our actions (Phil. 1:21).

"To die is gain" (Phil.1:21) was Job's attitude too, particularly in Job 10:20-22, where whilst recognizing the unpleasantness of death he is speaking, in the context, as if he were willing to suffer it to maintain his integrity with God. Paul is reasoning along similar lines.

The picture of Paul in prison, having reached this spiritual pinnacle, fired the minds and living of "many of the brethren in the Lord" (Phil. 1:21). And for me too, the old and brave Paul in that cell is the man I fain would be And yet as his perception of Christ and his surpassing excellency increased, so did his warnings against apostasy, and the need to hold on to true doctrine. In other words, his absorption and appreciation of the Spirit of Christ was what fired his zeal for purity of

doctrine and practice. It was this which gave him the spiritual energy and power to live the life that he did, to the point that he could truly say that for him, to live was Christ; that the life he lived in the flesh, the things he did, the thoughts he thought, was all the result of Christ living in him and through him. He brought *every thought* (and this isn't figurative language) into captivity to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). My sense is that as he was lead out to face his death, this phrase he'd coined to the Philippians years back was in his mind: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

1:21-23 Consider how and why Christ offered Paul the choice of death; he declined it because he saw it was more needful to remain with the new converts (Phil. 1:21-23). This accounts for his emphasis in Philippians on how much he desired their growth; because he had chosen to stay alive in this mortal flesh *solely because* he wanted to achieve this. The tragedy was that all in Asia turned away- when he had 'risked' remaining alive, with the full knowledge he could himself fall away, having been offered certain salvation- all for their sakes.

1:22-24 Understanding the way Paul breaks off into another theme and then resumes is the key to understanding some of the more difficult passages in his writings: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare [*his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say*] at this time his righteousness" (Rom. 3:25,26). "For this cause I, Paul [*the prisoner of Jesus Christ...* there is a parenthesis of 13 verses, then he resumes: *For this cause*] I bow my knees" (Eph. 3:1,14). "But if I live in the flesh [*this is the fruit of my labour... nevertheless to abide in the flesh*] (this) is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22-24).

1:23- see on 1 Cor. 12:31; 2 Tim. 4:6; 4:6-8.

Whilst Paul wrote the letter he was so ill that he had a choice of being able to "depart, and to be with Christ" (Phil.1:23) or remain. One way of understanding this is to read it as meaning that Paul was so ill that he could give up his will to live if he chose, but struggled for their sake to keep alive. No wonder his mind went to the afflicted Job.

1:24 It seems Paul had the choice from Christ as to whether he wanted to die and finish his probation; but he chose to stay alive, with all the temptations and spiritual pitfalls of human existence, for the sake of the first century believers (Phil. 1:24).

1:27 The early church are held up as our example in Phil. 1:27: "Stand fast in *one spirit, with one mind* striving together for the faith of the Gospel". Doesn't that sound just like an allusion to the early ecclesia? The theme continues in 2:2: "Be likeminded, having the same love, being *of one accord*, of one mind". There's that phrase "one accord" again. It's hardly used outside the Acts, so we should read that like a signpost, saying 'Go back to the Acts!'. So Paul is saying: 'You believers must always remember the great spirit of "one accord" in the early ecclesia in Jerusalem. Let the early church be your example!'. There are a number of other allusions back to the early chapters of Acts. For example, v.4: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others". Twice we read there in Acts of disregarding our own "things". Paul definitely has his eye on Acts 4:32: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul (just as Paul spoke about in Phil.2:2): neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own (cp. "his own things" in Phil.2:4); but they had all things common". And then in v.3 Paul warns against doing things "through vainglory". Doesn't that sound like an allusion to Ananias and Sapphira? Then he warns them in v.14 "Do all things without murmurings and disputings". It can't be coincidental that in Acts 6:1,9 we read twice about there being murmurings and disputings in the early ecclesia. Phil. 2 describes the exaltation of Christ on his resurrection. It seems no accident that this is then described in the very words which the apostles so often used in their preaching in the early chapters of Acts. Thus in v.9, "God hath highly exalted him" is a reference to Peter's words: "Being by the right hand of God exalted... him hath God exalted" (Acts 2:33; 5:33). The whole theme in Phil. 2 is of Christ suffering on the cross and then being exalted by the Father, and

given the mighty Name. The very same language is used so often in Acts (2:9-11=Acts 2:36; 2:10=Acts 4:10; 3:6,16). When Paul exhorts us to hold forth "the word of life" (Phil. 2:16), he surely has his mind on the way the early preachers held forth "the words of this life" in Acts 5:20. We are to follow their spirit.

Whoever really believes the doctrines of the One Faith and lives the life which they naturally bring forth, really will be saved. Therefore we will have a sense of true unity with our brethren who believe as we do, whatever human barriers there may be between us. Therefore "the Faith" is linked with unity between believers (Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:27). We will live eternally together, and this must begin in life together now. It is inevitable that a certain amount of 'politics' intrude upon our ecclesial experience; one group wants this, another wants that; one sees things one way, another perceives things from a different viewpoint. But here again, the principles of the most basic Gospel must govern us. The Greek word for 'politics' does in fact occur in the New Testament.- when Paul says that our *politeuesthe* must be "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). The principles of the loving, saving, reconciling, patient Christ must work their way through even the politics that are inevitably part of life together.

1:29 By God's grace, the Lord tasted death *for* (Gk. *huper*) *every man*, as our representative: "in tasting death he should stand for all" (NEB). In His death He experienced the essence of the life-struggle and death of every man. The fact the Lord did this *for us* means that we respond *for Him*. "To you it is given *in the behalf of* (Gk. *huper*) Christ, not only to believe on Him [in theory], but to suffer *for his sake* (Gk. *huper*)" (Phil. 1:29). He suffered *for us* as our representative, and we suffer *for Him* in response. This was and is the two-way imperative of the fact the Lord was our representative. He died *for all* that we should die to self and live *for Him* (2 Cor. 5:14,15). "His own self bare our sins [as our representative] in his own body [note the link " *our sins*" and "his *own* body"] that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24,25). We died with Him, there on His cross; and so His resurrection life is now ours. He is totally active for us now; His life now is *for us*, and as we live His life, we should be 100% *for Him* in our living. He gave His life *for us*, and we must lay down our lives *for Him* (1 Jn. 3:16). See on 2 Cor. 5:15.

1:30 The way Simon the Zealot and Matthew the pro-Roman tax collector were all welded together within the 12 would have been an arresting display of unity in the Gospel, which cannot fail to have impressed first century Palestine. And it would have been so in the Antioch ecclesia too- the elders included Paul, the fiery ex-Orthodox rabbi; Manaen, one of the intimates of the Herod family; Barnabus, a Cypriot Levite who had owned land there to get round the Law's demands; Simeon the black man; Lucius from Cyrene, also in Africa. No wonder it was from this ecclesia that the Gospel really spread outwards. When the early church showed that uncanny unity between Jew and Gentile, slave and master, they converted the world. And so would and could and do we. And yet when and where we are divided, the power of conversion is lost. This is why the Philippians were told to live lives appropriate to the Gospel they preached, and to 'contend as one man' for the Gospel (Phil. 1:27,30). Their united witness, according to John 17, would convert the world. But if they were disunited, that great salvation would not be shared as it could potentially be.

2:1 Phil. 2:1-11 is a hymn of praise to Jesus, exalting in His present high status. But it has a context. The context is an appeal to unity and self abnegation in the service of others. This is what a grasp of His exaltation should lead to. This passage should not just be 'a difficult passage' to explain to others. Let us see the real import of it for us.

2:2- see on Phil. 1:27.

Paul exhorts preachers to be "with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel", and then goes on to define that "one mind" as the mind that was in Christ Jesus in His time of dying. Having outlined the mind of Christ at this time, Paul then returns to his theme of preaching, by saying that

the Lord's death was so that each of us should be inspired to humbly confess him as Lord to the world (Phil. 1:27; 2:2,5,11).

2:4 We should "look upon" the best interests of others (Phil. 2:4)- the Greek word *skopos* is the one used in "telescope" or "microscope". Our focus must be upon what is their best interest spiritually. Not upon anything else. Condemning, belittling, comparing, labelling, insulting, condescending, being sarcastic... have absolutely no place in a life driven by this purpose.

If we are to live lives devoted to the rest of the brotherhood, we need a motivation more powerful than just steel will-power. The constant out-giving of the cross, in the face of the most studied rejection and lack of appreciation, can be the only motivation that time and again, without fail, will revive our flagging will. Paul paints a powerful picture of the Lord's progressive self-humbling in service to others, culminating in "the death of the cross"; and with this in mind, he asks us: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ..." (Phil. 2:4). The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

"Being in the Form of God" (Phil. 2:5-11)

"Jesus... being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped at, to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:5-11).

These verses are taken to mean that Jesus was God, but at his birth he became a man. It is significant that this is almost the only passage which can be brought forward to explain away the 'missing link' in trinitarian reasoning - how Jesus transferred himself from being God in Heaven to being a baby in Mary's womb. The following analysis seeks to demonstrate what this passage really means.

1. There are a number of almost incidental phrases within this passage which flatly contradict the trinitarian idea.

a) "God also has highly exalted" Jesus "and given him a name" (v.9) shows that Jesus did not exalt himself - God did it. It follows that he was not in a state of being exalted before God did this to him, at his resurrection.

b) The whole process of Christ's humbling of himself and subsequent exaltation by God was to be "to the glory of God the Father" (v.11). God the Father is not, therefore, co-equal with the Son.

2. The context of this passage must be carefully considered. Paul does not just start talking about Jesus 'out of the blue'. He refers to the mind of Jesus in Phil. 2:5. Back in Phil. 1:27 Paul starts to speak of the importance of our state of mind. This is developed in the early verses of chapter 2: "Being of one accord, of one mind... in lowliness of mind... look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Phil. 2:2-5). Paul is therefore speaking of the importance of having a mind like that of Jesus, which is devoted to the humble service of others. The verses which follow are therefore commenting upon the humility of mind which Jesus demonstrated, rather than speaking of any change of nature. Just as Jesus was a servant, so earlier Paul had introduced himself with the same word (Phil. 1:1 cp. 2:7). The attitude of Jesus is set up as our example, and we are urged to join Paul in sharing it. We're not asked to change natures; we're asked to have the mind of Jesus- so that we may know the "fellowship of sharing in his [Christ's] sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10,11).

3. Jesus was “in the form of God”. We have shown in an earlier study that Jesus was of human nature, and therefore this cannot refer to Christ having a Divine nature. The N.I.V. translation of this passage goes seriously wrong here. In passing, it has to be noted that some modern translations designed for ‘easy reading’, tend to gloss over the precise meaning of the Greek text, and tend to give a paraphrase rather than a translation in certain passages. Phil. 2:5-8 is a classic example of this. However, this is not to decry their use in other ways.

That “form” (Greek ‘*morphe*’) cannot refer to essential nature is proved by Phil. 2:7 speaking of Christ taking on “the form of a servant”. He had the form of God, but he took on the form of a servant. The essential nature of a servant is no different to that of any other man. In harmony with the context, we can safely interpret this as meaning that although Jesus was perfect, he had a totally God-like mind, yet he was willing to take on the demeanour of a servant. Some verses later Paul encourages us to become “conformable unto (Christ’s) death” (Phil. 3:10). We are to share the ‘*morphe*’, the form of Christ which he showed in his death. This cannot mean that we are to share the nature which he had then, because we have human nature already. We do not have to change ourselves to have human nature, but we need to change our way of thinking, so that we can have the ‘*morphe*’ or mental image which Christ had in his death.

The Greek word ‘*morphe*’ means an image, impress or resemblance. Human beings can have a ‘*morphe*’. Gal. 4:19 speaks of “Christ (being) formed in” believers. Because he had a perfect character, a perfectly God-like way of thinking, Jesus was “in the form of God”. Because of this, Jesus did not consider equality with God “something to be grasped at”. This totally disproves the theory that Jesus was God. Even according to the N.I.V. translation, Jesus did not for a moment entertain the idea of being equal with God; he knew that he was subject to God, and not co-equal with Him. There are many examples in the Greek Old Testament of the Greek word *morphe* being used to mean 'outward form' rather than 'essential nature'- e.g. Jud. 8:18 [men had the *morphe*, the outward appearance, of a king's sons]; Job 4:16; Is. 44:13 [a carpenter makes an idol in the *morphe* or outward appearance of a human being- but not in the very nature of a human being!]; Dan 3:19 [the king's *morphe* or appearance changed because he got angry; his essential nature remained the same]. And likewise in the Apocrypha: Tobit 1:13; Wis. 18:1; 4 Macc. 15:4. If Paul meant nature or essence he would have used the word *ousia* or *physis*- as he does in Gal. 2:16 where he speaks of "We who are Jews by nature [*physis*]...".

4. Christ “made himself of no reputation”, or “emptied himself” (R.V.), alluding to the prophecy of his crucifixion in Is. 53:12: “He poured out his soul unto death”. He “took upon himself the form (demeanour) of a servant” by his servant-like attitude to his followers (Jn. 13:14), demonstrated supremely by his death on the cross (Mt. 20:28). Is. 52:14 prophesied concerning Christ’s sufferings that on the cross “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”. This progressive humbling of himself “unto death, even the death of the cross” was something which occurred during his life and death, not at his birth. We have shown the context of this passage to relate to the mind of Jesus, the humility of which is being held up to us as an example to copy. These verses must therefore speak of Jesus’ life on earth, in our human nature, and how he humbled himself, despite having a mind totally in tune with God, to consider our needs.

5. If Christ was God in nature and then left that behind and took human nature, as trinitarians attempt to interpret this passage, then Jesus was not “very God” while on earth; yet trinitarians believe that he was. This all demonstrates the contradictions which are created by subscribing to a man-made definition such as the trinity.

6. A point concerning the phrase “being in the form of God”. The Greek word translated “being”

does not mean 'being originally, from eternity'. Acts 7:55 speaks of Stephen "being full of the Holy Spirit". He was full of the Holy Spirit then and had been for some time before; but he had not always been full of it. Other examples will be found in Lk. 16:23; Acts 2:30; Gal. 2:14. Christ "being in the form of God" therefore just means that he was in God's form (mentally); it does not imply that he was in that form from the beginning of time.

7. "In the likeness of man... in human form" (Phil. 2:7) doesn't mean that the Lord Jesus only appeared as a man, when He was in fact something else. Rather the emphasis is upon the fact that He truly was like us. Going deeper, F.F. Bruce has suggested that these terms "represent alternative Greek renderings of the Aramaic phrase *kebar-'enash* ("like a son of man") in Daniel 7:13" (1).

Philippians 2 In First Century Context

It has been shown that the hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 is alluding to various Gnostic myths about a redeemer, the son and image of the "highest God", who comes down to earth, hides himself as a man so as not to be recognized by demons, shares human sufferings, and then disappears to Heaven having redeemed them (2). I suggest that these allusions are in order to deconstruct those myths. Paul's point is that the redemption of humanity was achieved by the human Jesus, through His death on the cross, and not through some nebulous mythical figure supposedly taking a trip to earth for a few years. The hymn also alludes to the many wrong ideas floating around Judaism at the time concerning Adam. Messiah was *not* Adam; Adam is compared and contrasted with Jesus in Phil. 2:6-11- he like Jesus was made in the image of God, yet he grasped at equality with God ("you will be like God", Gen. 3:5), which Jesus didn't do. The description of Jesus "being in the form of God" was therefore to highlight the similarities between Him and Adam, who was also made in the form of God. The choice Jesus faced was to die on the cross or not, and it is this choice which Phil. 2:6-11 glorifies. The context of Phil. 2 shows that it was in this that He was and is our abiding example in the daily choices we face. If His choice was merely to come to earth or stay in Heaven, then there is nothing much to praise Him for and He is not our example in this at all.

We can understand 2 Cor. 8:9 in this same context- the choice of Jesus to 'become poor' for our sakes is held up as an example to the Corinthians, to inspire their financial giving. The choice is whether or not to live out the cross in our lives- rather than deciding whether or not to come down from Heaven to earth. Jesus gave up the 'riches' of His relationship with God, calling Him "abba", to the 'poverty' of the cross, in saying "My God, Why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). Poverty was associated with crucifixion, rather than with a God coming from Heaven to earth: "Riches buy off judgment, and the poor are condemned to the cross" (3). It is Christ's cross and resurrection, and not this supposed 'incarnation', which is repeatedly emphasized as being the source of our salvation (Rom. 5:15,21; Gal. 2:20; 3:13; Eph. 1:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18). This is a far cry from the teaching of Irenaeus, one of the so-called 'church fathers', that Christ "attached man to God by his own incarnation" (*Against Heresies* 5.1.1). The New Testament emphasis is that we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son. The whole of Phil. 2 is about the Lord's attitude in His *death* and not at His *birth*. It was *after* His birth but *before* His death that the Lord could talk of his freedom of decision as to whether or not to lay down His life (Jn. 10:18)- and it is this decision which Phil. 2:9-11 is glorifying.

One of the dangers of the Trinity is that it de-emphasizes the colossal human achievement of Jesus as a man. It also makes God Himself somewhat of an irrelevancy, if Jesus is our Saviour God. And thus it's been observed that the history of Christian art shows icons etc. progressively giving prominence to Jesus, with God Himself portrayed increasingly as an old man with a white beard, somewhere in the background. Yet Jesus came to bring us to God, living out a breathtaking partnership of God and man which remains our constant pattern.

Trinitarian theology sees God's salvation of humanity as being on account of His supposed 'incarnation' in Christ, and His sending of the [supposedly] pre-existent Christ into the world. But the New Testament emphasis is upon the *death* of Christ, His victory within Himself and subsequent resurrection, as the crucial means by which our redemption was enabled. And further, how He saved us through the cross and through His own self-debasement is held up as our very real example in passages like Phil. 2 and 2 Cor. 8:8-10. We are not pre-existent gods in Heaven awaiting an incarnation on earth. We are very real, human guys and gals. His pattern can mean nothing for us if it was all about saving others through submitting to some kind of 'incarnation'. But the Biblical emphasis makes His sufferings, death and victory in resurrection our very real pattern, so real that we are to be baptized into it (Rom. 6:3-5) and live according to this as a pattern for human life every moment.

Paul Clifford pointed out to me that we should remember that Philippi was in Macedonia, it was named after Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. Alexander was some sort of hero there. He was held to be successful in his exploits because after conquering a people, he did not have a policy of ruling by suppression but instead made all attempts to befriend them by making himself a servant to the people. Alexander was perceived to have an *hypostasis* (the substantial quality) of both master and servant. It seems that Paul may be making a conscious connection between the Lord Jesus, and Alexander the Great. But the Lord Jesus went so much further. He emptied Himself of all pride and became a servant to all. In our context, the point I take from this is that Alexander didn't change natures when he, the master, became a servant to his people; and the same is true of the Lord Jesus. His humiliation and self-deprecation was specifically upon the cross; and as such He is our example. We too are to have His spirit. We are unable to change natures; the challenge rather is to change our minds. Peter says the same, perhaps alluding to Paul's words here: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time".

The Acme Of Humility

Trinitarian theology uses Phil. 2 to justify their 'V-pattern' view of Christ- that He was high in glory in Heaven, then descended briefly to earth, and then returned to high glory in Heaven. All such talk of a V-pattern, albeit on the lips of eloquent churchmen and theologians (4), is frankly a serious missing of the point. Phil. 2- and the whole teaching of Jesus- is that the true greatness is in humility, the servant of all becomes Lord of all. The pinnacle, the zenith, the acme- was in the humility of the cross. The New Testament presents the death of Christ as His final victory, the springboard to a J-curve growth, involving even literal ascent into Heaven. What seemed to be defeat turned out to be the ultimate victory.

Notes

- (1) F.F. Bruce, *Paul And Jesus* (London: S.P.C.K., 1977) p. 77.
- (2) Documented in Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology Of The New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1955) p. 166. Bultmann showed that many of the 'difficult passages' in John have similar connections (*ibid* p. 175). I would argue that John likewise was alluding to these Gnostic [and other] redeemer myths in order to deconstruct them.
- (3) Quoted in Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion In The Ancient World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) p. 60 note 15.
- (4) The V-pattern analogy is to be found, e.g., in C.F.D. Moule, *Forgiveness And Reconciliation* (London: S.P.C.K., 1998) p. 36; C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary On The Second Epistle To The Corinthians* (London: A. & C. Black, 1973) p. 336.

2:6- see on 1 Cor. 15:45.

The essence of the temptation in Eden was to think that the tree of knowledge could bring salvation; it was an attempt to grasp at equality with God, according to Phil. 2, it was a vain belief that possession of knowledge / truth enables us to play God. And we, with our emphasis on the need for truth, for correct understanding, are especially prone to this major temptation.

He did not conceive the equality with God with which He would be rewarded as "booty" (Gk.), something to be grasped for: instead, He concentrated on being a humble servant, working to bring about the salvation of others (Phil. 2). This sense of working for *God's* glory must really permeate our thinking.

Vincent Taylor analyzes Paul's hymn of praise to the Lord Jesus in Phil. 2:6-11 and concludes that it is an adaptation of a Jewish hymn which spoke of "the appearance of the Heavenly Man on earth". Paul was writing under inspiration, but it seems he purposefully adapted a Jewish hymn and applied it to Jesus- to indicate the status which should truly be ascribed to the Lord Jesus. See on Col. 1:15.

The lowest of the 30 aeons, Sophia, "yielded to an ungovernable desire to apprehend [God's] nature". And Paul alludes to this in Phil. 2:6 by saying that Jesus by contrast didn't even consider apprehending God's nature, but instead made Himself a servant of all. As more and more is known of the literature and ideas which were extant in the first century, it becomes the more evident that Paul's writings are full of allusions to it- allusions which seek to deconstruct these ideas, replacing them with the true; and by doing so, presenting the Truth of the Gospel in the terms and language of the day, just as we seek to. See on Col. 2:9.

2:7 Trinitarians please note that Phil. 2 was written by Paul with his mind on the death not birth of Christ, as their false theology requires (Phil. 2:7 = Mt. 10:28; and note the connections with Is. 53).

The mixture of the Divine and human in the Lord Jesus is what makes Him so compelling and motivational. He was like us in that He had our nature and temptations; and yet despite that, He was different from us in that He didn't sin. Phil. 2 explains how on the cross, the Lord Jesus was so supremely "in the likeness of men"; and yet the same 'suffering servant' prophecy which Phil. 2 alludes to also makes the point that on the cross, "his appearance was so unlike the sons of Adam" (Is. 52:14). There was something both human and non-human in His manifestation of the Father upon the cross. Never before nor since has such supreme God-likeness, 'Divinity', if you like, been displayed in such an extremely human form- a naked, weak, mortal man in His final death throes.

The Lord ***taking upon himself*** the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7) is to be connected with how at the Last Supper, He ***took*** (s.w.) a towel and girded Himself for service (Jn. 13:4). The connection between the Last Supper and Phil. 2, which describes the Lord's death on the cross, would suggest that the Lord's washing the disciples' feet was an epitome of His whole sacrifice on the cross. The passage describing the Last Supper begins with the statement that the Lord "loved us unto the end" (Jn. 13:1). This is an evident description of the cross itself; and yet His service of His followers at the Last Supper was therefore an epitome of the cross. As that Supper was "prepared" (Mt. 26:17,19), so the Lord on the cross "prepared" a place for us in the Kingdom (Jn. 14:1 s.w.). As the observing disciples didn't understand what the Lord was doing by washing their feet, so they didn't understand the way to the cross (Jn. 13:7 cp. 36). There is thus a parallel between the feet washing and His death. But in both cases, the Lord Jesus promised them that there was coming a time when they would understand His washing of their feet; and then they would know the way to the cross, and follow Him. John describes the Lord ***laying aside*** His clothes in order to wash the feet of His followers with the same word he frequently employs to describe how Christ of His own volition ***laid down*** His life on the cross, as an act of the will (Jn. 10:11,15,17,18); and how later His sacrificed body was ***laid aside*** (19:41,42; 20:2,13,15). As the Lord laid Himself down for us, epitomized by that deft laying aside of His clothes, so, John reasons, we must likewise purposefully lay down our lives for our brethren (1 Jn. 3:16). As He did at the last supper, so He bids us do for each other. John

uses the same word for Christ's "garments" in his records of both the last supper and the crucifixion (13:4,12 cp. 19:23). It could be noted that the man at the supper without garments was seen by the Lord as a symbol of the unworthy (Mt. 22:11 cp. Lk. 14:16,17). He humbled Himself to the level of a sinner; He created the story of the sinful man who could not lift up His eyes to Heaven to illustrate what He meant by a man humbling himself so that he might be exalted (Lk. 18:14). And He humbled Himself (Phil. 2:9), He took upon Himself the form of a servant and of a sinner, both in the last supper and the final crucifixion which it epitomized. As the Lord Jesus laid aside His garments and then washed the disciples' feet with only a towel around His waist, so at the crucifixion He laid aside His clothes and perhaps with a like nakedness, served us unto the end: the betrayers and the indifferent and the cautiously believing alike. Throughout the record of the Last Supper, there is ample evidence on the Lord's awareness of Judas' betrayal (Jn. 13:10,11,18,21,25). The account in 1 Cor. 11:23 likewise stresses how the Supper was performed with the Lord's full awareness of Judas' betrayal. It is perhaps therefore inevitable that we in some ways struggle with the problems of rejection, of betrayal, of being misunderstood and not appreciated by our brethren. For these were all essential parts of the Lord's passion, which He asks us to share with Him.

The Lord in His time of dying was and is the definition of self-humbling: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Mt 23:11-12). Being a servant to others is the 'abasing' or [s.w.] humbling that will lead to exaltation. The Lord became a servant of all in His death (Mk. 10:44,45). These things are brought together in Phil. 2:5-11, where we are invited to have nothing less than the mind of Christ in the self-humbling of the cross: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who...thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name...". The seven stages of the Lord's self-humiliation are matched by seven stages of the Father's exaltation of Him (read on in Phil. 2 and note them!). And this pattern is to be ours. This mind is to be in us. Because of this, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other... look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil 2:3-4). Every time we look on the things of others rather than just our own, not seeking our own glory but esteeming others enough to see them as worth suffering for...we have achieved the spirit of the cross, we have reached self-humbling. As the Lord died for Himself and others, so we are to look on the things of our salvation *as well as* those of others. This must be the foundation principle of all aspirations to preach or strengthen our brethren: esteeming others, thinking they are worth the effort, seeking their salvation.

2:8- see on Heb. 2:3.

"Became obedient" suggests that in His mind the Lord worked down and down, until He came to the final humility of the cross. Likewise Heb. 2:9 describes how Christ was "made lower" than Angels- the same Greek word is translated "decrease". He was decreased lower than the Angels "by the suffering of death"; perhaps because previously the Angels had been subject to Him, but in His time of dying he was 'decreased' to a lower position?

Philippians 2:6-9 describes the progressive humiliation of the Lord Jesus on the cross (not in His birth, as Trinitarian theology has mistakenly supposed. Note the allusions back to Isaiah 53). *There* He was supremely "in the form of God", but notwithstanding this He took even further the form of a servant. In that blood and spittle covered humility and service, we see the very form and essence of God. My understanding of Phil. 2:8 is that being in the form of God, being the Son of God and having equality with God are parallel statements. The Lord understood being 'equal with God' as some kind of idiom for His Divine Sonship (Jn. 5:18; 10:33; 19:7). He was in God's form, as His Son, and He therefore didn't consider equality with God something to be snatched; He had it already, in that He was the Son of God. In other words, "He considered it not robbery to be equal

with God" is to be read as a description of the exaltedness of His position as Son of God; not as meaning that it never even occurred to Him to try to be equal with God. He was equal with God in the sense that He and the Father were one, spiritually, and on account of the fact that Jesus was the begotten Son of the Father. This interpretation depends upon understanding 'being equal with God' as an idiom for being the Son of God; it doesn't, of course, mean that 'Jesus is God' in the Trinitarian sense. There, on the cross, the Lord Jesus was the form of God, equal with God in that sense, the only begotten Son. And yet on the cross His form was marred more than that of any man, He finally had no form that could be desired (Is. 52:14; 53:2). And yet this was the form of God. **He** was contorted and marred more than ever, there was no beauty in **Him** that men should desire Him, in those hours in which His Son suffered there. The Lord Jesus then had the form of God, although in His mind He had taken the form of a servant. The Lord made Himself a servant in His mind; He looked not on His own things, but on those of others (Phil. 2:4,7). This is the context of Philippians 2; that we should have the *mind* of Christ, who disregarded His own status as Son of God and humbled Himself, even to death on the cross, so that we might share His status. His example really is ours, Paul is saying (which precludes this passage describing any 'incarnation' at the birth of Christ). The Lord had spoken about the crucial need for a man to humble himself if he is to be exalted (Lk. 14:11); and this is evidently in Paul's mind when he writes of Christ humbling Himself and then being exalted. He saw that the Lord lived out on the cross what He had asked of us all. If that example must be ours, we can't quit just because we feel rejected and misunderstood and not appreciated by our brethren. ***For this is the very essence of the cross we are asked to share.*** See on Jn. 19:19.

Our Lord Jesus seems to have gone through stages of progressive humbling of himself, rungs up (down) the ladder, before He was *made* perfect (complete) by His sufferings (Heb. 2:10): Christ

1. "Made himself of no reputation, and
2. took upon Him the form of a servant, and
3. was made (Gk. 'made himself') in the likeness of men: and...
4. He humbled himself, and
5. *became* obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:7,8).

The repeated use of the word "and" seems to imply a series of stages. Indeed, seven stages of humiliation and seven of exaltation are discernible in the hymn here. In our Lord's progression towards that ultimate height, of laying down his life for others, we see our ultimate prototype. He stepped progressively downwards in the flesh, that He might climb upwards in the Spirit.

He wasn't a God who came down to us and became human; rather is He the ordinary, very human guy who rose up to become the Man with the face of God, ascended the huge distance to Heaven, and received the very nature of God. It's actually the very opposite to what human theology has supposed, fearful as they were of what the pattern of this Man meant for them. The pre-existent view of Jesus makes Him some kind of Divine comet which came to earth, very briefly, and then sped off again, to return at the second coming. Instead we see a man from amongst men, arising to Divine status, and opening a way for us His brethren to share His victory; and coming back to establish His eternal Kingdom with us on this earth, His earth, where He came from and had His human roots. Take a passage much beloved of Trinitarians, Phil. 2. We read that Jesus was found (*heuretheis*) in fashion (*schemati*) as a man, and He humiliated Himself (*tapeinoseos*), and thereby was exalted. But in the next chapter, Paul speaks of *himself* in that very language. He speaks of how he, too, would be "found" (*heuretho*) con-formed to the example of Jesus in His death, and would have his body of humiliation (*tapeinoseos*) changed into one like that of Jesus, "the body of his glory". We aren't asked to follow the pattern or *schema* of a supposed incarnation of a God as man. We're asked to follow in the path of the Lord Jesus, the Son of man, in His path to glory.

Repeatedly, we are promised that *His* glory is what we will ultimately share, at the end of our path of humiliation and sharing in His cross (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; Jn. 17:22,24). The more we think

about it, the idea of Jesus as a Divine comet sent to earth chimes in with some of the most popular movies. Think of *Superman* and *Star Trek*- the hero descends to earth in order to save us. Or take the "Lone Ranger" type Westerns, set in some wicked, sinful, hopeless town in the [mythical] American West... and in rides the outsider, the heroic cowboy, and redeems the situation. The huge success of these kinds of story lines suggests that we like to think we are powerless to change, that our situation is hopeless and beyond human salvation... an outsider is needed to save us, as we look on as spectators, feeling mere pawns in a cosmic drama. And this may explain the attraction of trinitarianism and a Divine comet-like Christ who hit earth for 33 years. It breeds painless spectator religion... go to church, hear the Preacher, watch the show, come home and spend another rainy Sunday afternoon wondering quite what to do with your life. Yet the idea of a *human* Saviour, one of us rising up above our own humanity to save us... this demands so much more of us, for it implies that we're not mere spectators at the show, but rather can really get involved ourselves.

2:9 Jesus carried the name of Yahweh when on earth- He came in the Father's Name (Jn. 5:43) and did and said many things which previously had been specific to Yahweh. Thus He walked on the water and stilled the waves as Yahweh was said to do (Ps. 107:29); yet Phil. 2:9 implies He was given the Name at His ascension: "God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name". Does this suggest there are degrees of God manifestation and degrees of bearing His Name?

The Lord Jesus "humbled himself", and was later "highly exalted" (Phil. 2:9), practising His earlier teaching that he who would humble himself and take the lowest seat at the meal would be exalted higher (Mt. 23:11,12; Lk. 14:10,11). The Lord Jesus at the Last Supper humbled Himself from the seat of honour which He had and took not only the lowest seat, but even lower than that: He washed their feet as the servant who didn't even have a place at the meal. And both James and Peter saw the Lord's humbling Himself at that supper and His subsequent exaltation as a direct pattern for us to copy (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Paul takes things one stage even further. He speaks of how he humbled himself, so that *his hopelessly weak and ungrateful brethren* might be exalted (2 Cor. 11:7). He is evidently alluding to the Gospel passages which speak of how we must humble ourselves so that *we* may be exalted (Mt. 23:11,12; Lk. 14:10,11). But Paul sees *his* exaltation, which his humbling would enable, as being identical to *theirs*. He doesn't say: 'I humbled myself so that I may be exalted'. He speaks of how he humbled himself so that *they* might be exalted.

Peter preached in and about the name of Jesus- this is emphasized (Acts 2:31,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,17,18,30; 5:28,40,41; 10:43). The excellence of knowing Him and His character and the wonder of the exalted Name given on His ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12) lead Peter to witness. Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this.

Phil. 2:9 in the AV says that the Lord Jesus has a name "above" every name. Yet His Name surely cannot be "above" that of Yahweh. The Greek for "above" is usually translated "for [the sake of]", and I would suggest we read Phil. 2:9 as saying that the name of Jesus is for [the sake of] every name, in that every man and woman was potentially comprehended in His all-representative sacrifice. By baptism into the name of Jesus, they confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. There was and is no other name given under Heaven by which men can be saved; "every name" under the whole Heaven must take on the name of Jesus in baptism. This is why Acts associates His exaltation (Acts 2:33; 5:31) and His new name (Acts 2:21,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,18,30; 5:40) with an appeal for men and women to be baptized into that Name. Realizing the meaning of the Name of Jesus and the height of His exaltation meant that they realized how "all men" could have their part in a sacrifice which represented "all men". And thus they were motivated to preach to "all men". And thus Paul's whole preaching ministry was a bearing of the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Christ as our representative means that He is the representative of the church as a whole, the entire body of persons who are “in Christ”, we each have some unique contribution to His body upon earth. This is why He suffered *so* much- so that He found a fellow feeling true with every tempted mind which is in Him. In society and the workplace, nobody is irreplaceable, no cog can somehow not be replicated albeit in a slightly different form. But the part we have to play in Him is unique and in one sense irreplaceable by anyone else. He has been highly exalted and given a name *huper* every name, that each of us should bow our knees before Him (Phil. 2:9). *Huper* here is usually translated “above”, but perhaps the idea is rather that through His representative sufferings, the Lord has now a Name *for* every one of our names / personalities / histories / characters. He tasted death *for* every man (Heb. 2:9), and we are therefore to be *for* Him and all that are in Him. His whole suffering *for* us was to leave us an example, that we should follow in His steps to the cross (1 Pet. 2:21). Forasmuch as He suffered *for* us, we are to arm ourselves likewise with that same mind (1 Pet. 4:1- this is repeating the teaching and reasoning of Phil. 2, that we should have the same mind in us which was in Jesus at the time of His death). As He laid down His life *for* us, so we should lay down our lives *for* our brethren (1 Jn. 3:16)- in all the myriad of large and small sacrifices this requires, from phone calls through thoughtful comments and cash generosity to literal death *huper* others if that’s what’s required. His whole priestly, reconciliatory work is to be ours. Not that *we* are Saviours of the world in ourselves, but we are to do this work *huper* Him and *huper* this world.

2:10 These words are alluding to Is. 45:23,24: “...unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength”. We all find humility difficult. But before the height of His exaltation, a height which came as a result of the depth of the degradation of the cross, we should bow our knees in an unfeigned humility and realization of our sinfulness, and thankful recognition of the fact that through Him we are counted righteous. The reference in Phil. 2:10,11 to every knee bowing and every tongue confessing the Lordship of Jesus is perhaps a reference back to the great commission to take Him to all peoples. That day when every knee would bow to the Lord Jesus will be the result of the outcome of His exaltation. A grasp of who the Lord Jesus really is and the height of His present exaltation will naturally result in a confession of Him to the world, as well as a deep personal obedience to His word and will (Heb. 2:1).

In Phil. 2:10, the Lord Jesus is said to have been given power over all beings in heaven, earth and the nether-world. The Romans understood the world to be divided into these three spheres of the cosmos. But this passage is based upon Is. 45:23, which says that God has total supremacy – and this has been granted to His Son. As I understand it, Paul is reasoning that if God is all powerful, and if that power has been given to the Lord Jesus, then whatever cosmology there is around, e.g. belief in a nether-world, well, in that case, Jesus has all power over that as well. The same argument applies to demons. If they exist, well the essence is that they are well and truly under the Lord’s control and aren’t essentially powerful. Paul doesn’t so much ridicule the idea of a nether-world, rather he takes the view, as Jesus did in His dealings with the demon issue, that God’s power is so great that their existence is effectively not an issue.

2:11 Is. 45:20-24 speaks of how “all the ends of the earth” will look unto “a just God and a Saviour [Jesus]” and be saved- evident reference back to the brazen serpent lifted up for salvation. The result of this is that to Him “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess” his moral failures, rejoicing that “in the Lord have I righteousness and strength...in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory”. These words are quoted in Phil. 2:11 in description of the believer’s response to the suffering Saviour. And yet they are quoted again in Rom. 14:10-12 regarding our confession of sin before the Lord at judgment day. The connections mean simply this: before the Lord’s cross, we bow our knee and confess our failures, knowing the imputation of His righteousness, in anticipation of how we will bow before Him and give our miserable account at the judgment. And both processes are wonderfully natural. We must simply allow the power of a true

faith in His cross to work out its own way in us. At the judgment, no flesh will glory in himself, but only in the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:29). And even now, we glory in His cross (Gal. 6:14).

Is. 45:23-25 cp. Rom. 14:11,12, about our reaction at the judgment seat	Phil. 2, about our reaction to the cross of Christ today
:23 every knee shall bow	:10 every knee shall bow
:23 every tongue shall swear	:11 every tongue shall confess
:24 in the Lord	:11 Jesus Christ is Lord
:25 shall glory	:11 to the glory of God

Clearly our response to the cross is a foretaste of our response to the judgment experience.

2:12 The fact the Philippians obeyed Paul more when he was absent than when he was present has some implications (Phil. 2:12). One of the strongest is that Paul in person was not charismatic, indeed, his physical presence was perhaps a big discouragement to be personally committed to him. Perhaps he was actually quite obnoxious in appearance. His power was therefore in his message, and not in his personality. His hearers were willing to pluck out their eyes and give them to him [a reference to his physical infirmity?] because of his *message* rather than because of any personal charisma.

The parable of the unjust steward makes the point that in the Kingdom, the faithful will be given by Christ "the true riches... that which is your (very) own" (Lk. 16:12). The reward given will to some degree be totally personal. Each works out his *own* salvation, such as it will be (Phil. 2:12)- not in the sense of achieving it by works, but rather that the sort of spirituality we develop now will be the essential person we are in the eternity of God's Kingdom.

Moses' last speeches are often referred to by Paul (e.g. Phil. 2:15 = Dt. 32:5; Phil. 2:28 = Dt. 31:16; Phil. 2:12 = Dt. 31:8,27,29).

2:13 Christianity is meant to be lived in a community. Indeed, God has created salvation in a community, in the body of Christ. "Work out your [plural] salvation... for it is God who is working in your midst [as a body]" (Phil. 2:12,13).

2:14 Our way of life will make an inevitable witness to the world. Simply not moaning and groaning in the daily round will be a holding out of the word of life to those with whom we trudge through this life (Phil. 2:14 cp. 16).

2:15- see on Mt. 3:11; Jn. 3:18.

Phil.2:15 describing the believers now as lights shining in the world is alluding to the Septuagint of Dan.12:3, concerning the saints in the Kingdom shining as the stars. Once it is appreciated that we are now in the spiritual heavenlies (Eph.2:6) then this makes sense.

When Paul spoke of us shining as lights in a dark world, in "a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. 2:15), he was using language which Moses had earlier used of how apostate Israel were the "crooked and perverse generation" (Dt. 32:5). The point of his allusion may have been that despite the darkness and apostasy of the surrounding brotherhood, we must all the same shine with the constancy of the stars.

Those among God's people who break their covenant with Him, He sees as the world. Thus Moses prophesied of an apostate Israel: " They have dealt corruptly with [God], they are no longer his children because of their blemish; they are a perverse and crooked generation" (Dt. 32:5 RSV). These very words are used by Paul regarding the Gentile world (Phil. 2:15). Apostate Israel are the

pagan world; and therefore the rejected at the day of judgment will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32).

Lk. 1:6 = Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 3:13. We are to have the serene spirituality, all down the years, of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

Those among God's people who break their covenant with Him, He sees as the world. Thus Moses prophesied of an apostate Israel: "They have dealt corruptly with [God], they are no longer his children because of their blemish; they are a perverse and crooked generation" (Dt. 32:5 RSV). These very words are used by Paul regarding the Gentile world (Phil. 2:15). Likewise Is. 42:1,2 concerning Christ's witness to the *Gentiles* is quoted in Mt. 12:19 regarding His witness to an apostate Israel. Israel were to be made like "the tope of a rock" just as Gentile Tyre would be (Ez. 24:7; 26:4). "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers", the Lord said to Israel (Mt. 23:32)- yet He was alluding to how the Gentile Amorites filled up the cup of God's judgments and then had to drink it. Pharaoh's heart was hardened to bring about God's glory, but Paul uses the very same language, in the same context, to describe what was happening to an apostate, Egypt-like Israel (Rom. 9:17). Korah and his company were swallowed by the earth, using the very language which Moses so recently had applied to how the Egyptians were swallowed by the earth at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12).

2:16 The Lord Jesus was the light of the world; and by doing "all things without murmuring and disputing... blameless and harmless [as the Lamb]... ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" [i.e. the Lord Jesus; Phil. 2:14-16].

Paul felt he would have "run in vain" if his converts didn't in their turn preach (Phil. 2:16). The quality of our converts affects the nature of our final reward- for Paul elsewhere uses the image of a race as a symbol for the Christian life which ends in the victory of the Kingdom. But whether he won or lost, he felt that the whole thing would be meaningless if they did not spiritually develop.

2:17- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

The believer's death is a pouring out of blood on the altar (Phil. 2:17 Gk; Rev. 6:9), which is language highly appropriate to the Lord's death. It follows from this that the death of one in Christ is the pinnacle of their spiritual maturity, as the Lord's death was the pinnacle of His. It is a spiritual victory, more than the temporal domination of the flesh which it can appear.

In Phil. 2:17, Paul says that he saw his brethren as an altar, upon which he was being offered up as a sacrifice. He saw his brethren as the means by which he could serve God. And for us too, the community of believers, the ecclesia, be they strong or weak, a pain in the neck or wonderful encouragement, are simply the method God has chosen for us to offer ourselves to Him. Running around for others, caring of others, patient sensitivity with our brethren... these are but the altar provided by God, upon which we can serve Him and give ourselves to Him.

2:21- see on 1 Cor. 13:5.

Paul realized more clearly the apostasy of the brotherhood; "all men seek their own" he commented (Phil. 2:21), in conscious allusion to his earlier words that such self-seeking should not be the case amongst the ecclesia (1 Cor. 10:24).

2:25- see on 1 Thess. 3:1.

He describes Epaphroditus as one of those "that ministered to my wants" (Phil. 2:25). The Greek for "ministered" is used in the LXX concerning the priests (and Joshua) ministering to Moses in practical things.

2:26- see on Mk. 14:36.

3:2 Phil. 3:2 graphically describes how evil division is: "Look out for those dogs... who do evil... who cut the body" (NET). If this is merely a reference to circumcision, it would contradict Paul's tolerant attitude towards those who in their immaturity still practiced the rite. He wasn't so passionately against circumcision as such; his reference is to those who divide the body of Christ through insisting upon such things. This cutting of the body is so easily done, whenever discord is sown. The language used by the Spirit here is some of the strongest anywhere in the New Testament. Sowing division is *so* seriously wrong.

3:4 Phil. 3:4-11 reads rather like an encomium [see on Gal. 1:10], with Paul writing of how he was "circumcised on the eighth day... of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5). But then he as it were alters course half way through, as if to say 'Nah, just kiddin'. He speaks of his "confidence in the flesh", his former "gains", as being now "loss for Christ"; he's almost sarcastic about his humanly impressive encomium. For he says all this in the context of the preceding chapter, Phil. 2, where he has shown that the only true path of glory lays after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, who had to die the death of the cross in order to be highly exalted. A similar sarcasm about his humanly impressive encomium is to be found at more length in 2 Cor. 11:21-12:10.

3:6- see on Phil. 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:16.

Paul comments that he persecuted the Christian church "zealously" (Phil. 3:6). He was alluding to the way that Phinehas is described as 'zealous' for the way in which he murdered an apostate Jew together with a Gentile who was leading him to sin (Num. 25). Note that the Jews in Palestine had no power to give anyone the death sentence, as witnessed not only by the record of the trial of Jesus but Josephus too (*Antiquities* 20.202; *BJ* 2.117; 6.302). Paul was a criminal murderer; and he had justified it by saying that he was the 1st Century Phinehas. Ps. 106:30 had commented upon the murder performed by Phinehas, that his zeal "was accounted to him for righteousness". This sets the background for the converted Paul's huge emphasis upon the fact that *faith* in Jesus is what is "reckoned for righteousness", and it is in *this* way that God "justifies the unGodly" (Rom. 4:3-5; 5:6; Gal. 3:6). Paul is inviting us to see ourselves as him- passionately obsessed with going about our justification the *wrong* way, and having to come to the *huge* realization that righteousness is *imputed* to us by our faith in the work of Jesus.

Paul saw himself as learning the lesson of Job. Phil. 3 has several allusions back to him- like Job, Paul suffered "the loss of all things" (:8), although he considered himself previously "blameless" (:6). He threw away his own righteousness, that he might be justified by grace and know thereby the essence of Christ (:9), just as Job did.

3:7 Paul saw himself as the man who gives all to buy the pearl (Mt. 13:45,46 = Phil. 3:7,8; although this passage also alludes to Moses; as if he took inspiration from Moses to be like the man in the parable). He saw the excellency of the knowledge of Christ as the pearl whose beauty inspired even a rich man to give up all that he had. Paul took comfort, real comfort, from the way he found himself in situations similar to those of his Lord.

3:8- see on Lk. 9:23-25.

The power of Paul's teaching about singleness is backed up by his personal situation. As a member of the Council who condemned Stephen, he would have had to be married. An unmarried Orthodox Jew would have been a contradiction in terms at that time. And yet he is evidently single in his Christian ministry. It seems fairly certain that his wife either died or left him at the time of his conversion, probably taking the children with her. If this is so, it gives extra poignancy to his comment that he had suffered the loss of all things for the sake of his conversion (Phil. 3:8). The chances are that he thought and wrote that with a difficult glance back to that Jerusalem girl, the toddlers he'd never seen again, the life and infinite possibilities of what might have been... And it gives another angle on his description of his converts as his children.

Paul "counted" the things of this life as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" and his sufferings (Phil. 3:8), so that he would gain the resurrection. Moses likewise rejected the world for the same two reasons: the excellency of sharing the reproach of Christ, and secondly from respect unto the recompense of the reward, at the resurrection. He uses the same word translated "esteemed" when we read of how Moses "esteemed" the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Heb. 11:26). The "reproach" of Christ is the same word used concerning Christ being "reviled" on the cross. Paul felt that the intellectual heights of knowing the mind of our crucified Lord, of being able to enter into the riches than are even now in the mind of Christ (Col. 2:3) more than compensated for his sacrifice of all material things in this life. And Moses was the same; he esteemed the "reproach of Christ", the knowledge that he was sharing the sufferings of his future saviour and would thereby enter the Kingdom which he would make possible, as far greater than the possibility of being King of Egypt. He knew that he was sharing the sufferings of Christ, and that therefore he would be rewarded. It was this knowledge which motivated him in rejecting the riches of Egypt.

Paul could have been such a high flyer; he profited (materially, the Greek could imply) in the Jews' religion above any one else (Gal. 1:14). But he resigned it all. He wrote some majestic words which ought to become the goal of every one of us: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss *for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:7,8). Why did he do it? Not just because he wanted to get salvation. "For the *excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*". For the *excellency* of who Christ is, as *my Lord*, he did it. Grasping the wonder of our salvation in the Lord Jesus should do even more than motivate us to write out a cheque; Paul not only gave, but he counted the things of this life as *dung* (and that's just what it means); he *despised* material advantage. This is a stage beyond just being generous.

3:10- see on Acts 9:16.

Paul spoke of knowing His sufferings, knowing Him [an ellipsis for 'His cross'?] and His resurrection (Phil. 3:10). He poured out the wine, broke the bread, and told His men to do it *in memory* of Him- as if the life they then could remember was the essence of the cross which was to come.

The centrality of the cross is reflected in the way in which to live a life crucified with Jesus is set up as the ultimate aim of the Christian life. We are "becoming conformed [coming towards His *morphe*, His form and appearance] unto his death" (Phil. 3:10 RV). Slowly, our lives are working out towards that end; this is intended by God to be the final position we all reach by the time of our death or the Lord's return; that we will in some vague, feint way, have become conformed to the mind of Jesus as He was at *His* death. And then, our body will be "conformed" (same Greek word) to His at His coming in a physical sense (Phil. 3:21). And this is why we should count all things loss in order to come to know Christ (Phil. 3:8)- which the context suggests we are to read as knowing the spirit of His death. This is why this study of the cross is so vital and central to our lives.

3:12 Relatively late in his career Paul could comment: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect", alluding to the Lord's bidding to be perfect as our Father is (Mt. 5:48). Through this allusion to the Gospels, Paul is showing his own admission of failure to live up to the standard set.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect"- compare with "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect..." (Phil. 3:12,15). In 1 Cor. 13:10, he considers he is 'perfect', and has put away the things of childhood. Thus he saw his spiritual maturity only on account of his being in Christ; for he himself was not "already perfect", he admitted.

3:12- see on Acts 18:18; 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

3:14- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

3:16 It has been observed of Paul: "In Phil. 3 he concludes a fundamental statement of his own Christian conviction by commending his opinion: 'So let those of us who are mature think in this way. And if in any way you think differently, this too will God reveal to you. Only we must stand by that conclusion which we have already reached' (3:15,16). That is: I am sure that mine is a correct, mature, Christian view, and I believe that in God's time, you will in the end share it. But what matters is that you honestly maintain and live by the position you have at present reached".

3:18 The cross of Christ is personified in Phil. 3:18, as if to show that the Lord's whole being and life was crystallized in His cross. He could take the bread and wine with the comment that *right then* His body was being broken and His blood shed (note the present tenses).

We can be active *enemies* of the Lord's cross (Phil. 3:18) unless we carry it, no matter how soporific and unaggressive our lifestyles may be.

3:20- see on Mt. 6:10.

When Paul speaks of redemption, he alludes to the practice of manumission, whereby a slave could be redeemed by his master and given the breathtaking gift of the much coveted Roman citizenship. Paul was a Roman citizen. But he invites all of us to see ourselves as a citizen of a Heavenly state (Phil. 3:20). We learn from Acts 22:26 that Paul was a Roman citizen from birth. The question therefore arises as to how they obtained citizenship. It would not have been through army service, because they were observant Jews (Phil. 3:5) and Jews didn't serve in the army. "The most common origin of this status for Jews outside Palestine was the manumission of Jewish slaves by masters who were themselves Roman citizens. In this case the citizenship was acquired... after one or two generations" [Simon Legasse, 'Paul's pre-Christian career' in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Book Of Acts* Vol. 4 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995) p. 372.]. So it seems Paul had been 'redeemed' by manumission. And yet he uses the very language of manumission about all who are redeemed and freed in Christ. Roman citizenship was the most coveted thing in the Roman empire. Phil. 3:20 claims that we *all* have the coveted citizenship.

3:21 The link between our mortality and humility is brought out in Paul's description of our present state as being "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. 3:21 RV). Believing we are mortal ought to be a humbling thing.

4:2- see on 1 Cor. 14:34.

4:3- see on Mt. 11:29; Eph. 1:5.

4:5 Forbearance and tolerance are to be characteristic of our attitude to others (Eph. 4:2; Phil. 4:5). Paul was aware that on some matters, brethren can quite honestly hold different points of view (Rom. 14:5,6). But there is a difference between tolerance and indifference. The tolerance which is the fruit of the spirit is something hard to cultivate, and it can only spring from love. It's not that we think something doesn't matter... but rather than in sympathy with the other person, we seek to understand why the other person is thinking and behaving as they do. There is some truth in the saying that to know all is to forgive all. And when false doctrine does have to be challenged, the truth must be spoken *in love* (Eph. 4:15). Opponents are to be corrected "with gentleness" (2 Tim. 2:23-25; 1 Pet. 3:15). It is all too easy, knowing the truth as we do, to win the argument but lose the person. And so often I have been guilty of this.

We should preach especially in the last days, knowing that a witness must be made to all nations before the Lord comes; and Phil. 4:5 seems to imply that just because "the Lord is at hand" we should let our "moderation" [RVmg. "gentleness"] be known unto all men" in the hard world of the last days.

4:6 Mt. 6:25 = Phil. 4:6. How do we obey that command to "take no thought for your life"? By praying consciously for every little thing that you need in daily life, e.g. daily bread.

It can be that we take the exhortation to "be careful for nothing" as meaning that we are intended to live a care-free life. But the sentence goes on: "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God", and a few verses later we read of how the Philippians were "careful" to support Paul's ministry in practice (Phil. 4:6,10). The idea is surely that we should have no anxiety or care about the things of this life- and the world in which we live is increasingly preoccupied with the daily issues of existence. The same Greek word for "careful" or "anxious" (RV) is repeatedly used by the Lord in the context of saying we should *not* be anxious (Mt. 6:25,27,28,31,34)- but rather, we should be anxious to serve and hear the Lord in practice. We must "be careful to maintain good works" (Tit. 3:8), "care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25), "care" for the state of others (Phil. 2:20). So the NT teaching is that we should not have the anxious care about our daily existence which characterizes the world, but rather, should translate that into a life of anxiety for *others*. See on Lk. 10:42.

Paul perhaps realized the tendency to make prayer just a list of requests when he commanded his Philippians: "In every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). This is what prayer is all about; an opening up of life before God, not specific requests; a casting of our care upon Him (1 Pet. 5 :7). The believers of the parable told their Lord of the ungrateful behaviour of their brother (Mt. 18:31)- they brought the situation before Him, without asking specifically for something to be done.

4:7 The peace of God fills the mind simply as a result of making our requests known (Phil. 4:6,7). Praying alone in the room, kneeling, maybe at the bedside, pressing your little nose into that mattress as you concentrate your thoughts and requests; the very experience of this close communion will *of itself* enable you to unbend your legs and rise up a new man.

4:9 Ours isn't just a religion like anyone else's; it is *real*, creative life. There is congruence between belief and action, an honest admission of our humanity, just as there was then, and this yet further compels a response in those who see it. Paul could tell the Philippians to think on whatever *things* were true, honest, just, pure etc.; and then boldly say that "Those things [which he has just listed] which ye hath both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these things do" (Phil. 4:8,9 RV). What they had learnt and heard from Paul, they had seen in him. He was the word which he preached made flesh, after the pattern of his Lord. Paul could speak of "my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). His ways, his life, his person, was what he taught- there was congruence between his teaching and himself. And this congruence was consistent- in every place and in every ecclesia, be it in Corinth, Jerusalem or Rome, Paul the person was reflected in the teaching of Paul. The lack of congruence between the message and the life is what is turning people away from the true church in these last days; and yet the opposite is true now as never before. Congruence between life and teaching, to the point that they are one and the same, is powerfully attractive, especially in these days of shallowness of personality, playing out of roles and other forms of hypocrisy. This was why people believed in Jesus.

4:12 - see on Lk. 3:5.

4:16 Paul saw his brethren's need as his personal need. We see this by studying the apparent contradiction between Paul's comment that the Philippians sent support to him repeatedly for *his* necessities (Phil. 4:16), and the way he boasts to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:7) and Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:9) that he did not receive personal financial support from others, but worked with his own hands so as to be self-supporting (see too Acts 20:33-35). Yet he wrote those things at roughly the same time as the Philippians were sending him help towards 'my necessities'. The conclusion seems to be that Paul viewed the necessities of his converts as *his* personal necessities- hence he can say

that the Philippians sent money and support for *his* necessities, whilst at the same time truly stating that he took no *personal* support from his converts.

4:17- see on 1 Thess. 3:12.

Paul prayed that others would bring forth fruit (Col. 1:9,10), and he tells the Philippians (Phil. 4:17) how he is willing to accept donations from them, because he wanted them to bear fruit. We can help others please God- by our prayers for them, and by giving them the opportunities to bear fruit.

The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and in that sense nothing can be given to Him (Ps. 50:8-14). And yet, for our benefit, He asks for sacrifice to be given to Him. Paul likewise asked the Philippians for an offering: "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire (spiritual) fruit that may abound to your account" (Phil. 4:17). Prayer is one of the new covenant's equivalents of the sacrifices.

4:18- see on Jn. 12:3.

COLOSSIANS

1:5 It's an upward spiral. We have "love toward all the saints, because of the hope which *is* laid up for you" (Col. 1:5 RV). If we doubt the hope, thinking we don't know if we will be accepted or not... there isn't much inspiration to love our brethren with the similar senseless grace which *we* have experienced.

1:6 Paul enthuses that the Colossians were in the good ground category: the Gospel "*bringeth forth fruit... in you, since the day ye heard*" (Col. 1:6).

The important doctrines of the basic Gospel bring forth the fruit of spirituality in the converts (Col. 1:6). The *euangelion* is pictured in Colossians 1 as a mighty, personal force working powerfully in the lives of men and women. It produced fruit, i.e. concrete actions (Philemon 11). The Gospel gives "understanding *that ye might walk worthy*" (Col. 1:9,10). We bear fruit and increase in this "by the [increasing] knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10 RVmg.). Thus we are to be renewed in knowledge, finding full assurance of our salvation in *understanding* (Col. 2:2; 3:10). The Hebrew word for "understanding" is also that for "certainty"- e.g. Josh. 23:13 "Know for a *certainty...*" [s.w. "understanding"]. To understand is to be sure, in God's language. Understanding, "being filled with the knowledge of his will", *does* have a place in determining our daily walk in Christ. What and how we understand, and thereby what we believe, *does* therefore matter.

1:9 Paul wishes that the Colossians would be "filled with the knowledge of his will" (Col. 1:9), just as at his conversion he had been chosen so "that thou shouldest know his will" (Acts 22:14). He wanted them to share the radical nature of conversion which he had gone through; the sense of life turned round; of new direction... See on Acts 13:11.

1:10- see on Col. 2:1.

1:12 When Col. 1:12 speaks of our sharing in the inheritance of the holy ones in light, he may well have Angels in mind- we shall become like the Angels (Lk. 20:35,36).

1:13 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness (cp. Egypt, 1 Pet.2:9,10), and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear son; in whom we have (now) redemption through His blood... for by Him were all things created (the new, spiritual creation of believers is finished in prospect)... you... now hath he reconciled... *if ye continue in the faith... whereunto I also labour, striving...*" (Col.1:13,14,16,21,23,29). This shows how our comprising the Kingdom in prospect is dependent upon our continued personal effort. The contention is sometimes made in discussion with those who wrongly believe that the Kingdom in its full sense is the church of today that "into" in Col.1:13 can mean 'for'. However, the Greek preposition 'eis' means 'in the interior, into, indicating the point reached or entered' (Strong). Thus Phillip and the Eunuch "went down both into (Gk: 'eis') the water" (Acts 8:38)- from which we correctly argue that baptism is by full immersion into water. However, it is true that at times 'eis' is translated with the idea of 'towards', although this is not its primary meaning. The rest of the quotation from Col.1 made above would suggest that we should understand 'eis' here in its normal meaning.

1:15 The creation record in Genesis 2 is not about a different creation; it is a more detailed account of how the Angels went about fulfilling the command they were given on the sixth day. The process of bringing all the animals to Adam, him naming them, becoming disappointed with them, wishing for a true partner need not therefore be compressed into 24 hours. It could have taken a period of time. Yet the command to make man, male and female, was given on the sixth day. However, this may have taken far longer than 24 hours to complete. Indeed, the real intention of God to create man in His image was not finished even then; for Col. 1:15 interprets the creation of a man in God's image as a reference to the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus. *This* was what the Angels had worked for millennia for, in order to fulfil the original fiat concerning the creation of man in God's image. Even now, we see not yet all things subdued under Him (Heb. 2:8); the intention that the man should have dominion over all creation as uttered *and apparently fulfilled* on

the sixth day has yet to materially come to pass. The Angels are still working- with us. For 1 Cor. 15:49 teaches that *we* do not now fully have God's image, but we will receive it at the resurrection. Therefore we are driven to the conclusion that the outworking of the creation directives regarding man in God's image was not only in the 24 hours after it was given, but is still working itself out now. The new creation is therefore a continuation of and an essential part of the natural creation; not just a mirror of the natural in spiritual terms. See on 2 Cor. 4:6.

Jesus is described as the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), a phrase which is parallel to "the firstborn of every creature" or creation (Col. 1:15 R.V.). He therefore speaks of himself as "the first begotten of the dead... the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14). Jesus was the first of a new creation of immortal men and women, whose resurrection and full birth as the immortal sons of God has been made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus (Eph. 2:10; 4:23,24; 2 Cor. 5:17). "In Christ shall all (true believers) be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:22,23). This is just the same idea as in Col. 1. Jesus was the first person to rise from the dead and be given immortality, he was the first of the new creation, and the true believers will follow his pattern at his return.

Col. 1:15-20 is another poetic fragment which is misunderstood by those seeking to justify the false idea of a personal pre-existence of the Lord; it has been identified as a Jewish hymn which Paul modified (see on Phil. 2:6). We must remember that Paul was inspired by God to answer the claims of false teachers; and he was doing so by using and re-interpreting the terms which they used.

Colossians 1:15-18: By Jesus Were All Things Created

"The firstborn of every creature: for by (Jesus) were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead..." (Col. 1:15-18). This is typical of those passages which can give the impression that Jesus actually created the earth.

1. If this were true, then so many other passages are contradicted which teach that Jesus did not exist before his birth. The record in Genesis clearly teaches that God was the creator. Either Jesus or God were the creator; if we say that Jesus was the creator while Genesis says that God was, we are saying that Jesus was directly equal to God. In this case it is impossible to explain the many verses which show the differences between God and Jesus (see *Bible Basics* Study 8.2 for examples of these).

2. Jesus was the "firstborn", which implies a beginning. There is no proof that Jesus was God's "firstborn" before the creation of the literal earth. Passages like 2 Sam. 7:14 and Ps. 89:27 predicted that a literal descendant of David would become God's firstborn. He was clearly not in existence at the time those passages were written, and therefore not at the time of the Genesis creation either. Jesus became "the Son of God with power" by his resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). God "has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten you" (Acts 13:32,33). Thus Jesus became God's firstborn by his resurrection. Note too that a son standing at his father's right hand is associated with being the firstborn (Gen. 48:13-16), and Christ was exalted to God's right hand after his resurrection (Acts 2:32 R.V.mg.; Heb. 1:3).

3. It is in this sense that Jesus is described as the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), a phrase which is parallel to "the firstborn of every creature" or creation (Col. 1:15 R.V.). He therefore speaks of himself as "the first begotten of the dead... the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14). Jesus was the first of a new creation of immortal men and women, whose resurrection and full birth as the immortal sons of God has been made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus (Eph. 2:10; 4:23,24; 2 Cor. 5:17). "In Christ shall all (true believers) be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:22,23).

This is just the same idea as in Col. 1. Jesus was the first person to rise from the dead and be given immortality, he was the first of the new creation, and the true believers will follow his pattern at his return.

4. The creation spoken about in Col. 1 therefore refers to the new creation, rather than that of Genesis. Through the work of Jesus “were all things created...thrones...dominions” etc. Paul does not say that Jesus created all things and then give examples of rivers, mountains, birds etc. The elements of this new creation refer to those rewards which we will have in God’s Kingdom.

“Thrones... dominions” etc. refer to how the raised believers will be “kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10). These things were made possible by the work of Jesus. “In him were all things created in the heavens” (Col. 1:16 R.V.). In Eph. 2:6 we read of the believers who are in Christ as sitting in “heavenly places”. If any man is in Christ by baptism, he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). By being in Christ we are saved by His death (Col. 1:22). The literal planet could not be created by being in Christ. Thus these verses are teaching that the exalted spiritual position which we can now have, as well as that which we will experience in the future, has all been made possible by Christ. The “heavens and earth” contain “all things that needed reconciliation by the blood of (Christ’s) cross” (Col. 1:16,20), showing that the “all things...in heaven” refer to the believers who now sit in “heavenly places...in Christ Jesus”, rather than to all physical things around us.

5. If Jesus were the creator, it is strange how He should say: “...from the beginning of the creation God made them...” (Mk. 10:6). This surely sounds as if He understood God to be the creator, not He Himself. And if He literally created everything in Heaven, this would include God.

6. That "by him" is a poor translation is readily testified by reliable scholars. Take J.H. Moulton: "for *because of him* [Jesus]..." (1); or the *Expositor's Greek Commentary*: "*en auto*: This does not mean "by Him"" (2).

7. Many of Paul's more difficult passages are understandable once it is appreciated that he is alluding to existing Jewish and Gentile literature which was familiar to his readers. He does this in order to deconstruct it and give the Lord Jesus His rightful place of exaltation. There are a number of connections between Col. 1:15-20 and Jewish Wisdom theology concerning Adam and the mystical "heavenly man". The terms "image of God" and "firstborn" refer to Adam; it's as if Paul is showing that Jesus should be afforded the place of all exaltation, and not the mystical "Adam" or "Heavenly Adam" which Judaism then believed in (3). Another possibility, not necessarily mutually exclusive, is that Paul is alluding to and even quoting a "pre-Christian Gnostic redeemer hymn" (4)- and seeking to demonstrate that Jesus is the true redeemer. We may apply the words of a well known song or character to someone we know, in order to show the similarities and bring out the contrasts; but the correspondence isn't 100%. And so with the manner in which Paul quotes Gentile or Jewish literature and terminology about Jesus- not every word must be literalistically pressed into relevance to Him. It's like the idea of types- Joseph was a type of Christ, but not *everything* about Joseph was true of Christ. We need to be aware that Paul didn't sit down to right theology sitting in an ivory tower university, or because he just felt like delving into these matters for the pure intellectual buzz of it. His letters are all missionary documents, born out of real life situations in his work of preaching and then pastorally caring for his immature converts. He was dealing with attacks upon his tender babes in Christ by Jewish and Gentile false teachers; there was no written New Testament, and the Christian message was in competition with the 'scriptures' of the surrounding religions. So it's hardly surprising that Paul so often alludes to their terminology and literature in order to deconstruct it.

8. It should be noted, as a general point, that God the Father *alone, exclusively*, is described as the creator in many passages (e.g. Is. 44:24; Is. 45:12; Is. 48:13; Is. 66:2). These passages simply leave no room for the Son to have also created the literal planet.

9. It could also be argued that the hymn to Jesus here in Colossians 1 is speaking of how God views Jesus. “He is “firstborn of all creation”- not in time, but in the Father’s mind” (5). To God, Jesus

was the beginning, in everything He was *en pasin autos proteuon*- in all things He held first place (Col. 1:18). But where and how? In the Father's mind. It was God who created the world. But for God, in the context of creation, Jesus His Son was pre-eminent.

James Dunn comments on Col. 1:20: "Christ is being identified here not with a pre-existent being but with the creative power and action of God... There is no indication that Jesus thought or spoke of himself as having pre-existed with God prior to his birth" (6).

Notes

(1) J.H. Moulton, *Grammar Of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) Vol. 3 p. 253.

(2) W.R. Nicoll, ed., *Expositor's Greek Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) p. 504.

(3) This case is made at length in H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) pp. 78-86.

(4) See E. Käsemann, "A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy" in *Essays On New Testament Themes* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1964) pp. 149-168.

(5) Thomas Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1993) p. 138.

(6) James Dunn, *Christology In The Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) p. 254.

1:16 Paul at times quotes from or alludes to popular Jewish ideas with which he may not have necessarily agreed. The lack of quotation marks in New Testament Greek means that it's hard for us at this distance to discern when he does this – but it seems to me that it's going on a lot in his writings. Thus he uses the phrase "your whole spirit, soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23), a popular Jewish expression for 'the whole person' – but it's clear from the rest of Paul's writings that he didn't see the body and soul as so separate. Likewise he uses the term "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers" in Col. 1:16 – a Jewish rabbinic term which expressed their idea of "the various gradations of angelic spirits". But it's doubtful he believed in this himself.

1:19- see on Eph. 3:19.

1:20 God has reconciled all of us into Himself through the work of Jesus (Col. 1:20 RVmg.); reconciliation with God is therefore related, inextricably, to reconciliation with each other. The fact that believers in Christ remain so bitterly unreconciled is a sober, sober issue. For it would appear that without reconciliation to each other, we are not reconciled to God. All we can do is to ensure that any unreconciled issues between us and our brethren are not ultimately our fault.

1:22 The Lord Jesus through the cross can "present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable". Yet by our preaching we "may present every man perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:22,28). The connection is clear: because we are being presented perfect in Christ through belief and baptism, we preach the opportunity of this experience to others. Likewise the Law often stressed that on account of Israel's experience of being redeemed from Egypt, they were to witness a similar grace to their neighbours and to their brethren. See on Jude 24.

1:23- see on Lk. 6:48.

1:24 It has been perceptively commented: "The work of Christ in one sense is complete, but in another sense it is not complete until all men have known it and been reconciled to God by it. He is dependent on men and women to take it out and to make it known. He who accepts this task of bringing the message of the work of Christ to men may well be said to complete the sufferings of Christ". Every leaflet we distribute, every conversation we start, every banknote we put to the Lord's work... through all this we are extending the victory of the Lord in ways which would otherwise never occur. Thus Paul can say that in his work of preaching and upbuilding, he was filling up the sufferings of Christ (Col. 1:24). By the cross, all things were reconciled, but this is only made operative in practice *if* men "continue in the faith", which Paul suffered in order to

enable (Col. 1:20-23). This is the context in which Paul speaks of fulfilling the cross. Thus Paul speaks of filling up "the afflictions of Christ" in his life (Col. 1:24), but uses the very same word to describe the "afflictions" [s.w.] which he suffered for his brethren (Eph. 3:13). The sufferings of the Lord become powerful and continue to bring forth fruit in human lives- through our response to them.

1:25 Knowing the Gospel somehow compels us to testify of it. "The word (*logos*) of God", a phrase which the NT mainly uses with reference to the Gospel rather than the whole Bible, is sometimes used as parallel to the idea of preaching the Gospel (Rev. 1:9; 6:9; 20:4 and especially Col. 1:25).

1:27 At baptism, the "new man" was created within us; the man Christ Jesus was formed in us, a new birth occurred, the real, essential Duncan or Dave or Deirdre or Danuta became [potentially at least] 'Jesus Christ', "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). This is how important this matter is. Perceiving the Christ-man within yourself is related to your "hope of glory"; this is the assurance of our future salvation, through which we can have all joy and peace through believing.

1:28 Elders should desire to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28), as Christ will "present (us) holy and unblameable" (Col. 1:22), as a spotless bride (Eph. 5:27). The relationship between Christ and the ecclesia is to be mirrored within the ecclesia. See on Eph. 5:31.

1:29- see on Lk. 13:24.

Paul can say that he has not yet become complete (Phil. 3:10-14) and yet he seeks to present each of his converts "complete in Christ" (Col. 1:29). He recognized that he too hadn't got to where he was seeking to take his converts.

2:1- see on Rom. 9:3.

Appreciating that prayer is so much "in the spirit", we can better grasp why prayer is portrayed as a struggle. Moab would pray in the time of his judgment; "but he shall not prevail" (Is. 16:12), as if the prayer process was a struggle. Jacob, by contrast, struggled with the Angel in prayer and prevailed (Hos. 12:2-4). The Romans were to strive together with Paul in prayer (Rom. 15:30); the Lord's prayers in Gethsemane were a resisting / struggling unto the point of sweating blood (Heb. 12:2). "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have [RV 'how greatly I strive / struggle'] for you... that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding" is parallel to "We do not cease to pray for you... that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 2:1 cp. 1:9,10). Paul's conflict / struggle for them was his prayer for them. Epaphras likewise was "always striving for you in his prayers" (Col. 4:12 RV).

2:2 He who fears the Lord, "him shall he teach in the way that he [God] shall choose" (Ps. 25:12). The Father opens up new ways of understanding for us each, of His choosing and according to our individual needs, in response to our living a God-fearing life. If our hearts are knit together in brotherly love, the more we will understand- for true understanding is, in the end, to fathom the depths of God's love (Col. 2:2).

2:3- see on Mt. 13:46.

"The wisdom of God was in the midst of him" (1 Kings 3:28 AVmg.) is alluded to in Col. 2:3- clearly seeing Solomon as a type of Christ.

2:6 As we received Christ Jesus as Lord at baptism, so we *live* daily in Him; our baptism experience is lived out throughout daily life (Col. 2:6). Thus Paul spoke of how he died daily so that he might share in the Lord's resurrection life (1 Cor. 15:31). We always bear about in our body the spirit of the Lord Jesus in His time of dying, so that His life might be made manifest in our mortal flesh even now (the use of "mortal flesh" indicates that this is not a reference to the future resurrection). In this way the process of dying to the flesh works life in us (2 Cor. 4:10-12). See on Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 1:23.

2:7- see on Lk. 6:48.

2:8 - see on Mt. 24:4.

2:9 Colossians and Ephesians emphasize the reconciling of both Christians and Angels through the death of Christ, perhaps due to the cross taking away the Angel-coordinated Mosaic system which separated man from God and the Angels. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things (a phrase which elsewhere includes Angels- e. g. Heb. 2:8) unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in Heaven" (Col. 1:20). What are the things in earth and Heaven if they are not Christians and Angels? In Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9)- the fulness of Gentiles, Jews and Angels. "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power (i. e. Angels- Col. 2:15)"- 2:10. As Christ is the head of the Angels, so if we are in the body of Christ, He is our head too, and we are therefore with the Angels in the same body. There is thus no need to worship them, nor the Mosaic ordinances they instituted. This seems to be a major theme in Col. 2 "Let no man beguile you of your reward in... worshipping of Angels... and not holding the Head (Christ), from which all the body (both Christians and Angels, whose head is Christ, v. 10,15) by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together (Angels and Christians!) increaseth (both of us growing in knowledge of God) with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the elements of the (Mosaic/ Angelic) world, are ye subject to (Mosaic/ Angelic) ordinances... ?" (v. 18-20). The evident similarities between Colossians and Ephesians invite us to interpret Ephesians 1 in the same way: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth (Angels and Christians, Jews and Gentiles)... in whom we also (as well as Angels- it is hard to understand why Paul, being a Jew, should speak like this about Gentiles also, as well as Jews, obtaining an inheritance) have obtained an inheritance... (God) raised (Christ) from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the Heavenly places, far above all principality and power (i. e. Angels- Col. 2:15), and might, and dominion (Angels- Jude 8,9), and every name that is named (Christ "hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name" than Angels- Heb. 1:4), not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things (literally all things- including Angels) under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:10,11,20-23). The reference in Eph. 3:15 to "the whole family in Heaven and earth" probably refers to the Angelic and human parts of the family of God in Heaven and earth respectively being united by the sacrifice of Christ. Christ's parables of the lost coin and lost sheep lend support to this. The woman and the shepherd on one level represent Jesus searching for the lost saint, calling together the friends to rejoice on finding him (Lk. 15:9,29). These friends represent Angels, we are told (v. 10). However, those in the ecclesia are also members of God's household; Christ laid down His life for us His friends; "Ye are My friends... I have called you friends" (Jn. 15:13-15). The parables of Luke 15 were initially directed at the Pharisees, implying that they as the shepherds of the ecclesia should be mixing with the weak of the flock to win them back (Lk. 15:2-4; n. b. "which man of you..."). Thus Jesus also expected the woman, shepherd and friends to refer to members of the ecclesia on earth. Yet He also specifically says that they have reference to the Angelic household in Heaven. Thus both Angels and earthly believers are part of the same "family in Heaven and earth" of Eph. 3:15. See on Jude 6; Heb. 9:23.

Col. 2:8,9 reasons that because in Christ dwells all the fullness of God, so far is He exalted, that we therefore should not follow *men*. A man or woman who is truly awed by the height of the Lord's exaltation simply will not allow themselves to get caught up in personality cults based around individuals, even if they are within the brotherhood.

Many of the 'difficult passages' in the New Testament are only difficult because they are alluding to, and even quoting phrases from, popular contemporary ideas and writings and seeking to deconstruct them. This technique is found throughout the Bible, especially with respect to false yet popular

ideas about evil. To take an example: Valentinus taught in the second century that there was a *pleroma*, a "fullness of the Godhead", comprised of 30 aeons of time. Like most thinkers, he was drawing on ideas that had circulated a century before him, and so it's reasonable to think that the philosophical idea of a "fullness of the Godhead" was around in the first century. And Paul uses just this phrase when explaining how the entire fullness of the Godhead was to be found in the person of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:9). No need for philosophy and wild guesses at the structure of God. The fullness of the Godhead was and is in the personality of Jesus. However, this isn't Paul's only allusion to this idea. The lowest of the 30 aeons, Sophia, "yielded to an ungovernable desire to apprehend [God's] nature". And Paul alludes to this in Phil. 2:6,7, saying that Jesus by contrast didn't even consider apprehending God's nature, but instead made Himself a servant of all. As more and more is known of the literature and ideas which were extant in the first century, it becomes the more evident that Paul's writings are full of allusions to it- allusions which seek to deconstruct these ideas, replacing them with the true; and by doing so, presenting the Truth of the Gospel in the terms and language of the day, just as we seek to.

Colossians 2:9: "Christ... In whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"

The Lord Jesus has now been exalted to Heaven, and shares God's nature. This verse refers to how Jesus is now, after His resurrection, and not how He was during His mortal life on earth. Reading the rest of Colossians chapter 2, we see that Paul is writing to counter various heresies that were being introduced to the ecclesia in Colosse- especially those which required a return to the Law of Moses. Yet Paul reasons that now God supremely "dwells" or 'tents' in Jesus- not in the Jewish tabernacle or temple (Jn. 1:14; 2:19). He emphasizes the supremacy of Jesus; His greatness. Because the Jewish false teachers were trying to persuade the Christian converts to join Judaism and devalue Jesus. Paul isn't saying that Jesus is God Himself. Rather is he saying that the fullness of God's personality and glory is manifested in the person of Jesus.

"All the fullness"

The Greek word for "fullness" is *pleroma* - the same word is also found in Col. 1:19, regarding how all God's "fullness" dwelt in Jesus. Although the Lord Jesus had human nature, He never sinned; and thus was full of the God's personality and character. To know Jesus was to know God- for He was and is God's Son, and indeed the perfect replica of Him in human form.

The fullness which is Christ's- and His "fullness" is God's fullness- is shared with us: "Of His fullness have all we received" (Jn. 1:16). In this sense the church, as the body of Christ, is "the fullness of Him that fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23; 4:13). Through knowing Christ, the believers are therefore "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19). So the fact that Jesus had "all the fullness of God" doesn't make Him "God" Himself in person; because we will not become God Himself in person because we are filled with God's fullness; any more than a son *is* his father. In the same way as Christ's body after His resurrection was filled with the Spirit and nature of God- so will ours be (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:20,21).

The Colossian Heresy

It's clear that Paul was writing his letter to the Colossians in order to combat some specific heresies which were developing there. We can try to reason back from what Paul wrote, to get some idea of the false teachings that were being circulated. The words "fullness" and "bodily" are terms which were common amongst the Gnostics. The Gnostic heresy was developing at the time Paul wrote to the Colossians. The Gnostics spoke about how they had a "fullness of knowledge" which Christians only had part of. The 2010 Wikipedia article about Gnosticism defined it as: "Gnostic systems are typically marked out by... The notion of a remote, supreme source - this figure is known under a variety of names, including '*Pleroma*' (fullness, totality)... The heavenly *pleroma* is [understood as]

the centre of divine life, a region of light "above" our world... Jesus is interpreted as an intermediary aeon who was sent from the *pleroma*... The term is thus a central element of Gnostic cosmology". Paul was deconstructing and correcting these ideas. The fullness of God Himself was manifested in one specific person- the risen Lord Jesus. This "fullness" wasn't some "region of light"- it was an actual person, i.e. the Lord Jesus. It's been shown that Colosse was a centre of Gnosticism, and that many Jews living there had mixed their ideas with it (1). William Barclay makes the point that "There was not infrequently a strange alliance between Gnosticism and Judaism; and it is just such an alliance that we find in Colosse, where... there were many Jews" (2).

The Gnostics believed that all matter was hopelessly evil, including the human body. Paul is arguing against this by pointing out that the Lord Jesus even now has a body, which is full of God's fullness in a bodily way. William Barclay explains further: "If matter was altogether evil and if Jesus was the Son of God, then Jesus could not have had a flesh and blood body so the Gnostic argued. He must have been a kind of spiritual phantom. So the Gnostic romances say that when Jesus walked, he left no footprints on the ground. This, of course, completely removed Jesus from humanity and made it impossible for him to be the Saviour of men. It was to meet this Gnostic doctrine that Paul insisted on the flesh and blood body of Jesus and insisted that Jesus saved men in the body of his flesh" (3).

Notes

(1) Edwin Yamauchi, "Sectarian Parallels: Qumran and Colosse," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121:482 (April 1964): 141-152, online at http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bsac/gnosis_yamauchi.pdf

(2) William Barclay, *The Daily Bible Study Series: Colossians* (Westminster John Knox Press: 1976).

(3) Barclay, *op cit*.

2:11 Col. 2:11-15 describe the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus as His 'circumcision'. The cross did something intimate and personal to Him. Through the process of His death, He 'put right off the body of his flesh' (RVmg.). He shed His humanity. The saying goodbye to His mother, the statement that she was no longer His mother but just a woman to Him, was, it would seem, the very last divesting of 'the body of his flesh'. It seems to me that such was His love of her, so strong was His human connection to her who gave Him His human connection, that the relationship with her was the hardest and in fact the final aspect of humanity which He 'put off' through the experience of crucifixion. And this is why, once He had done so, He died.

2:13 Christ died and rose so that He might be made Lord of His people (Rom. 14:9); if we believe in His resurrection and subsequent Lordship, He will be the Lord of our lives, Lord of every motion of our hearts. We are yet in our sins, if Christ be not risen (1 Cor. 15:17). But He has risen, and therefore we are no longer dominated by our moral weakness. Because baptism united us with His resurrection, we are no longer in our sins (Col. 2:13). Therefore the baptized believer will not "continue in sin" if he really understand and believes this (Rom. 6:1 and context). Ours is the life of freedom with Him, for He was and is our representative [note that He represents us now, in His freedom and eternal life, just as much as He did in His death].

Baptism is to be associated with the ancient rite of circumcision. The Lord Jesus Himself as it were circumcises men at their baptism, cutting off the flesh of their past lives, and thereby inviting them to live in a manner appropriate to what He has done for them (Col. 2:11-13).

2:14 in the context of baptism and warning believers not to return to the Law, he argues "If ye be dead with Christ (in baptism) from the rudiments of the (Jewish) world, why, as though living in the (Jewish) world, (i.e. under the Law) are ye subject to (Mosaic) ordinances...?" (:20). The Law was "against us... contrary to us" (Col. 2:14) – hence it being called an adversary/Satan. The natural Jews under the Mosaic Law, as opposed to the Abrahamic covenant regarding Christ, are called "the

children of the flesh” (Rom. 9:8). Similarly those under the Law are paralleled with the son of the bondwoman “born after the flesh” (Gal. 4:23). Paul reasons: “Are you now made perfect by the flesh?... received you the Spirit by the works of the Law?” (Gal. 3:2,3) – as if “by the flesh” is equivalent to “by the law”. Now we can understand why Heb. 7:16–18 speaks of “The Law of a carnal commandment... The weakness and unprofitableness thereof”. Not only is the word “carnal” used with distinctly fleshly overtones elsewhere, but the law being described as “weak” invites connection with phrases like “the flesh is weak” (Mt. 26:41). Rom. 8:3 therefore describes the Law as “weak through the flesh”. See on Rom. 8:3.

2:15- see on Lk. 11:22.

Disarmed [NIV]- an allusion to 1 Sam. 17:51.

The binding of the strong man in the parable was done by the death of Christ. One of the spoils we have taken from his house is the fact we don't need to keep the Mosaic Law (Mt. 12:29 = Col. 2:15).

2:17 Bible students have long recognized a 'prophetic perfect' tense in Hebrew, whereby the future is spoken of as having already happened. This not only reflects the utter certainty of God's words coming true, it also reflects God's way of looking at issues without time, in the sense that God is beyond time. Thus when He told Abraham that He *had made him* (not 'will make you') a great nation, this reflected the way that God already saw Abraham as a father of many. Things which don't yet exist for us do *actually* exist for God (Rom. 4:17). The Law was a *shadow* of Christ (Col. 2:17) even when Christ didn't physically exist. Yet a shadow implies the real existence of the object. The Law reflected God's knowledge of the Lord Jesus; to Him, the Lord did in that sense pre-exist, although we know that literally He didn't. Likewise Levi was seen by God as paying tithes whilst he was still as it were within Abraham's body (Heb. 7:9,10), and the dead believers are likened to spectators in a stadium, cheering us on as we race the race of this life (Heb. 12:1).

Paul's statement that God has made public display for ridicule (*edeigmatisen en parrêsia*) of the “rulers and authorities” is alluding to a phrase which occurs in the Jewish writings about the supposed Satanic rulers of this present world. But Paul says that God displays them for what they are and thereby holds them up to ridicule (Col. 2:17), rather like Elijah mocking the non-existence of Baal. In Col 2:8,20 and Gal 4:3, 8–10, Paul says that believers are no longer subject to the “elements of the cosmos” (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*) – again, a term the Jews used to describe supposed sinful Angels ruling the cosmos. He's deconstructing these ideas rather than supporting them.

2:18 If we let ourselves act against our conscience, we are *now* condemned (Rom. 14:23). If we judge another, “thou condemnest [present tense] thyself” (Rom. 2:1). We must not let false teachers “judge against you” (Col. 2:18 AVmg.) in the sense that by following them we can let them as it were pass the verdict of condemnation upon us, here and now.

2:19 The Lord Jesus, as the Head, *ministers* nourishment to the body (Col. 2:19). But how? The same word is used in the parallel Eph. 4:16: every joint of the body *supplies* (s.w.) the rest of the body with nourishment. The Lord's work of ministering to us is articulated through us His servants. This is why faith can die in individuals and ecclesias, simply because brethren and sisters are not ministering strength to others. We should seriously consider our words, spoken and written, our motivation, whether or not we challenge a brother or sister over something, the direction of our conversations... for we can obstruct the grace and nourishment of Christ by our raising of that which pulls down rather than builds up. Likewise Col. 2:19 says that God gives increase to the body; but Eph. 4:16 uses the same Greek in saying how the body makes increase of itself in love. It occurs again in Eph. 2:21: “all the building fitly framed together *groweth* unto an holy temple”. This is all so weighty in its implication. Our duty is not merely to retain a correct understanding of certain propositional truths, and ourselves live a reasonable life. The welfare of all others in the body has

been delegated to us. Their salvation and perhaps their eternal rejection lays in our hands, to some extent. See on Eph. 4:16.

3:1 The structure of Paul's letters shows very clearly the link between doctrine and practice. Colossians 1 and 2 are pure theology, the precise, analytical Paul at his most flowing, intellectually devastating and persuasive; but "*then...*" (3:1) we are lead on to another two chapters of the practical implications of this. This theology / doctrinal treatise and the pivotal, crucial *then... therefore...* is likewise the turning point of Romans (12:1), Galatians (6:1-10), Ephesians (4:1) and Philippians (4:1). His theology, his doctrine, always ends in an ethical demand (see too 1 Thess. 5 and 2 Thess. 3). To use pompous words, our orthodoxy (right doctrine) must lead to orthopraxy (right behaviour).

3:3 When we were baptized, *we died* to the natural life, and therefore the only life we have is the life which we are given by reason of our association with the resurrected Lord Jesus. And therefore our spiritual life must be the central thing in our existence- not a hobby. As I dried myself off after my baptism, I opened my Bible at 'random', and came with marvellous appropriacy to Prov. 23:26: "My son, give me *thine heart*". And Paul taught the same: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). "The love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that (Christ) has died for all (believers); therefore all have died. And He died for all (of us), that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised... therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old (life) has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:14-17 RSV). "I was co-crucified with Christ (Gk.): nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me" (Gal. 2:20). And "The love of Christ constrains us", it shuts us up with no other real way to move, as the Greek implies.

3:4- see on 1 Cor. 15:20.

If we believe we really will be there, then we will look more earnestly for the day to come. We can never be truly enthusiastic about the Lord's return if we are unsure about our ultimate acceptance at His hand. Because we are *sure* that "When Christ... shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory. Mortify *therefore* your members which are upon the earth; fornication..." etc. (Col. 3:4,5). We don't control ourselves because we think this will make us good enough to be accepted, but rather because we believe that we have already been accepted. By grace alone.

3:5 Paul saw Mt. 5:29, 30 in a sexual context (= Col. 3:5); which fits the context of Mt. 5:28.

The Colossians still had to "put to death" things like fornication, even though they had put them to death in baptism (Col. 3:5 = Rom. 6:6). Yet they are described as having formerly lived in those things, as if now, they don't do them (Col. 3:7). Yet clearly they did still do those things. Again, Paul is saying that they don't do those things by status, in God's eyes, therefore they shouldn't do them in practice.

3:10 Because in status we have 'put on the new man', "put on, therefore... mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind", i.e. bring forth in yourself the characteristics of Jesus, seeing you have 'put Him on' in baptism (Col. 3:10,12). Clothe your personality with Him, submerge yourself within Him, seeing you 'put on' Christ in baptism.

The Lord Jesus is set up in so many ways as the example for us to follow- in a way that some cosmic being descending from outer space never could have been. In the same way as Jesus was the image of the invisible God in His character (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4), so we are bidden put on the image of God (Col. 3:10), being transformed into His image progressively over time (2 Cor. 3:18), through "the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2), being conformed to the image of Jesus our Saviour (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49). Thus the *process* of our redemption, through the perfect character of Jesus, becomes in turn a *personal pattern* for each of us who have been saved by that process. And it was only through the successful completion of that work of redemption that Jesus was "made" Lord of all (Rom. 1:4; Acts 2:36). This is a different picture to the Gnostic-Trinitarian

idea of a pre-existent Lord of all descending to earth. Further, their theory gets somewhat confused when they claim that the Angelic appearances on earth in Old Testament times [e.g. the Angel with Israel in the wilderness] were actually appearances of Jesus on earth. If this is so, then *when* did Jesus come to earth to save men? Did He make several visits...? Why couldn't each of these visits have been enough for human salvation? The idea that the Lord Jesus was an Old Testament Angel is simply unsustainable in Scripture and needs to be rejected, along with all Gnostic-influenced views of Him. We know from Acts 14:11 that there was a strong tendency in the first century to believe that the gods could come to earth in the likeness of men; and Trinitarianism simply reflects the fact that weak Christians in the early centuries sought to accommodate Christianity to their existing beliefs.

3:11 In the "new man" whom we have "put on", i.e. Christ, "there *cannot be* Greek and Jew" etc (Col. 3:11 RV). But we have to do something in order to bring this about- mere baptism isn't enough. Paul continues: "Put on *therefore*... a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience" (Col. 3:12). If we are "in Christ", there "cannot be" division in that body- if there is, from our perspective, then surely we are proclaiming ourselves to be not of that body. But in order to actualize being "in Christ", we have to *therefore* show kindness, humility, patience etc. *in order that* there will not be division. We have to live out in practice the status which we have been given at baptism, of being "in" the undivided, indivisible Christ.

3:13 The axe is laid to the root of all us trees. It's as if we haven't brought forth the fruit we should, and the husbandman has just tapped us with His axe, ready to cut us down- unless we change and start bringing forth good fruit (Lk. 3:9). This is how serious our position is. We are as the weak army against whom the Lord Jesus comes with an infinitely stronger one, we are as those who have made a quarrel with Him (Col. 3:13). And we must urgently seek reconciliation; for time is short. Those who are thankfully redeemed in Christ, now lovingly reconciled to Him, are described as blind, starving prisoners, bound in the darkness, awaiting execution (Ps. 107:14; Is. 42:7; 49:9; 61:1; Zech. 9:11).

3:14- see on 1 Cor. 13:11.

Moses' spiritual pinnacle was characterized by arriving at a profound depth of love. Love is likewise seen by Paul as "the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14), the sign of ultimate maturity.

3:15 We are called to the hope of the Kingdom "in one body" (Col. 3:15); all who receive the call of the true Gospel are in the same one body. There is one body, based around sharing the one faith, one hope, understanding of the one Father and Son, having participated in the one baptism (Eph. 4:4-6). So whoever believes the doctrines of the basic Gospel and has been baptized and walks in Christ, we have a duty (and should have a desire) to fellowship. The need for unity amongst us is so very often stressed (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:5,6; Phil. 2:2; Eph. 4:31,32; Col. 3:12-15).

3:16- see on 1 Pet. 2:5.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16) may well be an allusion to the tradition of learning the Gospel of Mark. How can it *richly* dwell in us if we do not daily meditate upon those inspired records?

There are connections between praise and forgiveness of sin. Col. 3:16 speaks of communal hymn singing as a means of "admonishing" each other- and the Greek translated "admonish" here means just that (cp. Tit. 3:10). The connection between praise and confession / forgiveness makes this appropriate. It may be that Paul is writing with his eye on Dt. 32; the Song of Moses spoke of Israel's weakness and proneness to apostasy. Yet they were bidden sing this to each other. Would anything like that get into a Christian hymn book today?

4:4- see on Mt. 26:35.

See on Eph. 6:20. Paul himself admits a tendency not to preach, to hold back from giving his all to fulfil that commission he had received to testify of the Gospel of God's grace (1 Cor. 9:16). He asks his brethren to pray that he would be able to "make it manifest" more than he did (Col. 4:4 cp. Eph. 6:20).

4:5 In a preaching context, Paul tells us to "redeem the time", or "be buying up the opportunity" (Col. 4:5 RVmg.); we are to urgently snap up every opportunity to preach.

Closer analysis of "redeeming the time" reveals that this is in fact a quotation from the LXX of Dan. 2:8, where Nebuchadnezzar tells the wise men that they want to 'redeem the time, because you know that [the decree for their execution] is gone from me'. There are other allusions in Col. 4 to Daniel: captivity, earnest prayer, thanksgiving, making manifest wisdom to the world as we ought to, walking in wisdom in the eyes of the world. Daniel and his friends urgently devoted every moment of their lives to prayer in order to redeem time, so that they would be delivered; and Paul took as it were a snapshot of their frantic urgency, and applies it to each of us, also living in Babylon. "The days are evil", the world around us is insidious- and *therefore* we must redeem the time from it. Or it could be that 'the evil days' refers to the great and special day of evil, at the second coming (Eph. 6:13, in context; Ps. 37:29). In view of the coming of that day and the judgment it will bring, we ought to have a deep sense of the future we might miss, and the urgency of our present position; and devote ourselves therefore to redeeming the time. The sure coming of that day is an exhortation to the believer, "that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles... [for we] shall give account to him that is ready to judge" (1 Pet. 4:2-5). Peter's message is that there's no need to spend time living as the world does, tickling the desires of our nature- for we already spent enough of our time doing that. We are men and women living under judgment, and therefore should devote our lives to the service of God's will.

4:6 The command to have salt and therefore peace with each other (Mk. 9:50) is fulfilled, Paul saw, by watching our words (= Col. 4:6).

Salt was a symbol of covenant relationship with God (Lev. 2:13); yet in the NT this salt stands for love, peace and kind speaking the one to the other (Mk. 9:50; Col. 4:6). This is the result of true membership in covenant relationship; a true and abiding love for all others in covenant.

4:11 Paul graciously speaks of some brethren "who are of the circumcision [party]" as his "fellow workers unto the Kingdom of God", noting that they are "men that have been a comfort unto me" (Col. 4:11 RV). The circumcision party understood things very differently to Paul- he is ever arguing against their position, showing that circumcision profits nothing. And yet these brethren whom he here refers to were still acceptable to him as fellow workers, and he even took "comfort" from their fellowship. I find that a beautiful example of how tolerance can be practiced; despite the fact Paul was right and they were wrong, the simply reality that they were mistaken on this point, he could still work with them and be encouraged by them. He didn't reason: 'If you don't agree with me on this point, well, we're not working together, that's it, goodbye, I can take nothing positive from you by way of fellowship or encouragement'. In fact we could read the AV translation as implying that although Paul had many fellow workers, out of them all, the ones who were a personal comfort to him were these brethren who were of the circumcision party: "Aristarchus... Justus, who are of the circumcision, these only are my fellow workers... which have been a comfort unto me".

4:12- see on Col. 2:1.

4:17- see on Acts 12:25.

1 THESSALONIANS

1:2 The Old Testament as well as New is written in such a way as to encourage memorization, although this is often masked by the translation. There are several devices commonly used to assist in this. Not least is alliteration, i.e. similarly sounding syllables: *Pantote Peri Panton* (1 Thess. 1:2); *Polymeros kai polytropos* (Heb. 1:1); *hautee protee entolee* (Mk. 12:30); *aphtharton amianton amaranton* (1 Pet. 1:3,4).

1:3 Note how many times Paul gives thanks for the spiritual progress he sees in others, even though we can be sure he saw clearly enough the spiritual immaturity which there still must have been in his converts. So many times he thanks God in his prayers for what he has seen in others (Rom. 1:8-10; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 2 Cor. 1:3-7; 9:12-15; Eph. 1:3-23; Phil. 1:3-6; Col. 1:3-14; 1 Thess. 1:2,3; 2:13-16; 3:9; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; 2 Tim. 1:3-7; Philemon 4-7). Now it follows that if we are to *pray* like Paul, we must have the heart of love for people that was in him. So often we dwell upon the negative, the scandals, the failures of others. And we can't thank God for those things. Paul's pattern of prayer was of positive praise. And we can only share that if we have a mind that is positively perceptive of signs of response to grace in others.

'Faith' comes from a hearing of "the word of God" in the sense of 'the true Gospel'. This is why 'the doctrines of the one faith' and 'faith' are linked. This is the importance of doctrine. But faith never exists alone. James argues that there is no essential difference between faith and works. 'Faith' is not just credulity or a vague feeling of hope, but an active, driving force. There is "the work of faith" (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11); faith is something which ought to be 'done', the Lord taught (Mt. 23:23). Knowledge and faith are paralleled in John's thought (Jn. 8:32 cp. 14:1; and 6:69 cp. 11:27)- in stark contrast to this world's emphasis upon works rather than faith. Hence Isaiah's appeals to *know* and *believe* Yahweh (43:10); and the Lord's parallel of 'little faith' with little understanding (Mt. 16:7,8). *Pistis*, one of the NT words for 'faith', is translated in the LXX as both 'faith' (e.g. Dt. 32:20; Prov. 12:22) and 'truth' (Prov. 12:17; 14:22; Jer. 5:1). Indeed, another word used in the LXX is 119 times translated 'truth' and 26 times 'faith'. There is a connection between true knowledge of the Gospel and faith. And this faith is the basis for our works. We don't just learn the propositions of the one faith before baptism, and forget them. The triumphant spiritual life *lives them out*.

1:5- see on Gal. 1:6.

assurance- see on Jn. 15:26.

There was a confidence exuding from the early preachers that they had arrived at Truth. They 'had the Truth' in that what they knew and had experienced was enough for salvation. Unlike the surrounding philosophies and religions, they knew whom they had believed; they weren't going somewhere in vague hope, they had arrived. They had something concrete to offer others. They preached from a basis of personal hope and conviction and experience, quite unlike the more 'political' methods other religions used to recruit members. The philosophers and teachers of the 1st century had little conviction about the value or truth of their position. But the Truth came "not only in word but also in power...and with full conviction (Gk. *plerophoria*)" (1 Thess. 1:5). This conviction was not mere dogmatism and self-belief; and likewise our witness must carry with it a "full conviction" that contrasts with the uncertainty about faith, doctrine, hope etc. which many professing 'believers' of other faiths reveal when they are probed in any depth about their positions. Paul preached the seriousness of the issues which there are in the Gospel; and yet people flocked back to hear more (Acts 13:41). The preaching of truth involves the message of something being exclusive, and compellingly so. In the first century, "no pagan cult was exclusive of any other and the only restriction on initiation into many cults was the expense".

1:6 The idea of consciously modelling, of having some characters as your heroes, your inspiration towards a closer following of God, was very much in Paul's thinking. Not only does he do it himself, but he encourages others to do it. He doesn't use the word 'modelling'; he uses the word

'mimicking', Greek 'mimicos', normally translated "follow" in the AV. This Greek word is used almost exclusively by Paul. "Ye became *followers* of us and of the Lord.... ye know how ye ought to *follow* us... an ensample unto you to *follow* us" (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9; the implication is that in the gap between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they stopped following Paul as they initially did straight after his conversion of them).

We all have more influence on each other than we may think. Quite naturally, the Thessalonians imitated the ecclesias of Judaea and also Paul personally (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14). And in turn, they became models to all the believers in Macedonia (1 Thess. 1:7). Leadership is essentially a process of influence, rather than a brother standing up and lecturing others. But the Lord used images such as salt, yeast and light to describe *all* who are in Him. They speak of indirect, constant, transforming influence rather than a frontal assault on the unspirituality of others.

1:6-8 It is difficult to read 1 Thess. 1:6-8 in the RSV without seeing an allusion to the great preaching commission: as if Paul is saying: 'Well done for realising that the great commission which some of us received specifically, does in fact apply to you too!': "You became imitators of us... *for* not only has the word of the Lord *sounded forth* from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has *gone forth everywhere*"

1:6-9 Paul explains to the Thessalonians that he has consciously lived life before them in order to provide them with a template to copy; and their copying of that template in turn became a pattern to those within their circle of contact to emulate. In this we see the power of example, especially in the preaching of the Gospel: "You know what kind of men we were among you *for your sake* (i.e. Paul consciously lived as an example to them). And you became followers of us... so that *you* became examples to all in Macedonia... so that *we* do not need to say anything [because those who had copied Paul's example were effectively his voice to others]... *for they* [the converts of the Thessalonians, not Paul] themselves declare concerning *us* what manner of entry we had to *you* [i.e. the converts of the Thessalonians were a reflection of Paul's conversion of the Thessalonians]... you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea" (1 Thess. 1:6-9; 2:14). This last comment suggests that in imitating Paul, the Thessalonians were imitating the ecclesias in Judaea- perhaps indicating that it was those ecclesias who had initially influenced Paul and been his pattern, and now he was a pattern to the Thessalonians, and they in turn were a pattern to their converts in Macedonia.

1:7 The example of the early Christians, especially their deportment under persecution and even death, was what converted others. The Thessalonians were convinced that what Paul taught them was not the word of men but the word of God, because of who Paul was: his life, his self-sacrifice, his caring, convinced them (1 Thess. 2:1-14). Paul speaks of how they had become examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia; and yet he also notes in the same context how the Gospel has been spread throughout those very same regions, Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:7,8). Their example was associated with the acceptance of the message. Their faith had "gone forth" and so thereby had the word of the Lord "sounded forth" (RV).

1:8- see on Acts 2:46.

1:10- see on Mt. 3:7.

2:1 Paul's personal example could hardly be distinguished from the gospel he taught (1 Thess. 2:1-12)- he was his message, just as the Lord was His word made flesh. This is why 'authority' and respect are things which are earned naturally in a community by those who have converted the community. It is hard to impose these things from outside the conversion experience.

2:2 Paul saw himself in the parables- just as we should. Paul describes himself as having been "shamefully entreated" when he brought the Gospel to Philippi (1 Thess. 2:2)- using the Greek word used in Mt. 22:6 concerning how the messengers sent to the vineyard were "entreated spitefully". And maybe Paul was consciously aware that the Lord Himself had spoken of how He would be

“spitefully entreated” (Lk. 18:32) during His final sufferings. Hence Paul could speak of filling up the measure of Christ’s sufferings through what he suffered whilst preaching Christ’s Gospel (Col. 1:24).

2:3- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

He has to remind the Thessalonians that he isn't preaching because he wants to take money and have relationships with women (1 Thess. 2:3-12). There were some wealthy women in Thessalonica who accepted the Gospel (Acts 17:4 Western Text), and no doubt gossip spread from this. See on 1 Tim. 5:19.

2:4 We were "put in trust with the Gospel", literally 'en-faithed' with it, God gave it to us in faith that we would preach it (1 Thess. 2:4).

If we know God's judgments- and this is an ongoing process- then our self-examination will become closer and closer to the real picture of us which God has. It is apparent that God *now* tries our hearts (Job 7:18; Ps. 11:4; 17:3; 26:2; 139:23), e.g. weighing up our motives in preaching (1 Thess. 2:4).

2:7 Paul says he was gentle with his Thessalonians, as a nurse with her *own* children (1 Thess. 2:7 RV). This is a touching figure- a wet nurse giving that extra special attention to her *own* child (as 2:11 RV a father with his *own* children); and like children, they mimicked him (1 Thess. 1:6 Gk.). This was quite different to Paul’s background culture, where “boldness and abusive scolding were considered essential by many of the wandering philosophers if their teaching was to have any impact”. Many a Pentecostal pastor likewise scolds his flock for their lack of faith; but the leaders of our groups shouldn’t be like this. There should be gentleness, an appeal for love’s sake, rather than shouting and criticism. Paul dealt with his converts “as a father with his own children”, encouraging, comforting, ‘dealing with each one [individually]’ and urging them to live a life worthy of God’s grace (1 Thess. 2:11,12 RV). Note in this context how Paul says that he cares for them as for his own babies, as both the father and mother, and yet reminds them that “We were babes among you” (1 Thess. 2:7 RVmg.). His appeal to them was on the basis of the fact that although their parent, he was also essentially like them. Only as their spiritual father could he ask the Corinthians whether they wanted him to come to them with a whip or with a loving appeal. He *could* exercise the discipline of a father, out of his affectionate concern for them; but he chose, wherever possible, a better way. He normally uses the father:child image to show his closeness to them, rather than to impose his authority upon them. And so it should be with the true spiritual father or mother in our groups today. He asks them to copy him; his method of shaping the community was to present himself as the pattern. This was especially necessary amongst largely illiterate converts- one could not direct them merely to independent study of the text of Scripture. Paul even likens himself to a woman breast feeding a child (1 Cor. 3:1-3; 1 Thess. 2:7). And yet such wet nursing was considered to be an occupation for the very lowest of women in the Roman world; it was common for even a respectable slave woman to pass her baby over to such a woman to breast feed. But no, Paul himself, as their leader and converter, as it were breast fed them himself. This very nicely shows the link between unashamed, self-abasing humility and true leadership. And again, the Spirit chose ‘shepherd’ as an image of ecclesial leadership, when the surrounding Rabbis despised shepherds as dishonest. It’s just the same as the Lord Jesus describing Himself as the humble King- a very contradiction in the terms of the contemporary culture. There is an intended juxtaposition in Zech. 9:9: “thy King cometh...lowly, and riding upon an ass”.

2:8- see on Rom. 9:3.

Paul was “well pleased to impart unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us”. So says the RV of 1 Thess. 2:8. It is one thing to impart the Gospel to someone. It is another to give your soul to them, because you truly love them. I suspect we have all been guilty of merely imparting the gospel, without the heart that bled within

Paul. They are two quite different things. Imparting knowledge, inviting to meetings, distributing books... is not the same as giving your soul. The AV of this passage says that Paul was “*willing* to have imparted unto you... our own souls”. There may be a connection back to Rom. 9:3, where in the spirit of Moses, Paul says that he is theoretically willing to give his eternal place in the Kingdom for the sake of his hearers’ conversion- even though he had learnt from Moses’ example that God will not accept such a substitutionary offer. To give your life, to impart a Gospel... is one thing. But to so feel for others that you would let them go to the Kingdom rather than you... this is love. No wonder Paul was so compelling a converter. There was such an upwelling of thankful love and reflected grace behind his words of preaching.

2:9- see on Phil. 4:16.

It was during the course of their daily lives that the early converts made their witness. Note how Paul implies that it was during the course of his daily work that he won many converts: “You remember, brothers, our work and toil. *It was while* we were labouring night and day... that we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (1 Thess. 2:9). Celsus claimed that Christianity was attractive “only to the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children... [the Christian evangelists] were wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels [who enticed]... children and stupid women [to come along to]... the wooldresser’s shop, or to the cobbler’s or the washerwoman’s shop, that they may learn perfection”. This could almost be a quotation from 1 Cor. 1, where Paul describes the converts as just such people. And yet from out of their ordinary life situations, the witness went forth. Not from specially built halls, but from the workplace. And so it has ever been. This is why Pliny could observe that Christianity “penetrated not only the cities but even the villages and farms”. It was individuals converting individuals.

2:10- see on Phil. 1:10.

2:11- see on 1 Thess. 2:7.

2:12 1 Thess. 2:12,13 speaks of how God is constantly calling us to the Kingdom through the word of the Gospel, and therefore that word dynamically works in us who believe. The basic Gospel of the Kingdom works in us throughout our lives, calling us daily, beckoning us onwards to the Kingdom.

2:13 So often one hears a recent convert preaching to others about how wonderful their new church is, and how worthy they are to join. This I always discourage. For conversion is ultimately into Christ, and not into any human organization. We are to receive the Gospel from others not as the word of men, but as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13).

Paul taught the Thessalonians *after their baptism* “the Gospel of God... which effectually [Gk. ‘dynamically’] worketh also in you that (already) believe” (1 Thess. 2:9,13). That basic Gospel powerfully worked in them.

2:14- see on 1 Thess. 1:6-9.

2:16- see on Mt. 19:14.

The Jews forbid or hindered the apostles from preaching to the Gentiles “to fill up their sins... for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess. 2:16). This is quoting from the LXX of Gen. 15:16 about the Amorites. See on Jn. 12:31.

Not only did the Jews crucify God’s Son, but the book of Acts makes it clear that it was Jewish opposition which was the main adversary to Paul’s spreading of the Gospel and establishment of the early church (Acts 13:50,51; 14:2,5,6,19; 17:5–9,13,14; 18:6,12–17; 21:27–36; 23:12–25). Paul speaks of the Jewish opposition as having “killed both the Lord Jesus and the [first century Christian] prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone by hindering us

from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins" (1 Thess. 2:13–16). These are strong words, and must be given their full weight in our assessment of the degree to which the Jews were indeed a great 'Satan' to the cause of Christ in the first century.

2:17 It has been pointed out by F.F. Bruce that Paul's later letters reveal a marked *and progressive* fondness for Greek words compounded from *syn-*, i.e. together / with (e.g. *synergos*, co-worker; *synaichmalatos*, co-prisoner). Priscilla, Aquilla, Timothy, Titus, Marcus, Archippus, Luke, Aristarchus, Tychicus, Epaphras, Demas, Epaphroditus, Clement, Philemon, Euodias, Syntyche (the last two being weak in terms of spiritual behaviour)...all of these are described by Paul with a *syn-* compound word. It seems that as he matured, Paul *needed his brethren*, he realized he wasn't so alone and strong-willed as he had once been, he saw the Christ in his brethren. Often he speaks of his urgent desire to see the face of his brethren (Rom. 1:11; 15:24; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:17; 3:6,10; Heb. 13:23).

2:18 1 Thessalonians 2:14–16 relates how "the Jews...have persecuted us (Paul and his helpers)...forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles". But Paul goes on to say in 2:18: "wherefore we would have come unto you ...once and again but Satan hindered us". The "Satan" refers to Jewish oppositions to the Gospel and Paul's planned preaching visit to Gentile Thessalonica.

2:19,20 Nearly all references to Paul's "joy" are in the context of his joy at the prospect of others' spiritual development and salvation (Acts 13:52; Rom. 5:11; 15:32; 2 Cor. 2:3; 7:4,6,13; Phil. 1:14,18; 2:2,17; 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19,20; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:4; Philemon 7,20). See on Eph. 1:4. Paul could say that his great joy at the judgment would be to see his dear brethren enter the Kingdom (1 Thess. 2:19,20; Phil. 4:1; 2 Cor. 1:14); not just joy for his own personal acceptance. In this moment, "he that soweth and he that reapeth [will] rejoice together" (Jn. 4:36)- the letter writers, speakers, writers, travellers... Hence Paul "held forth the word of life" to his converts at Philippi, "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ (through their acceptance) that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain". This explains the intensity of his efforts to strengthen his brethren: "As though God did beseech you by us: we *pray* you... be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). And later he could write from prison "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:10). Thus even in this life John could write: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth... I wish *above all things* that *thou* mayest (spiritually) prosper" (3 Jn. 2-4).

3:1 When Paul was first imprisoned in Rome, it seems Epaphroditus was a great comfort to him; he didn't want to send him to Philippi, but he "supposed it necessary" (Phil. 2:25). Likewise, it was only when he "could no longer forbear" (1 Thess. 3:1,5) that he sent Timothy away from him when he was living at Athens, to strengthen the Thessalonians. Paul came to really need his brethren.

Loneliness isn't at all a bad thing. Paul tells the Thessalonians how desperately he wanted to physically be with them, but God stopped him "time and again"; and so he concluded in the end that it was better for him to be left at Athens alone (1 Thess. 2:17-3:1). He "could no longer forbear" that loneliness in Athens, just as many readers likewise struggle with their loneliness. But looking back, he realized that that aloneness in Athens had actually been for his spiritual good, even though he so longed to be with his brethren. And here those who so bemoan [understandably] their spiritual isolation as they live out their Christian lives in ones or twos can take comfort. It was whilst left alone in Athens that Paul's conscience was stirred within him and he began an incredibly successful preaching campaign (Acts 17:16-22). The image of that wonderful man standing alone on Mars Hill taking Christ to the masses there for the very first time is inspirational; but he only stood up there and did it because he had been left in Athens alone by a loving Father. His loneliness led to his spirit / conscience being stirred within him by the need of the humanity around him. His loneliness made him see how unique was his relationship with God Almighty and His Son

3:5 Notice how there was no distinction between Paul's will ("*When I could endure it no longer, I also sent...*" 1 Thess. 3:5), and that of his fellow workers ("*When we could endure it no longer... we sent...*" 1 Thess. 3:1,2). He assigned to his brethren his own feelings and decisions.

"For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith" (1 Thess. 3:5)- such was his concern for their spiritual state.

3:6- see on 1 Thess. 2:17.

3:7 Paul wrote to the Thessalonians how their faith was a comfort to him in his "distress". And yet he goes straight on to say that he plans to visit them in order to "perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (1 Thess. 3:7,10). I find this so wonderful. Their faith was imperfect- and yet Paul all the same rejoices in what faith they do have, and can speak of "all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God" (1 Thess. 3:9). Yet we are all too easily discouraged by the immaturities we notice in others' faith; instead, in a world where the majority don't truly believe, we need to focus on the positive in our brethren and rejoice in it, rather than holding them to some ideal standard which we claim to have in our own mind or understanding or perception. For when compared against the spirituality of our Lord, we are ourselves so miserably imperfect.

3:8 Paul could say that he lived, if his brethren held fast; his life was bound up with theirs (1 Thess. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:3). He was willing to be offered as a drink offering upon the sacrifice of the Philippians (Phil. 2:17). Time and again he rejoices in the joy and hope of others (e.g. 2 Cor. 7:13; Col. 1:4); they were his joy and hope and future crown of reward in the Kingdom (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19,20). For them to be accepted at the day of judgment would be his crown, i.e. his reward and expectation which he looked forward to. It was for their salvation, not his own, that he would rejoice at the Lord's return (2 Cor. 1:14). His spiritual life was bound up in that of others; others who were many times his spiritual inferior. See on 2 Tim. 2:10.

3:9- see on Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 2:19,20.

3:10- see on 2 Cor. 8:7; 1 Thess. 2:17.

Paul's description of praying "night and day" (1 Thess. 3:9,10) alludes to the sacrifices, prepared and offered "night and day" (Ex. 30:7,8; Ps. 55:16,17). There was clearly an element of preparation before offering the prayer, as there was before offering a sacrifice. Note how Prov. 15:8 likewise parallels sacrifice with prayer. Prayer ought to be a humbling experience, perhaps alluded to by the incense, representing prayer, needing to be "beaten small". Preparation of prayer involves humility. David takes words of supplication to himself, which as King he must often have heard from desperate citizens, and uses it in his own prayers to God: "Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call... A Psalm of David" (Ps. 20:9). In this one sees a conscious humility in how David formulated his prayers.

3:12-see on 2 Cor. 12:15.

Paul talks of an "account" of good works that is 'increased' by each good work- an account not kept by us, but by the Father (Phil. 4:17). And if we 'increase' in such acts of love, we increasingly have a heart unshaken by the prospect of judgment to come (1 Thess. 3:12).

3:13- see on Mt. 24:28.

Lk. 1:6 = Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 3:13. We are to have the serene spirituality, all down the years, of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

The cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) will go with Jesus to judgment, which must be located on earth for the glimpses of the judgment seat which we are given to be realistically fulfilled. The Lord Jesus comes to judgment with His saints with Him (1 Thess. 3:13; Zech. 14:5; Jude 14). It is reasonable to guess that this assembly of faithful believers will visibly reflect God's glory, giving the impression of a 'shekinah' cloud. This may be due to the physical presence of the Angel with us

during our time in this cloud. Such a picture is presented in Dan. 7:9-14; Jesus comes with the faithful, symbolized as clouds, along with the Angels, to the judgment seat. It is at this stage that the responsible from all nations come to the judgment (Mt. 25:32) so that there can be a separation of sheep and goats. The 'coming down' of the righteous responsible to Jerusalem will be at the same time as the judgment of the wicked nations in that same place: "Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down" (Joel 3:11) occurs in the context of Armageddon. The bride comes down out of Heaven as a prepared bride. "Saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau" (Obad. v 21), i.e. Israel's Arab enemies. The apparent confusion between our gathering to judgment in Jerusalem and the judgment of the nations there at the same time is explicable if we accept that the meaning of time will be collapsed around the second coming. The sequence of events here suggested chimes in with the thought so often expressed by generations of believers - that our initial reaction to the knowledge that our Lord is back will effectively be our judgment, although this will be formally confirmed at the judgment seat before which all the responsible must appear (2 Cor. 5:10).

4:1 "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another... to the end He may establish your hearts" (1 Thess. 3:12,13) gives an insight into the upward spiral of development which the Lord wishes us to partake in. It's quite a theme in 1 Thessalonians: "abound more and more... increase more and more" (4:1,10).

4:3 The will of God is not always done on earth automatically; it's not determining of human behaviour in absolute terms; otherwise the will of God would exclude human freewill. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thess. 4:3); but the Thessalonians still had the freedom to commit fornication. The will of God here refers to the wish / desire of God. But the fulfilment of God's will is of course up to the freewill of the individual. Which is why we pray for God's will to be done in our lives; not in the sense of 'OK well get on and do what You are going to do anyway', but rather of seeking for strength to personally do God's wish in our lives. And as we mature, our will and the Father's become closer. We ask what *we* will and it is done; and therefore and thereby we ask for the Father's will to be done.

4:3-6 There was evidently a problem with immorality in the Thessalonica ecclesia (1 Thess. 4:3-6). And yet the ecclesia was so eager for the second coming that some were throwing in their jobs, so certain were they that it was imminent. Clearly the moral implications of the soon coming of the Lord had not been felt. And this is why in every chapter of those epistles, Paul pounds away about the Lord's return- a fact which they knew and enthused about, just as we can, and yet would not face up to its real implications. If Christ is coming soon, we must quit the things which plagued Thessalonica- immorality, laziness, irresponsibility etc.

4:7 Paul had the same calling as we do (Rom. 9:24; 1 Thess. 4:7); in him above all there is set a pattern for all those who would hereafter believe. This may not entail itinerant missionary work as it did for Paul, but all the same, the same essential commitment to Gospel preaching must be at the core of the life of every convert.

4:11- see on 1 Cor. 1:26-28.

"...that ye *study* (be ambitious) to be quiet, and to do your own business... that ye may *walk* honestly toward them that are without" (1 Thess. 4:11,12). "That ye *study* (be ambitious) to be *quiet*" presents a powerful opposition of ideas; to have heroic ambition to be quiet; to be self-controlled, living a blameless spiritual life in everyday things (this is what the idiom of "walk" refers to). In 2 Thess. 3:12,13, Paul returns to this idea: He tells them once again to live a *quiet* life, and says in that context: "Be not weary in (such) well doing". Yet he asks them in 1 Thess. 4:11 to be ambitious to be quiet. Surely he is encouraging them not to be weary in living a life of such ambition. And this is not the only reference to ambition in Thessalonians. Paul praises them for the

brotherly love which they undoubtedly had. But he doesn't just say 'Keep it up!'. He exhorts them to increase in it, more and more (1 Thess. 4:10).

4:14 Jesus will "bring with Him" from Heaven "them also which sleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:14) when the Heavenly Jerusalem (the believers) comes down from Heaven at Christ's return (Rev. 21:1). However, we know that Jesus will bring the Angels with Him. Being the guardians of those who have died, in this sense those people come with Christ from Heaven, although of course literally and personally they cannot see them "sleep in Jesus" in the dust of the earth. See on Dan. 5:23.

The Lord's resurrection is the basis for ours. Despite the emotion and hardness of death itself, our belief in resurrection is rooted in our faith that our Lord died and rose. When comforting those who had lost loved ones in the Lord, Paul doesn't simply remind them of the doctrine of the resurrection at the Lord's coming. His focus instead is on the fact that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. 4:14). The reality of the resurrection must mean something to us in the times of death which we face in life. Jesus and the New Testament writers seem to me to have a startling disregard of death.

4:15- see on 1 Cor. 7:11.

1 Thess. 4 and 5 are shot through with allusions to the Olivet prophecy. A few of the more obvious are listed:

1 Thess.	Olivet Prophecy
4:15 " This we say unto you by the word of the Lord" Jesus	Jesus on Olivet
4:16	Mt. 24:30,31
5:1	Lk. 21:24
5:2	Mt. 24:43
5:3	Mt. 24:43,48,51
5:5 " Children of light"	Wise virgins with lamps (Mt. 25)
5:6	Mt. 24:13,25,42,49
5:9	Mt. 24:51

1 Thess. 4:15-18, begins with "For..." . This is explaining 1 Thess. 4:14, which states that "they also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (up) with him" . This will thus be true both spiritually, in that they will share His victory over death, and, literally, in that they will come with their judge to judgment. John 14:3 may also become easier to handle with this understanding: "I will come again, and take you to be with me" (N.I.V.). Initially, this will mean a literal ascent into the sky, followed by a return to earth to be with Christ eternally in the Kingdom. "That where I am, there ye may be also" may be the spirit's basis for 1 Thess. 4:17, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord". The idea of literally travelling through the sky to the judgment seat was plainly taught by our Lord in His explanation of how " one shall be taken (literally disappear) and the other left" at His coming; "Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Luke 17:36,37). The point of this allusion is to show that as the eagle travels through the air with a natural homing instinct, without fear or worry as to correct direction, so there should be no apprehension in the mind of the believer concerning the mechanics of how he will be taken away to meet his Lord

4:17 *clouds*- Jesus will return to earth for judgement with His Angels, as we are told in His parables concerning the judgement. In the parable of the wheat and tares the point is made that the Angels do not just come to gather the harvest, but also to separate the wheat from the tares. Thus it would seem that the actual process of judgement will be largely associated with the Angels. We are told in 1 Thess. 4:17 that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air". The clouds must be the clouds of Angels with which Jesus returns, and may even represent the figurative "air" in which we meet Him first of all, as if He is manifested through the Angels which He sends to gather us to judgement (although it is quite possible to take the 'air' literally too). The *elohim* under the Old Covenant were the judges, ruling over different numbers of God's people and judging them, referring them up to more senior *elohim* and finally to Moses. Similarly, at the judgement it may be that we are judged by our guardian Angel- ideally suited to discuss our lives with us- and then referred to Christ Himself.

If we believe that we are counted righteous, we must likewise assume that all those properly baptized are equally righteous, and will be saved along with us. We cannot condemn each other; therefore we must assume each other will be saved. If we have a positive attitude to our own salvation, we will likewise perceive our whole community. And the reverse is true; if we cannot believe that God sees *us* positively, we will tend towards a negative outlook upon ourselves. My sense is that many of us fail in this area. Paul had many reasons to think negatively of his converts; and yet he writes to the Thessalonians as if 'we all', all his readership, would be saved (1 Thess. 4:17). And likewise to dodgy Corinth, he writes as if they would all be accepted at the Lord's return (1 Cor. 15:52); he saw them *all* as innocent Eve in danger of being beguiled (2 Cor. 11:3).

The connections between the parable of the virgins and 1 Thess. 4 are strengthened by the same Greek word being translated "meet" in Mt. 25:6 concerning the wise virgins going out to "meet" Christ and also in 1 Thess. 4:17: "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up...in the clouds to *meet* the Lord in the air". The picture is therefore presented of the righteous obeying the call of their own volition, and then being confirmed in this by being 'snatched away' to meet Christ in the (literal) air. We will then travel with Christ "in the clouds" (literally) to judgment in Jerusalem. In no way, of course, does this suggestion give countenance to the preposterous Pentecostal doctrine of being 'raptured' into heaven itself. Every alternative interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:17 seems to run into trouble with the phrase "meet the Lord *in the air*". 1 Thessalonians is not a letter given to figurative language, but rather to the literal facts of the second coming. Further, the 1 Thess. 4:16-18 passage is described by Paul as him speaking "by the word of the Lord" Jesus (1 Thess. 4:15). If 1 Cor. 7 is any guide to how Paul uses this phrase, he would appear to be saying that in this passage he is merely repeating what the Lord Himself said during His ministry. This deals a death blow to some Pentecostal fantasies about the passage.

It is necessary to side-track in order to show that Paul is speaking of the faithful believers in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 rather than all the responsible:

- He comforts them that the dead believers really will be rewarded with immortality, and that they can take comfort from the fact that they would live for ever (1 Thess. 4:13,14,18). Paul is therefore assuming their acceptability at judgment.
- "Ye are all the children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5) as opposed to the unworthy within the ecclesia, who were in darkness. This suggests that Paul wrote as though his readership were all faithful and assured of eternal life.

Those wise virgins who go forth to meet Christ immediately are therefore those who will be "caught up together" with the faithful believers who will have been resurrected. This will be when the Angels "gather together *his elect*" (Mt. 24:31). They then "meet the Lord in the air" literally, perhaps connecting with Rev. 11:12: "They (the faithful, persecuted saints of the last days) heard a great voice from heaven (cp. "the voice" of 1 Thess. 4:16) saying unto them, Come up (cp. " caught up...") hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud (cp. " caught up... in clouds"); and their

enemies beheld them". It may well be that Rev. 11:12 is speaking of the faithful Jewish remnant of the last days, who will be snatched away along with us. This cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) will then go with Jesus to judgment, which must be located on earth for the glimpses of the judgment seat which we are given to be realistically fulfilled. It is reasonable to guess that this assembly of faithful believers will visibly reflect God's glory, giving the impression of a 'shekinah' cloud. This may be due to the physical presence of the Angel with us during our time in this cloud. Such a picture is presented in Dan. 7:9-14; Jesus comes with the faithful, symbolized as clouds, along with the Angels, to the judgment seat. It is at this stage that the responsible from all nations come to the judgment (Mt. 25:32) so that there can be a separation of sheep and goats. The 'coming down' of the righteous responsible to Jerusalem will be at the same time as the judgment of the wicked nations in that same place: "Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down" (Joel 3:11) occurs in the context of Armageddon. "Saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau" (Obad. v 21), i.e. Israel's Arab enemies. The sequence of events here suggested chimes in with the thought so often expressed by generations of believers - that our initial reaction to the knowledge that our Lord is back will effectively be our judgment, although this will be formally confirmed at the judgment seat before which all the responsible must appear (2 Cor. 5:10).

The chronology we have suggested can now be summarized:-

- Persecution of believers.
- The Lord is revealed; the resurrection.
- An Angel invites each of the responsible to go and meet Christ.
- The unworthy delay, whilst the worthy go immediately.
- The worthy are snatched away into the air, forming a cloud of glory which is visible to all. They are physically with Jesus.
- Along with Him they come to Jerusalem.
- The unworthy are then gathered there.
- There is a tribunal-style judgment. The sheep and goats are together before the judgment seat. They are then finally separated by Christ's judgment, and receive their rewards.
- The wicked are destroyed along with the nations then surrounding Jerusalem.

The time scale for all this is unimportant - it could well be just a few seconds, if the meaning of time is to be collapsed, although there presumably must be a period of time for the cloud of witnesses to be beheld, and for the unworthy to desperately try to slap themselves into spiritual shape. The tremendous encouragement offered by the scenario here presented should not be missed: we will come with our judge, possibly already reflecting His glory, to the judgment. This in itself should give us a sense of humble certainty as we come before His tribunal. So much will depend on our reaction to the Angel's coming - our faith in acceptance, our degree of concern for the things of this life - all will be revealed in that instant.

5:2 There has been much confusion over the 'thief-like coming of Christ' mentioned in 1 Thess. 5:2. The context is concerning the state of the ecclesia in the last days, and is shot through with allusions to the parable of the virgins. The sleeping virgins represent the unworthy amongst the believers who will live just prior to the second coming. Paul's allusion to this fills out the details: the coming of Christ to this category of 'believers' will be like a thief in the sense that their privacy and spiritual house will be invaded by the reality of the second coming. This will be due to their attitude of 'peace and safety', which they will actively promulgate - 'Everything's great within the household, we're going from strength to strength spiritually, there's no need to fear failure in any form!' That "they shall say, Peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:3) suggests that this is an attitude which they publicly disseminate amongst the brotherhood. Bearing in mind the many prophecies and indications that there will be a massive spiritual collapse within the latter-day ecclesia, it is reasonable to assume that the faithful minority will speak out against this - to be met by a barrage of 'peace and safety' reasoning. Those who will stand ready for their Lord will be in the light, in the day, self-aware, spiritually sensitive and realistic, and therefore *not* saying "Peace and safety" (1

Thess. 5:3-8). Christ's coming as a thief to the unworthy is therefore in the sense of His coming being unexpected by them, rather than being as a thief to the world. The frequent application of the 'peace and safety cry' to the world of the last days never ceases to amaze the present writer. Prophecy after prophecy describes a time of global cataclysm around the time of the second coming, even though this may be mixed with a fair degree of material prosperity. In no way will it be a time of "peace and safety" for the world; and their ever-increasing escapism shows that they don't exactly see it like that either. Biblically speaking, their hearts are failing them for fear, apprehensive concerning whatever is going to happen to their planet earth (Lk. 21:26, see modern versions).

5:3 The insistent stress by Paul on the need to live lives worthy of our beliefs is really powerful. He knew that this was the main drawing power for the community. It has often been pointed out that sections of his letters seem to have strong links between them. Consider:

1 Thess. 5	Rom. 12
:12,13a	Respect elders
:3-8	Don't think too highly of yourselves
:13b	Peace among yourselves
:18	Peace with all men
:14	Care for weak and unruly(14:1); Receive the weak
:15	Not evil for evil, but good to all men
:17	Not evil for evil, but good to all men
:16	Rejoice always
:12	Rejoice in hope
:17	Pray unceasingly
:12	Continue in prayer
:19	Don't quench the Spirit
:11	Fervent in spirit
:20	Don't despise prophecy
:6	Prophecy
:21	Test all things, hold fast to good
:9	Cleave to good
:22	Avoid evil

The conclusion from this could be that there was in fact a common document to which Paul is referring- a kind of practical guide to true Christian living that was expected of converts. If this is the case, then the early community would have been committed to being joyful, prayerful, tolerant, peaceful, loving, humble, Bible based, as a fundamental principle. These were what accepting Christ in baptism would have required.

Paul begins chapter 5 by saying that we do not need to know exact times and seasons (i.e. dates) of the second coming, because the most obvious sign is that it would come when some in the ecclesia were unaware- it would come upon them as a thief. Likewise Jesus said that a sign more important than famines etc. was the tribulation of the household. The unworthy saints of the last days who are not watching will find the second coming take them like a thief (Mt.24:43). 1 Thess.5:3 says that those who think there is "peace and safety" within the ecclesia will also find the second coming to be thief-like. Thus a lack of spiritual watching is the equivalent of the "peace and safety" cry. The attitude that all within the house (the ecclesia) is well and there is no real danger of tribulation will result in a lack of watching. What sense can we make of Lk. 21:36 if we deny the possibility of a persecution period: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass" ...? "Pray *always* that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that *shall* come to pass...". Whilst it is possible that we will be *saved out of* the tribulation, to dogmatically say that we will not experience it, coupled with an attitude which refuses to admit the doctrinal and behavioural problems within the ecclesia, will result in us being lulled into a sense of peace and safety. This "peace and safety" atmosphere within the ecclesia matches that in Israel just prior to the Babylonian invasion: "Them that are at ease (A.V.mg. "secure") in Zion" (Am.6:1, cp. Lk.6:24) trusted in their riches and regular observance of a few religious rituals. But surely we "are all the children of light" (the word), and therefore "are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief" (v.5,4). "By peace (prosperity) he shall destroy many" (Dan.8:25) is the language of 1 Thess.5:1-3 regarding peace, safety and materialism destroying the saints of the last days. If this connection is valid, it shows that the little horn of Daniel will exert its influence within the ecclesia.

Ezekiel (8:8-15; 9:8; 11:3), Jeremiah, Micah and perhaps even the Lord Jesus (Is. 59:16; Lk. 13:8) over-estimated the spirituality of God's people in the run up to the 'day' of Divine judgment in their time. The "peace and safety" cry within the latter day ecclesia (1 Thess. 5:3) is part of an extended set of allusions back to the parables of Mt. 24 and 25, concerning the apostate, drunken servant who thinks everything is fine being suddenly destroyed by his Lord's coming. This kind of believer had been foreseen by Moses in Dt. 29:19; the type who hears the curses for disobedience, but blesses (forgives) himself in his heart, "saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst". As natural Israel will be awoken from their drunkenness by the final Arab invasion (Joel 1:1,2), so spiritual Israel will be awakened by the holocaust to come. The false prophets who lived on the eve of the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions told Israel that everything was "peace and safety" within the ecclesia of their time (Jer. 5:12; 6:14; 14:13; Ez. 13:10; Mic. 3:5). It seems that the latter day ecclesia will likewise have a faithful remnant who clearly perceive the apostacy, although they are surprised at it, seeing in it the clearest sign of their Lord's return; and an apostate majority, backed up by the elders of the ecclesia, who will claim with some aggression that this is all utter nonsense, and there is peace and spiritual safety within the ecclesia.

The day of the Lord will result in the wicked being "in pain as of a woman that travaileth" (Is. 13:8; 1 Thess. 5:3). The Lord seems to have alluded to this when He spoke of how the faithful just before His coming would be like a woman in travail, with the subsequent joy on delivery matching the elation of acceptance at Christ's return (Jn. 16:21). So, it's travail- or travail, especially in the last

days. If we choose the way of the flesh, it will be travail for nothing, bringing forth in vain (this is seen as a characteristic of all worldly life in Is. 65:23). We either cut off the flesh now (in spiritual circumcision), or God will cut us off. This point was made when the rite of circumcision was first given: "The uncircumcised [un-cut off] man... shall be cut off" (Gen. 17:14).

5:5- see on Rom. 13:12.

At times it seems Paul 'unconsciously' uses a phrase from the parables, out of context, but as an indication that they were running through his mind (e.g. "children of light" in Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5 is quarried from Lk. 16:8).

There is a superficial contradiction between the following three passages:

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Mt. 24:42)

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:5).

This is alluding to Christ's parable of Mt. 24:42-51, where He says that we should stay awake like the house manager who knows when the thief is coming, and therefore watches.

"If therefore thou wilt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3). The implication is that if we watch, Christ's coming will not be like a thief to us, and therefore we *will* know the hour of His coming.

So we should watch and be loving the appearing of Christ because we don't know when He will come; but if we watch, He will not come like an unexpected thief, because we will know the hour of His coming. Giving all these passages a latter day application (whilst not denying they had a primary meaning in the first century too), this would suggest that those who do watch will have a sure sense of when Christ is coming. But we can't know the day or hour... to which I would respond: We must watch *as if* we know for sure that the hour of Christ's coming is upon us. If we do this, then when Christ comes, we will be prepared for Him, *as if* we had been told the actual hour. The fact the NT writers spoke as if Christ's return was imminent in their time was not because they were just over optimistic; for they were inspired. Surely they were inspired to write *as if* the Lord's return was imminent in their time because this is how God expected His people to perceive the Lord's coming: as absolutely imminent.

5:6 - see on Mt. 26:41.

5:7- see on Mt. 3:7.

There are many links between 1 Thess. 4,5 and Mat. 24,25. The wise virgins slumbered and were sleeping at the time of the Lord's return. Paul matches this by saying that the *unworthy* will be slumbering and we ought to be awake and watching at the time of the Lord's return. And yet, the parable teaches that those slumbering wise girls will be accepted. This is a glaring paradox within the Lord's own teaching- for had He not taught that the faithful servants will be awake and watching when their Lord returns? Yet the paradox is there to flag a major message- that even though the last generation of believers may well not be ready and watching as they should be, their humble recognition of the very likelihood of their oil running out would be their saving grace. And within 1 Thess. 5:6-10 this same paradox is brought out: "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us *watch* and be sober. For they that *sleep sleep* in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we *wake [s.w. watch]* or *sleep*, we should live together with him". The same Greek words are italicized. The contrast is between those who watch and those who sleep. And yet Christ died to save both those who watch / are awake, and those who sleep, as the 'wise' virgins slept when they ought not to have done. Both those who watch and those who sleep [after the humble pattern of the wise virgins] will be saved due to the fact that Christ died to save sinners, to save the sleepy as well as the more lively- if they are truly and humbly in Him. Likewise the Lord's parables generally include two types- the self-righteous

rejected, and the accepted, who have something spiritually the matter with them. They either enter the Kingdom with splinters in their spiritual vision / perception, or are totally blinded by planks in their vision and will be rejected.

5:17- see on Jude 20.

When Paul wrote of praying "night and day", it could be that he refers to his twice daily prayer times. For he was hardly praying 24/7.

5:21- see on Job 34:4,5.

5:22 "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth (Heb. covereth) the matter" (Prov. 11:13). The principles of the atonement and the redemption we have experienced ought to be finding expression in every part of our lives. Instead of gossiping, we ought to cover over the confidences which we have been let into. We should abstain from every appearing of sin; wherever it comes up, we should abstain (1 Thess. 5:22; this verse *doesn't* mean 'don't do things which look as if they're sinful'). Whenever we hear of sin we should seek to cover it, not to show it forth more widely, and especially seek for it to be forgiven. By doing so we will reflect our own experience of how God has dealt with His knowledge of our sins.

5:23- see on Phil. 1:10.

Paul at times quotes from or alludes to popular Jewish ideas with which he may not have necessarily agreed. The lack of quotation marks in New Testament Greek means that it's hard for us at this distance to discern when he does this – but it seems to me that it's going on a lot in his writings. Thus he uses the phrase "your whole spirit, soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23), a popular Jewish expression for 'the whole person' – but it's clear from the rest of Paul's writings that he didn't see the body and soul as so separate.

5:26 "A holy kiss" seems to have been the way of concluding a first century Christian meeting, in the same way as Paul ends some of his letters with this (1 Thess. 5:26; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14).

5:27 Revelation, Thessalonians and Colossians contain specific statements that the material was to be read out loud to the [illiterate] church members (Rev. 1:3; 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16); but the contents of those books require quite detailed analysis, which we tend to wrongly assume can only be given by reading the text. The processes of occasional listening to a text [employed by most first century believers] and reading a text [employed by many twenty first century believers] are quite different. We can go back to a text, re-read it, re-access it at will. Someone who occasionally hears a passage read, and who maybe only heard parts of the New and Old Testaments read once or twice in their lives, simply relates to the text differently. Further, the nature of the reading of the text, the delivery of the speaker, would've played an important part in the interpretation of it by the illiterate hearer- hence the greater responsibility of teachers in the first century than today. For the illiterate audience, the message was tied up with the messenger to a huge degree. Hence Timothy is told to pay attention to his [public?] reading, preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 4:13).

2 THESSALONIANS

1:5 If we continue faithful under tribulation, this "is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer" (2 Thess. 1:5). It is a foretaste of judgment. See on 1 Pet. 3:16.

1:6-10 Paul saw the day of judgment as an "assurance", a comfort, rather than an inevitable and dreaded event on the horizon of our existence (2 Thess. 1:6-10; Acts 17:31). Job and David speak of it likewise.

1:7- see on Mt. 24:28.

1:7,8 Jesus will return to earth with His Angels, and this means that throughout eternity there will be Angels with us on the earth. This is something to take into account in our visions of the Millenium and Kingdom age. It appears that they are more prominent in the setting up of the Kingdom, and that we will take over their role later on. They are the "reapers" sent forth to gather the saints, and that they will be responsible for punishing the nations (2 Thess. 1:7,8). Initially, the Angels and Jesus will be physically together in the judgement of the world- the unrepentant worshippers of the beast "shall be tormented... in the presence of the holy Angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:10). Presumably the individual beast worshippers will be brought together to one locality for this judgement- the literal location of Gehenna, where the unworthy saints will be punished? This gathering process will be by the Angels, as was that of the saints and of the nations to Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

1:7-9 If we could break this split second into real time, there would be the process of mortal emergence from the grave, judgment involving a period of time, then the righteous being grouped at Christ's right hand side, and then they would all be immortalised together. "Come... inherit the Kingdom" is spoken to the whole group of sheep; we will be immortalised together, at the same time. If we are all judged individually in real time, this is impossible. Some would be immortalised months or years after others. This collapsing of time at the Lord's return would explain why "the resurrection" is sometimes used as a description of the whole process of resurrection, judgment and immortality (even in the OT- Ps. 1:5 LXX; 24:3), and why 2 Thess. 1:7-9 speaks as if the judgment of the wicked and the coming of Christ from Heaven are simultaneous.

1:9- see on Rev. 14:10.

1:10 Our amazement and incomprehension at the judgment is also brought out in 2 Thess. 1:10, which speaks of the saints 'admiring' Christ in that day, using a Greek word meaning 'to marvel at in incomprehension'. This praise will also be on account of our being "presented faultless" before the judgment (Jude 24).

1:11- see on 1 Thess. 1:3.

Paul prays that "every desire of goodness" which there is in the Thessalonians will be fulfilled (2 Thess. 1:11 RV). He assumed they had such spiritual ambition, and wanted to see it realized. Spiritual ambition means that we will desire to do some things which we can't physically fulfil- and yet they will be counted to us. Abraham is spoken of as having offered up Isaac- his intention was counted as the act. And Prov. 19:22 RV appropriately comments: "The desire of a man is the measure of his kindness". It is all accepted according to what a man has, not what he has not.

2

"The man of sin" (2 Thess. 2)

However we understand the "working of Satan" (*energeian tou Satana*) in 2 Thess. 2:9, it was under the control of God – for it was part of the "strong delusion" (*energeian planes*) which God sent (2 Thess. 2:11). The repetition of the word *energeian* is missed through the mask of translation through

which most read this passage, but in the original Greek it stands out clearly. The ‘Satan’ isn’t working *against* God but is being used by God in *His* working in the lives of others. It is “evil” and “the work of Satan” which deceives the wicked (2 Thess. 2:9,10); but God works through this, it is *He* who sends the delusion... an indication that ‘Satan’ here is not radical evil, i.e. evil that is free and independent from God, lurking free in the cosmos as it were, but is sent by God, under His control. But of course, we want to know more about this ‘Satan’; and clearly the Jewish opposition to the Christian Gospel was a significant adversary or ‘Satan’ in the first century.

Like the majority of New Testament prophecy, 2 Thess. 2 has application to both AD70 and the last days, although this does not preclude a reference to the Papacy down through the years between those times. It was inspired at a time when apostasy had already set in within the ecclesia, largely due to the inroads of the Judaizers. We can be sure that the Jewish opposition which attended Paul’s first visit to Thessalonica would have continued well after he left. They were under pressure from “them that trouble you” (2 Thess. 1:6), who are defined in Gal. 5:11–13 as the Judaizers (“they... which trouble you”). The Thessalonians are comforted that these troublers would be destroyed by the Lord’s second coming in fire, “taking vengeance on them... that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (preferring that of Moses): who shall be punished with everlasting destruction (cp. Gehenna) from the presence of the Lord” (1:9). This sounds very much like the punishment of the responsible at judgment day (Jude 24) – and the Judaizers fit that category. Significantly, the only occurrences of the Greek idea of a “man of sin” in the LXX describe Jewish apostates (Prov. 24:22; Is. 57:4).

A Specific Individual

This prophecy speaks of a specific “man of sin” who would arise within the people of God [be they Israel or the ecclesia]. It seems that there may have been such an individual in the first century:

- “You have heard that antichrist shall come” (1 Jn. 2:18)
- “Who [singular] did hinder you... a little leaven [that] leaveneth the whole lump... he that troubleth you...” (Gal. 5:8–10)
- “He that is of the contrary part” (Tit. 2:8)
- “Who (which individual) hindered you?... (Paul’s) letters, saith he, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:7,10 A.V. mg.).
- The world – the first century Jewish world, in John’s usage of the term – was under the power of a ‘Satan’, a Prince or leader (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 1 Jn. 5:19) – perhaps the High Priest?
- A “stranger” to the flock and a “thief” would come to harm the flock of the Lord Jesus (Jn. 10:5,10).
- The existence of such an individual would make special sense of the Lord’s request for the Father to keep the disciples safe from “the evil one” (Jn. 17:15). 1 Jn. 2:13,14 alludes to this prayer and shows it to have been fulfilled in the first century – the true believers had been kept safe from “the evil one”. And there appears some connection with the promise of Rev. 3:10, given just prior to the cataclysm of AD70, to keep the brethren safe from “the hour of trial”.
- John seems to speak, at least in the Greek text, of one specific individual – e.g. “The one [singular] saying he is in the light” (1 Jn. 1:9). “Who, then, is *the* liar?” (1 Jn. 2:22) has evident connection with the lying antichrist figure of 2 Thess. 2:8,9; and “the deceiver” (2 Jn. 7) connects with that same figure who will follow “deceit” (2 Thess. 2:11). John saw the singular antichrist as being heralded by many antichrists who had, he felt, already arisen in the first century. They belonged to the [Jewish] world (1 Jn. 4:5) – an indication that the antichrist is somehow Semitic, at least in its first century application. John’s reference to “many false prophets” (1 Jn. 4:1) connects with Mt. 24:11, which in an AD70 context predicts that “many false prophets shall arise”. This indicates to me that the singular antichrist had some fulfilment in the first century. And the same will be [is?] true in our last days. The likes of Saddam Hussein and Hitler are perhaps such

antichrists who presage the coming of the specific person who will be the latter day antichrist. They had some similarities to him, but were not the actual person. Significantly, John seems to have understood this person as someone who would nominally accept Jesus, but deny that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Messiah (1 Jn. 2:22). This would fit a Moslem position far better than it would a Catholic – for Catholics believe that Jesus is the Christ. Likewise in the first century, the Jewish antichrists believed Jesus had existed, but denied He was the Christ.

It is noteworthy that this individual is not named. Martin Hengel comments, correctly: “One of the riddles of Jewish and early Christian polemic is that it hardly ever really names its opponents, but tends to use derogatory paraphrases. This is [also] true of Essene polemic, which conceals its opponents in ciphers”⁽¹⁾. In this context we recall the references to Babylon and Egypt in the Old Testament as, e.g., “Rahab”. Paul likewise doesn’t seem to refer to his enemies by their names but rather hides behind almost taunt phrases (2 Cor. 11:5,13; 12:11; Gal. 5:12; Phil. 3:2; and see too Gal. 1:7; 3:1,10; 4:17; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Rom. 3:8; 15:31). The references to the prophetess “Jezebel” in Rev. 2:20 and “the teaching of Balaam” (Rev. 2:14) don’t actually name the individuals concerned, but rather give them a kind of code name.

It is against this background that 2 Thess. 2:2 warns them not to be “soon shaken in mind, or be troubled (cp. 1:6; Gal. 5:12), neither by Spirit, nor by word (from those claiming the Spirit gift of prophecy), nor by letter as (if it were) from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (R.V. “here”). This all indicates Judaist activity; they had elsewhere used the tactic of forging letters in Paul’s name (Gal. 6:11; Heb. 13:22; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 3:1). Thus Paul concludes this second letter to the Thessalonians with “the salutation of me Paul with mine own hand which is the token in every epistle, so I write” (2 Thess. 3:17). Their reasoning was that the day of Christ, i.e. the Kingdom, was already present. This was a basically Jewish argument – hence the Judaist cancer at Ephesus had lead to Hymenaeus and Philetus “saying that the resurrection (and therefore the Lord’s return) is passed already; and overthrown the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18).

The Jewish nature of the man of sin⁽²⁾ which Paul warns the Thessalonians of is also suggested by a careful reflection upon 1 Jn. 2:11,19: “He that hateth his brother... walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth... they went out from us, but they were not of us”. This is all alluding back to the example of Cain going out from God’s presence and wandering in the land of Nod with no direction to his life. Cain is a type of the Judaizers and the Jewish system (Jn. 8:44); the primary reference of John’s letters was probably to the Judaizers. These people are described in 1 Jn. 2:18 as “antichrists” whose presence heralded the full manifestation of “the antichrist”. This is why the New Testament repeatedly stresses that the appearance of false teachers and fake Christs will be a sign of the end. If these antichrists of the first century were Jewish, then “the antichrist” probably also was. There is ample evidence that John’s letters were primarily intended for ecclesias facing this Judaizer problem. The copious links with his Jewish-based Gospel should make this evident. Note too that the Qumran Essenes described the apostate High Priest as “the man of lies”. Tertullian’s interpretations of John’s letters clearly understood the “antichrists” to be referring to contemporary false teachers.

Paul warns that the Lord’s coming will not be until there has come a marked further apostacy, and the full public revelation of the man of sin, whose “mystery of iniquity” was already quietly at work. It would be fully revealed once God’s withholding patience had ended. At this stage the man of sin would show “lying wonders” which would deceive many; but he would soon be destroyed by “the brightness of (the Lord’s) coming”. This “mystery of iniquity” was the Judaist false doctrine undermining the ecclesia, resulting in many believers being influenced by them, until in the immediate prelude to Christ’s ‘coming’ in AD70 the Jewish system seemed to have the upper hand over the true believers. We know from Heb. 6 and elsewhere that the Judaist elders were able to do

miracles. Such a bout of impressive miracles to be done by false teachers in the last days is predicted in the Olivet prophecy and parts of Revelation. The events of AD70 then totally destroyed the Jewish system.

The following verse by verse commentary seeks to interpret 2 Thess. 2 from these two perspectives – of AD70 and the last days. The fact that “the man of sin” appeared in the first century in the form of Judaist false teaching within the ecclesia means that “the wicked one” sitting in the temple is to be read on a figurative level – as referring to the temple of the ecclesia. Indeed, most N.T. usage of “temple” is with reference to the ecclesia. The Lord’s mysterious reference to an idolatrous abomination sitting in the holy place in the last days (to which Paul is alluding) must therefore also have at least some reference to a gross evil within the latter day ecclesia.

v.3 “That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”.

“The son of perdition” was Judas (Jn. 17:12), the epitome of sin and the Jewish Devil (Jn. 6:70,71 cp. 8:44). We will see that throughout 2 Thess. 2 there is frequent reference to the events surrounding our Lord’s suffering and death; as we also note in the Revelation passages concerning the saints’ final sufferings. Judas was concealed among the disciples until he finally flew his true colours at his betrayal of Christ, which marked the beginning of His passion. The Judaizers were only revealed for what they really were in the traumas of AD69/70. And if the man of sin has a latter day equivalent, this group of false teachers will only show their hand immediately prior to the second coming, at the beginning of the tribulation, which matches the beginning of Christ’s final sufferings which began after Judas’ betrayal. This indicates that any witch hunt for this group is doomed to failure. The disciples tried to expose Judas, “the man of sin”, before his proper time to be manifested; and ended up accusing each other of fitting the role. Such is the inability of human nature to make accurate judgment in this respect. There were three and a half days from the time of Judas being openly revealed for what he was to the end of Christ’s sufferings, marked by the resurrection. It may be that there will be a three and a half year tribulation period for the latter day believers, beginning with the open revealing of the “man of sin”.

The N.I.V. (correctly) translated “man of sin” as “man of lawlessness”, highlighting the contradiction in the fact that the law-crazy Judaists were actually lawless. Because lawlessness abounds in the last days, the majority of the ecclesia will lose their love (Mt. 24:12). The beast is epitomized by a man – “the number of the beast... is the number of a man” (Rev. 13:18)⁽³⁾, in the same way as the system described in 2 Thess. 2 is personified as a man of sin. The figure of Rev. 13:5,6 is clearly based around an Old Testament ‘man of sin’, Goliath – a real, historical person. Rev. 11:4,13 draw a contrast between a god of the earth / land of Israel, and the true God of Heaven. The “god of the earth” has two olive trees and two candlesticks standing before him, with evident allusion back to Zech. 4:14; 6:5, where the Lord / King of the earth / land appears to refer to the King of Babylon.

These passages all imply that there may well be one specific “man of sin” in the last days. Judas, the prototype “son of perdition”, influenced the other disciples, as shown by the complaint concerning Mary’s ‘waste’ of ointment being described as made by Judas in Jn. 12:4, but by the whole group in Mt. 26:8. Jude’s letter is a warning against the Jewish-influenced apostacy of the first century. He cites “the gainsaying of Korah” as typical of the false teaching that was infiltrating the ecclesias. He could have spoken of “Korah, Dathan and Abiram”, but instead he focuses on Korah, as if he was the outstanding influence. By doing so, was Jude suggesting that there was one specific individual in the “last days” who was to be resisted?

The connection with Judas would suggest that the man of sin being in the temple may refer to the presence of this individual or system within the ecclesia. But there is a clear link with Mt. 24:15, concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the temple as a clear sign that Christ's return is imminent, just as Paul says the man of sin in the temple is the clear sign of the second coming (2 Thess. 2:3). The Lord's words are looking back to Daniel's prophecy that a desolator (RV) is to appear in the temple, and also to Jeremiah's description of Nebuchadnezzar as a 'desolator' of God's people and His cities, who achieves his 'desolation' by a fake theophany, coming with clouds and chariots just as the Lord Jesus will (Jer. 4:7,13). The language used by Jeremiah in that section is very similar to that used in Ezekiel 38 about the individual named as 'Gog'. The abomination that desolates is at the hands of an individual desolator – the man of sin of 2 Thess. 2. The likely application to an abomination within the ecclesia notwithstanding, one is tempted to look for a physical temple to be built in Jerusalem in order to ease the fulfilment of this prophecy. It cannot be insignificant that the right wing Rabbis are enthusiastic for this, *and have already drawn up the plans for one!* It could be that Rev. 13:14,15 predict that the man of sin will set up a literal image of himself there in the temple. And as has been pointed out, Caligula had ordered a statue of himself to be erected in the temple, and although this never actually happened, this would've been an enduring memory amongst the New Testament readership. This background again points to the personality cult of a specific individual being developed in the temple.

v.4 “Who opposeth and exalteth”

This is used in 2 Tim. 2:25 concerning the Judaizers and Jews, and it is translated “adversary” in the same Judaist context in Lk. 13:17; 21:15; 1 Cor. 16:9; Phil. 1:28 and 1 Tim. 5:14. Their arrogance is well described as exalting themselves above anything that is ‘worshipped’, whether Christian or otherwise. This is the same word as “devotions” in Acts 17:23 concerning pagan idols. They made themselves “as God”, perhaps by imitating Moses, the god of this (Jewish) world” (2 Cor. 4:4 and context); James 4:11,12 is just one example of the Judaist-influenced eldership making themselves equal to Moses. There are two Greek words translated “temple”, one referring more to the physical building and the other to the spiritual dwelling place of God, i.e. the ecclesia (1 Tim. 3:15). It is this latter one which is used here – the man of sin sits down (Gk. ‘takes his place’) in the ecclesia, showing himself (Greek ‘demonstrating’) that he is God. This word is translated “approved” in Acts 2:22 concerning Christ's approval as God's representative by His miracles. This indicates that the man of sin is an imitation of Christ – a true antiChrist. The showing that he is God would be through the pseudo miracles of v.9 – in the same way as Moses was made as God to Pharaoh through the miracles he did (Ex. 7:1). The Judaist-influenced elders of the Jewish ecclesias seem to have retained the power of the miraculous gifts for a short time after their apostasy (Heb. 6:4–6); the Jews also had their false miracle workers (Acts 13:6; 19:14). The beast of Revelation also works impressive miracles. Thus as the man of sin did false miracles in the first century through the Jewish miracle workers and their Judaist friends within the ecclesia, so both in the beast system of the last days as well as in the ecclesia, the latter day “man of sin” will work false miracles.

v.5,6 “Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I told you these things? And *now* ye know (appreciate) what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time”.

There is a definite allusion here to Lk. 24:6: “He is... risen; remember *how* (with what earnestness, the Greek implies) he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee”, concerning his sufferings and resurrection. The connection runs deeper; as the Angel spoke those words in Lk. 24, the disciples were about to turn back, to capitulate to the reasoning of the Jewish Satan, due to their failure to truly appreciate earlier prophecy. The believers of AD70 and the last days have parallels with the position of those men. They had frequently heard about the coming sufferings of their Lord, but

somehow turned a deaf ear to them. We too can let the reality of these warnings about our future suffering just pass us by.

Paul says that these things had previously been explained to the Thessalonians, perhaps in 1 Thess. 5:3–5; there they were told that the pre-eminent sign of the Lord's coming is the "peace and safety" cry within the ecclesia. Now in 2 Thess. 2 Paul puts it another way: "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away *first*", or most importantly, as the most obvious sign. "Withholdeth" is also translated as "stand fast" and also "keep hold", often in the context of resisting Judaist infiltration by retaining true doctrine. This would imply that the spiritually strong within the ecclesias were withholding the revealing of the man of sin and the Lord's return ("that he might be revealed in his time" can neatly refer to either, cp. 1 Tim. 6:15). However, it was only a matter of time before the falling away was so widespread that they would be "taken out of the way"; "for the mystery of iniquity (literally 'law-breaking', another pun on the Judaizers' position) doth already work" (v.7). This is the opposite to "the mystery of Godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16), and refers to the Judaizers claiming to be so spiritually deep that the Truth was a "mystery" known only to them (cp. Jude 19; Rev. 2:24). That which hindered the revealing or coming (cp. 1:7; a false second coming) of the man of sin would be taken out of the way. "Out of the way" here is normally translated "from among them" – the spiritually minded members of the ecclesia were to be taken away, so that God's punishments could come upon the rest of them. In the first century this was shown in the command for the faithful to flee the Jerusalem ecclesia (Lk. 21:21), to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4), which is a common symbol of Israel and apostate Jewry in the prophets. The word for "mystery" is also used in a negative sense in Rev. 17:5,7 concerning the woman of sin riding the beast – hinting at a specific individual who will be the figurehead of the beast?

v.8 "And then shall that wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming".

It was the Jewish system which was destroyed by the 'coming' of AD70; there is a close connection between 'the evil one', i.e. the Devil, and the Jewish system.. The Spirit and brightness of the Lord's coming parallels the description of judgment on the Judaizers in 1:6–9: "...mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance... punished... from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power". This judgment is against "them that trouble you" (1:6), i.e. the false Judaist 'brethren' who were leading the early church astray (Gal. 1:7). The link with 2:8 shows that it is such false brethren *within the ecclesia* (temple) who are "the wicked one" which will be destroyed by the second coming. 2 Thess. 1:6–9 also recalls the description of coming judgment on the apostate Jews in Rom.1:18: The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unGodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness". Paul's words in Thessalonians can also be traced back to Is. 11:4: "He (Christ) shall smite the earth (Heb. '*eretz*' – land, of Israel) with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" in Israel, primarily. The Greek for "wicked" is translated "without law" in Romans, again making a play on the Judaizers who were claiming to keep the Law. There is a parallel between "the mystery of iniquity" in v.7 and the "wicked one" of v.8 – the revealing of "that wicked" is therefore the revealing of a mystery, which mimics the 'revealed mystery' of the true Gospel (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3; 6:19; Col. 1:26). The wicked one was to be "destroyed", the Greek for which is also translated "abolish", "do away", "make of no effect", "vanish away", "make void" etc., all in the context of the doing away of the Jewish Law and the system which supported it. This was only fully done with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD70.

"The spirit of his mouth" looks forward to Rev. 19:15,21 concerning Christ's destruction of the beast, which has close links with the man of sin. The emphasis on the destruction of the man of sin by Angels and fire recalls Dan. 7:10,11 concerning the beast's destruction by the Lord's return.

Perhaps the man of sin will appear associated with the latter day ecclesia, the temple of God, but he will be linked with the political ‘beast’ which will then be in control of the world.

v.9 “Him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders”.

‘Satan’ in the New Testament frequently refers to the Jewish system. “Coming” can be translated ‘coming in’, referring to the subtle entry of Judaist agents and ideas into the ecclesia (Gal. 2:4 etc.). The coming of Christ was associated with miracles, and this would be matched by ‘Satan’s’ miracles at *his* ‘coming’. The Greek for “working” is often used concerning the working of the Holy Spirit. “Power, signs and wonders” is a phrase always used concerning the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 2:22,43; 4:30; Rom. 15:19; Heb. 2:4); and in 2 Cor. 12:12 concerning the qualifications of an apostle. This would portray the man of sin as a false apostle (cp. 2 Cor. 11:13–15) doing false miracles to accompany a false Gospel; he is “the son of perdition” after the pattern of Judas. The Greek for “lying” is used about the apostate Jews in Jn. 8:44; Rom. 1:25; 1 Jn. 2:21.

Jannes and Jambres were another prototype of these Judaizers (2 Tim.3:8). Perhaps these magicians who replicated Moses’ miracles were apostate Jews. Israel’s experience in Egypt points forward to ours at the time of the second coming. Perhaps the beast, symbolic ‘Egypt’ of the last days, will also have a group of renegade Jews in tow, who match the miracles performed by the latter day Moses. Showing “signs and lying wonders” is an evident allusion back to Mt. 24:24, concerning this happening in the last days of AD70 and our own times. If the miraculous gifts are possessed by some of the faithful in the last days, e.g. In connection with the Elijah ministry, the ability of the apostate believers to do miracles will seem the more credible. There are many links between 2 Thess. 2 and the Olivet prophecy:

Matthew 24	2 Thessalonians 2
Lawlessness will abound (v.12)	The man of lawlessness
Men saying “Lo, here is Christ” (v.23)	“Be not soon shaken... by word... that the day of Christ is here” (v.2 R.V.)
“Believe it not” (v.23)	“Let no man (of sin) deceive you” (v.3).
“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders” (v.24).	“With all power and signs and lying wonders” (v.9)

“Insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (v.24); implying the non-elect *will* be deceived.

“Behold, I have told you before” (v.25), as Christ prophesied His sufferings.
“As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (v.27)

“The Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven (Angels) with power and great glory” (v.30)

“Shall gather together his elect” (v.31)

“I am Christ... shall deceive many” (v.5)

“Iniquity shall abound” (Greek: ‘multiply’, i.e. convert more people to it)
“The love of many shall wax cold” (v.12)

“All deceivableness... they (shall) believe a lie... but you, brethren beloved of the Lord, have from the beginning (been) chosen to salvation” (v.10,13) – i.e. it was impossible for *them* to be deceived.

“When I was yet with you, I told you these things” (v.5)

“The brightness of his coming” (v.8)

“With his mighty Angels... The glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:8,9 cp. 2:8)

“Our gathering together unto him” (v.1)

“Strong delusion, that they should believe a lie... all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish” (v.11,10).

“The mystery of iniquity does... work” (v.7)

“They received not the love of the truth” (v.9)

The description of those deceived in 2 Thess. 2 is amplifying that of the judgment seat in 1:6–9, which is concerning those responsible to judgment, i.e. those who know Christ. We therefore conclude that the many who are deceived by false claims of miracles are actually within the ecclesia. Only the elect will not be deceived. This was what happened in the run up to AD70, and must presumably be seen in our last days too. The establishment of the beast’s power in Jerusalem, accompanied by powerful miracles and the support of some Judas-like brethren within the ecclesia for it, will persuade some in the church to think that Christ is back. The connections between Mt. 24 and 2 Thess. 2 indicate that many (Gk. The majority, Mt. 24:12) within the ecclesia will be deceived, egged on by a subtle group of false Christians who will be the counterpart of the first century Judaizers.

v.10 “With all deceivableness (used concerning the Judaizers in 2 Pet. 2:13) of unrighteousness (used about the Jews in Rom. 1:18,29; 2:8; Heb. 8:12; 2 Pet. 2:13) in them that perish (cp. 1 Cor. 1:18 – about the Jews?); because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”.

This implies that they received the truth, but not the love of it. Is this true of the latter day church?

v.11 “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie”.

This same word for “lie” is used in v.9 about “lying wonders”. This implies that the beast / false prophet / man of sin is somehow allowed by God to do the lying wonders; they will be sent by God to test the faithful. God deluded the unfaithful within the first century ecclesia into false doctrine and alienation from Him; and it seems, if we are interpreting correctly, that He will do the same in these last days.

Who Will He Be?

We have seen that the latter day man of sin will have some association with the people of God, after the pattern of Judas. He may be partly Jewish. He may even have Christian connections. Or it may be that he is an Arab, a half Jew, who will enthrone himself as the head of the Arab beast and make his capital and temple in Jerusalem. Nah. 1:15 RV describes the leader of the Assyrian invasion as “the wicked one”, the “wicked counsellor” (1:11), “*he* that dashes [Israel] in pieces” (Nah. 2:1). Further evidence for a charismatic Arab antichrist is provided in my study of the revival of latter day Babylon in *The Last Days*. Of particular significance is the way that the man of sin exalts himself “against all that is called God or that is an object of worship” (2 Thess. 2:4 RV mg.). This is exactly relevant to Islam, whose insistent belief in one God leads them to be aggressively against any icon, idol or object of worship. This is the very opposite to the Catholic way of venerating objects of worship.

Notes

- (1) Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: S.C.M., 1996 ed.), p. 41.
- (2) This is explored in detail in section 2–4 ‘The Jewish Satan’.
- (3) The following table shows the evident links between the personal “man of sin” spoken of in 2 Thess. 2, and the beast systems of Revelation. I am grateful to Phil Edmonds for tabulating these connections:

2 Thessalonians 1& 2	Revelation
2:3 – son of perdition (see also John 17:12)	17:8 – Beast goes into perdition
2:7 – mystery of iniquity (Gk. <i>anomia</i>) (<i>a reference to the son of perdition</i>)	17:7 – Babylon associated with mystery
2:8 – wicked (lit. ‘lawless’ – Gk. <i>anomos</i>) one revealed (see also v. 7 where “iniquity” = Gk. <i>anomia</i>)	1:1 – The revelation of Jesus Christ
2:8 – Lord consumes him [the wicked one] with the spirit of his mouth (<i>ref. To Isaiah 11:4</i>)	19:11, 15 – Christ destroys the beast (<i>ref. To Isaiah 11:4</i>)
1:8 – Lord Jesus in flaming fire	19:12 – Christ’s eyes “as a flame of fire”
2:11 – those who perish believe a lie (<i>a reference to the wicked one of 2:8</i>)	19:20 – “false (or lying) prophet”
2:11 – strong delusion (or working of deceit) (<i>a reference to the wicked one of 2:8</i>)	13:14 – deceive
	19:20 – deceive
	(<i>references to the second beast and the false prophet</i>)
2:9 – signs (Gk. <i>semeion</i>) (<i>a reference to the wicked one of 2:8</i>)	13:13 – wonders (Gk. <i>semeion</i>)
	19:20 miracles
	(Gk. <i>semeion</i>) (<i>references to the second beast and the false prophet</i>)
2:4 – temple	11:2 – temple

The Beast and the Man of Sin

There are some connections between Mt. 24 and 2 Thess. 2 which show that the “man of sin” has specific reference to the last days, as Mt. 24 does:

Matthew 24	2 Thess. 2
“Then shall many be offended” v.10	“A falling away first” v.3
“The love of many shall wax cold” v.12	“They received not the love of the truth” v.10
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The man of sin is “the son of perdition”, clearly alluding to Judas (Jn. 17:12). This associates this power with the apostate element within the ecclesia. Through infiltrating the ecclesia, he will sit “in the temple of God” (2 Thess. 2:4), i.e. the ecclesia. Judas was a betrayer; we have seen from the Olivet prophecy that there will be betrayers within the ecclesia in the tribulation period. The link with Judas surely teaches that there will be a ‘Fifth column’ within the latter day church, who are connected with the latter day Babylon / beast / man of sin.

However, it is possible that these prophecies refer to a specific individual who claims that he is Christ – a real ‘antiChrist’, possibly associated with a renegade Christian (after the pattern of Judas being one of the twelve). It may even be that he builds a literal temple, which would then be the abomination which makes desolate standing in the holy place. Remember that the horn / beast blasphemes the temple (Rev. 13:6), and in their manifestation as the King of the North, “he shall plant the tabernacle of his palace... In the glorious holy mountain” of Zion (Dan. 11:45). 2 Thess. 2:8,9 point the contrast between the Lord’s coming and that of the man of sin – as if the latter is a replica of the former. This new power will break in pieces opposing nations just like Christ will (Dan. 7:23 cp. 2:44); he will institute a new set of laws world-wide as if he has God’s authority (Dan. 7:25 cp. 2:21).

Some may be duped into thinking that Christ has come back, when actually it is the ‘antiChrist’ of the beast. The beast may have its adherents within the ecclesia who will promulgate this view. The beast has a mouthpiece in another beast that speaks like a dragon – i.e. like the beast – but has horns like a lamb, i.e. a fake Christ. This beast “does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men (i.e. this is conscious exhibitionism), and deceives... by the means of these miracles which he had power to do” (Rev. 13:11–14). Bringing fire from Heaven means that this is a conscious imitation of Elijah, implying that the Elijah ministry is active during the tribulation. It will be opposed by the publicity stunts of the beast system.

The idea of an anti-Christ as a replica of the real Christ also occurs in Proverbs, where there is a designed contrast between the woman of wisdom (representing Christ, the seed of the woman, 1 Cor. 1:24), and the “foolish woman” who does the same external things as “wisdom” (e.g. Prov. 9:1–5 cp. 9:14–17). This prototype antiChrist is a whore, which is a symbol associated with the

dragon / Babylon / beast of Revelation. Thus the antiChrist and the beast are closely linked. Because of the false miracles, the weak believer will worship the image of the beast and join the 666 system (Rev. 13:14–18). This is based on the image in the plain of Dura, which many of God's people were duped into worshipping. Only the three friends seem to have refused to do so. Perhaps the furnaces which were the means of punishment for those who refused to worship the image are related to the furnaces of the concentration camps, which we may well see repeated in the future.

“A time of trouble”

We have suggested that the blasphemous power building his palace on the temple mount in Dan. 11:45 is the man of sin of 2 Thess. 2, and thus also the little horn power. This is immediately before the second coming of Christ and resurrection described in Dan. 12:2. It is during this period that “there shall be a time of trouble such as never was” for God’s people, natural and spiritual – the time of Jacob’s trouble that occurs after Israel’s present regathering to the land. “That day is great, so that none is like it” (Jer. 30:7). Those who are written in the book experience it, but are saved from it. This group must surely be true believers. Seeing that this will be a time of trouble for God’s people such as never was, the previous sufferings of the Jews and the tribulation of the second world war will be nothing compared to this. It will be so bad that it will seem that every one of us will perish – “there should no flesh be saved” (Mt. 24:22). But for those who doggedly hold on to the patience and faith of the saints, the glorious, miraculous deliverance will come. Even an Angel was so amazed by the extraordinary nature of this time of trouble that he asked: “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?”. The answer was “For a time, time and an half (i.e. three and a half years); and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Dan. 12:7,8). The Hebrew for “the holy people” is literally ‘the people of the holy ones’ – i.e. all those among natural and spiritual Israel who belong to their holy guardian Angels. “All things” being fulfilled in Dan. 12:8 is probably alluded to in the fig tree parable – the generation that see the revival of Israel (fruit instead of leaves on the tree, as a result of Christian preaching) during that three and a half year tribulation will live to see the end of all things. The holy people are to be scattered (Dan. 12:7). The Hebrew means ‘to break in pieces’, and is also used regarding the beast / horn breaking in pieces the whole earth / land (Dan. 7:23). As it treats God’s people, so it will be judged, seeing that the little stone breaks in pieces the beast / image.

The horn who scatters God’s people in the last days, the “he” of Dan. 12:7 is the “King of the North” of Dan. 11:45 – suggesting that the beast / horn has something to do with latter day Assyria and Babylon, the historical / Biblical “King of the North”. The faithful will be “tried” (Dan. 12:10) by this invader, as Israel were by the Babylonian invasion of the past (Jer. 9:7). The same word is used in Zech. 13:9 and Mal. 3:2 concerning the faithful remnant in Jerusalem enduring their future sufferings.

There are a number of similarities between Daniel 11 and the prophecies concerning the persecution of the saints by the horn / beast / man of sin:

Daniel 11	The Latter Day Tribulation
v.31 "Shall pollute the sanctuary"	The beast's blasphemy against the temple
v.32 "Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries"	Some of those in the covenant will be deceived by the flatteries of the beast (cp. Dan. 8:25)
"Such as do wickedly"	"The wicked shall do wickedly" (Dan. 12:10)
v.32,33 "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits... instruct many"	Zealous preaching by the faithful during persecution.
v.33 "They shall fall by the sword"	The beast kills the saints with the sword and leads them into captivity in the tribulation (Rev.13:10). "They shall fall by the sword" is quoted in Lk. 21:24 concerning the tribulation.
"Many days"	1260 days
v.35 "Some of them of understanding shall fall" (in death)	"Some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Lk. 21:16) – the faithful remnant are characterized by their "understanding" – of the prophecies?
"To try them, and to purge, and to make them white"	"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" (Dan. 12:10)
"Even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed"	The tribulation continues right up to the end – the Lord's coming. The time appointed – 3.5 years of Dan. 12:7?
v.36 "The King...shall exalt himself"	As the horn did over the other horns. If this verse is a continuing description of Antiochus Epiphanes, then it just isn't all true. Rather it seems do we have another gap / jump in chronological fulfilment, as happens elsewhere in Daniel, until the latter day antichrist.
"And magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods"	The man of sin exalts himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4); the horn speaks blasphemy against God.
v.38 "He shall sit in the seat of the Almighty God" (A.V. mg.)	Sitting as God in God's temple (2 Thess. 2:4)

There are too many similarities here for this to all be coincidental. The primary fulfilment of Dan. 11 appears to be in the persecution of the Maccabees. The effective tribulation which they went through then, preparing as it did a faithful remnant who accepted Jesus as Messiah at His first coming, must be a dim shadow of what the church and natural Israel are to undergo in the last days. Note that Dan. 11:33 and 12:10 emphasize that only those who understand will spiritually survive the persecution. This should serve as the ultimate inspiration to zealously apply ourselves to the study of prophecy, rather than give up because it seems too difficult. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

The Old Testament Basis

In searching for an Old Testament basis for "that wicked one", we find that very phrase used in the Septuagint of Esther 7:4 to describe Haman. He too was 'revealed' for who he was – the Persian

leader plotting the total destruction of Jewry, from which they were saved by grace. The entire story of Esther can be read as a detailed type of Israel's latter day weakness, persecution and deliverance by grace. The idea of a "man of sin" within the temple of God surely has its source in the Ezekiel passages (e.g. Ez. 8:8–16) which describe the idolatry ("abomination") which occurred within the temple in the days just prior to the invasion of Israel by the Babylonians. These passages lead up to the vision of the purged, perfected temple of the Messianic Kingdom in Ez. 40 – 48. The 'men of sin' which Ezekiel saw within the temple were the "elders of the house of Israel", the corrupted priesthood. The connection with 2 Thess. 2 suggests that in the last days, before the final neo-Babylonian holocaust, the elders of both natural and spiritual Israel will practice corruption in the temple / ecclesia of God.

There is an incident in the experience of Nehemiah, Governor of Jerusalem (a type of Christ, Mt. 2:6) which points forward to all this. Nehemiah (cp. Jesus) returned to the Emperor to have his authority over Jerusalem confirmed (cp. Christ to God, Mt. 25:19; Lk. 19:12,13). He then returned to the holy land, to find Israel indifferent to the state of God's house, taken up with the petty materialism of daily life, with the result that the Arab Tobiah had been permitted by the elders of Israel to live in the chambers of the house of God (Neh. 13:6–9). Nehemiah in fury expels him and "cleansed the chambers", throwing out all his things, after the pattern of Christ cleansing the temple (Mt. 21:12). Along with the type of Moses returning from the mount to a corrupted Israel, this points forward to the state of affairs at Christ's return. Is. 8:5 speaks of an "image of jealousy" being placed in the temple by the Jews just prior to the Babylonian invasion. This was the original image behind the Lord's prophecy of the abomination of desolation being placed in the temple by the Romans. And yet His prophecy has a distinct latter day reference. All this points to a similar literal fulfilment in some way, in a literal latter day temple.

2:1 2 Thess. 2:1,2 implies that if we really have a firm faith in and focus on the second coming, we will not be led away by false teachers.

2:2 It may be that "be not soon shaken in mind... neither by Spirit, nor by word, nor by letter..." (2 Thess. 2:2) refers to the possibility of an Angel-Spirit giving the temptation to believe that the day of Christ would come without the "falling away" (see on Ez. 14:9). The strong delusion of 2 Thess. 2:11 which God would send was sent by Him- i. e. by His Angels through whom He does all things.

2:3 *Man of sin*- Goliath was one of the prototypes of the "man of sin".

Paul read the prophecy of deceivers arising in the last days as referring to deceivers arising within the ecclesia, i.e. people who were already baptized, consciously deceiving the majority of the ecclesia. He repeats this conviction at least three times (Mt. 24:4 = Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:3). Paul was an enthusiast for living as if we know the Lord's return is imminent; but he told the Thessalonians that that blessed day wouldn't come immediately, because some prophecy still had to be fulfilled (2 Thess. 2:3). This, I suspect, is the situation we are in now: living *as if* we expect the Lord imminently, but recognizing that we don't *know* whether his return is imminent, and still looking for some prophecy to be fulfilled.

2 Thess. 2:3 RV speaks of "*the* falling away" which must come as the final, crystal clear sign that the Lord's return is imminent. It sounds as if Paul treated this as an obvious, well known thing amongst the believers. In the context, he's saying: 'How ever can you believe this idea that the day of Christ is here now (RV)? As you know thoroughly well, the great apostacy from the truth in the ecclesia must come, and only *then* will the Lord come, to save the elect within his corrupted ecclesia'. The idea of latter day weakness in the ecclesia is taught explicitly and implicitly

throughout the Scriptures. Both natural and spiritual Israel have to be almost pleaded with to come out from among the beast system of the last days (Rev. 18:4), implying that somehow they become part of it- although ideally they should never have become involved with it. Israel being tempted by Balaam and the Moabite women at the very end of the wilderness journey looks forward to the tendency of latter day spiritual Israel to mess up on the eve of the Kingdom. A fair case can be made for thinking that Adam sinned at the end of the sixth day, on the eve of the sabbath of rest (cp. the Millennium). See on 1 Tim. 4:1.

The accounts of the latter day invasion of Israel all feature a single charismatic individual, who will be destroyed personally by the Lord Jesus at His coming. This is Paul's "man of sin", Daniel's aggressive king of fierce countenance, Ezekiel's Gog, the chief prince. It is also the person referred to by Micah: "And this man [Messiah] shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Mic. 5:1,2). The Lord Jesus will save His people in the latter days from an "Assyrian". It has been shown that Assyria and Babylon are used almost interchangeably in Scripture. Gog was a Jew who apostatized and went to live in Assyria / Babylonia, according to 1 Chron. 5. This is why he has the appearance of spirituality; and he may even be an Arab Christian. I say this because 2 Thess. 2 describes him as "the son of perdition", exactly the phrase used about Judas, the false disciple of Jesus. Notice how Tariq Aziz [Iraqi foreign minister at the time of writing] and other leading members of the Iraqi cabinet are in fact Arab Christians, not Moslems.

2 Thess. 2:3 is clear enough that the "man of sin" will arise in the last days immediately before the Lord's return. We need not think that Christ is about to return until we see this person gloriously enthroned "as God". This is what Paul seems to be saying. And when the Lord was asked for the signs of His coming, he started off by warning that false Christs would come (Mt. 24:4,5). 1 Jn. 2:18 says just the same: "It is the last time [RV "hour"] and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time". This was true in the run up to AD70, and it will be true in the ultimate last hour too. Ezekiel 38 likewise speaks of a man called 'Gog', a "chief prince", who would come against God's people at the time of the end. This is the man of whom Dan. 8:25 speaks- "he will destroy many and will stand up against the Prince of princes", the Lord Jesus.

2:3

The beast and the man of sin

There are some connections between Mt. 24 and 2 Thess. 2 which show that the "man of sin" has specific reference to the last days, as Mt. 24 does:

Matthew 24	2 Thess. 2
"Then shall many be offended" v.10	"A falling away first" v.3
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It seems reasonable to equate this "man" with the specific "antiChrist" of 1 Jn.2:18. The beast/ horn system is also an imitation of Christ- it breaks in pieces the whole earth (Dan.7:23)- the same word used in Dan.2:40,44 to describe Christ's breaking in pieces of the nations at his return. The little

horn will "think to change times and laws". This is clearly alluding to Dan.2:21, where God alone is described as changing the times and seasons. The little horn thus makes himself as God- the man of sin "as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess.2:4). This man of sin will be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's second coming (2 Thess.2:8). He will therefore be actively in existence in the last days. This man of sin will be revealed during a falling away from the truth just prior to the return of Christ (2 Thess.2:2,3). Thus whatever fulfilments of this power there may have been over history, it has to be accepted that it will have a particular manifestation in the last days.

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Christ will be as obvious as the lightning'. In the same way as eagles are irresistibly drawn to the carcase, so we will be to whatever place Christ appears at (Mt.24:28).

"A time of trouble"

We have suggested that the blasphemous power building his palace on the temple mount in Dan.11:45 is the man of sin of 2 Thess.2, and thus also the little horn power. This is before the second coming and resurrection described in Dan.12:2. It is during this period that "there shall be a time of trouble such as never was" for God's people, natural and spiritual- the time of Jacob's trouble that occurs after Israel's present regathering to the land. "That day is great, so that none is like it" (Jer.30:7). Those who are written in the book experience it, but are saved from it. This group must surely be true believers. Seeing that this will be a time of trouble for God's people such as never was, the previous sufferings of the Jews and the tribulation of the second world war will be nothing compared to this. It will be so bad that it will seem that every one of us will perish- "there should no flesh be saved". But for those who doggedly hold on to the patience and faith of the saints, the glorious, miraculous deliverance will come. Even an Angel was so amazed by the extraordinary nature of this time of trouble that he asked: "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?". The answer was "For a time, time and an half (i.e. three and a half years); and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" (Dan.12:7,8). The Hebrew for "the holy people" is literally 'the people of the holy ones'- i.e. all those among natural and spiritual Israel who belong to their holy guardian Angels. "All things" being fulfilled in Dan.12:8 is probably alluded to in the fig tree parable- the generation that see the revival of Israel (fruit instead of leaves on the tree, as a result of our preaching) during that three and a half year tribulation will live to see the end of all things. The holy people are to be scattered (Dan.12:7). The Hebrew means 'to break in pieces', and is also used regarding the beast/horn breaking in pieces the whole earth (Dan.7:23). As it treats us, so it will be judged, seeing that the little stone breaks in pieces the beast/ image.

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There are too many similarities here for this to all be coincidental. The primary fulfilment of Dan.11 appears to be in the persecution of the Maccabees. The effective tribulation which they went through then, preparing as it did a faithful remnant, must be a dim shadow of what we and natural Israel are to undergo in the near future. Note that Dan.11:33 and 12:10 emphasize that only those who understand will spiritually survive the persecution. This should serve as the ultimate inspiration to zealously apply ourselves to the study of prophecy, rather than give up because it seems too difficult. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

2:4 The Genesis record seems to frame the confederations of Arab tribes contemporary with the 12 tribes of Israel as being a kind of pseudo-Israel- for they too are described as being 12 tribe confederacies. There were 12 Aramaean tribes who came from the 12 sons born to Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. 22:20-24); 12 tribes from Ishmael (Gen. 25:13-16); and the five tribes from the sons of Esau (Gen. 36:9-14) joined with the seven Horite tribes in Seir (Gen. 36:20-28). Joel 2:20 speaks of the latter day invasion of Israel by "the northern army", which will then be consumed by the Lord's return. The Hebrew word for 'north' meaning 'hidden / concealed'- the 'north' is seen in Hebrew as the hidden / concealed place- the Jewish Encyclopedia interprets "the northern army" as "the concealed one". This may connect with 2 Thess. 2:4 speaking of the "man of sin" as a "Wicked one" who is revealed for who he is and then consumed by the Lord's second coming. This would associate the man of sin with the latter day invaders of Israel, which the Old Testament appears to define as the Arab neighbours of Israel. The Jewish Encyclopedia [article on "Ahriman"] mentions "a Judæo-Mohammedan tradition identifying the "Northern One" with the Mohammedan Antichrist, Al-Dajjal—the Liar".

There is a New Testament theme that in the last days, the ecclesia will be infiltrated by a "man of sin" who appears to be an apostle, and who in league with the Arab beast, the power dominating the

world, corrupts the ecclesia. He is an anti-Christ, a false God. His sitting in the temple of the ecclesia is matched by Tobiah the Arab having rooms in the temple- rooms which should have been symbolic of the dwelling place of God's people with Him (Neh. 7:13 cp. Jn. 14:1-3). He will get this place, as Tobiah got his place, because the ecclesia has failed to grasp the rigid line of demarcation between the things of God's Kingdom and those of Satan's. They will have been deceived by the apparent similarity between the two Kingdoms. The presence of antiChrist within the ecclesia will be the sign "whereby ye know that it is the last time" (1 Jn. 2:18); and 2 Thess. 2:3 and Mk. 13:5,14 say the same thing. The recognition of the presence of such false teaching within the ecclesia will be what tells the faithful remnant that the Lord's return really is imminent. If the "man of sin" is to be connected somehow with the Arab beast as we have suggested elsewhere, it may be that the vague, outline similarities between Islam and the One Faith are what are capitalized upon in order to make the differences seem minimal. Thus Moslems tenaciously believe in one God and a restored paradise on earth, and Shi'ite Moslems (comprising 99% Iranians and 60% Iraqis) look for the return of the 12th Imam (who they believe has ascended to Heaven) to rule the world. Moslem mosques are fake temples of God, designed as they are around an outer court and two sanctuaries. As Adam desired equality with God (see the allusions to his fall in Phil. 2) and was punished with an inability to hide, shame and nakedness as a result, so Edom will be punished in precisely the same way (Jer. 49:10)- because they too desire equality with God, as Babylon did in Is. 14:13, and as the man of sin will attempt (2 Thess. 2: 4). The connection between Babylon, Edom and the man of sin's blasphemy suggests that he is connected with Arab / Islamic religious blasphemy. We have shown elsewhere that the antichrist is a mimic of the true Christ; his kingdom is a parody of God's Kingdom. And the King of Babylon claiming "I am and none else beside me" are the very words of Yahweh- the King of Babylon is clearly to be identified with the man of sin, who sits as God in God's temple (2 Thess. 2). But the similarities run deeper. The Babylonian epic of creation is a parody of the Genesis account; the flood has its counterpart in the epic of Gilgamesh; and the Code of Hammurabi, an early ruler of Babylon, was clearly an anti-law of Moses. And Saddam Hussein's supporters used to greet him as the Messiah of the Arab world. Now Saddam has passed off the scene, but the point is that a similar charismatic leader could arise and be the antichrist. The "man of sin" will sit in the temple of God and proclaim that he is God. This is surely the "abomination that maketh desolate" that the Lord Jesus predicted would sit in the temple just prior to His return. The abomination makes "desolate", clearly referring to *Jerusalem* being made desolate by Babylonian / Iraqi invaders (Dan. 9:2,17). Luke 21:20 parallels "the abomination that maketh desolate" in Mt. 24 and Mk. 13 with "the desolation of Jerusalem". The abomination / abominator will stand "where *he* ought not" (Mk. 13:14 RV). He is the "one that maketh desolate" (Dan. 9:27 RV). A specific individual is clearly implied. Dan. 8:13 RV describes this person as "the transgression that maketh desolate"- yet it is the abominator that makes Jerusalem desolate. Therefore "the transgression" is surely being put by metonymy for a man, who will sit in the Most Holy place and make Jerusalem desolate. And 2 Thess. 2 says just the same- "the man of sin / transgression". The whole tenor of the Daniel prophesies is that they refer to an individual who will arise in the last days- not someone like a Pope sitting in St. Peter's for centuries. The vision of the 2300 days of abomination- the days during which the abominator will make Jerusalem desolate- "belongs to the latter days" (Dan. 8:26). These are the days during which the sanctuary and the host of God's people will be "trodden under foot"; interpreted by the Lord as Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles until "the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled".

It is quite clear that the Iraqi leadership would dearly love to sit and stand in the Sanctuary if they could get their hands on Jerusalem [as they vow they will]. He will sit there "as God". Another place where we read of a man sitting in the temple proclaiming that he is God is in Ez. 28:2, where the King of Tyre proudly says that he sits as God ruling the seas of the people. The King of Tyre was a prototype for the latter day man of sin. And he was an Arab, too- what we would call a Lebanese. It could even be that the rebuilding of Babylon is to be associated with a

rebuilding of Tyre. One of Nimrod's characteristics- the founder of Babylon- was that he filled the face of the earth with cities. The King of Tyre was "in Eden the garden of God" where he was "anointed" and beautifully adorned (Ez. 28:12,14). These descriptions may be further information about the serpent in Eden, although omitted from the Genesis account. In this case, the fake-Christ [annointed one] is "the old serpent", just as the latter day beast leader will be (Rev. 12). The beast is so often paralleled with its leader, just as the little horn seems to refer to both a leader and a nation / political system. The sudden destruction that comes upon Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2 is the same kind of thing spoken of in 1 Thess. 5:3- "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh". The saying of peace and safety is exactly the language of Daniel regarding the false peace produced in the very last days by Antichrist. It could well be that under Babylon's domination there is a brief boom period for the entire world. This ensures his political survival, and explains why all the world's merchants will weep at his fall. This sorrow by the traders hardly seems likely to happen if the Vatican was destroyed. This person will accuse the brethren of Christ before the throne of God (Rev. 12:10), but will be thrown down by the Lord's return and the establishment of the Kingdom. This is exactly the language of 2 Thess. 2 about the antichrist who is to be destroyed by the Lord's coming. Yet the idea of a false accuser of the brethren before the throne of God takes us back to Job's satan- who seems to have been an Arab pseudo-disciple, bringing down the outpouring of vial-like judgments upon God's people (cp. the scene in Revelation). Antichrist, the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God, is surely the abomination that Jesus said is to be in the temple in the last days, leading to the final desolation. Is. 14 describes the rise and fall of the King of Babylon; he too desired to set himself as God in the temple of God, having first terrorized the nations that dwell on the 'earth', those situated in the land promised to Abraham between the Nile and Euphrates. This seems so on the cards for latter day Babylon in the form of Iraq- to terrorize the Arab world into accepting her leadership, and then to seek to set up the King of latter day Babylon on "the mount of God", Zion. Finally, Nahum speaks of how there was one specific Assyrian leader who was to be destroyed by the coming of Messiah. The phrasing is so similar to that found about the "man of sin": "There is one gone forth out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor... behold upon the mountains the feet of him [Messiah] that bringeth good tidings... the wicked one shall no more pass through... he is utterly cut off. He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face" (Nah. 1:11,15; 2:1 RV).

2:7 The go-it-alone, maverick Paul came to love and need, desperately, his brethren. The work of fathering so many others in the Faith developed in him a whole range of characteristics which made him such a wealthy soul: he felt as a father (2 Thess. 2:11), as a mother (2:7), as an orphan (2:17 Gk.). The bitterness and the hardness was surely overridden by these characteristics, although as we have seen, traces of them still surfaced sometimes, under provocation.

2:8 Very similar language to Daniel 9:26 occurs in Is. 10:23: "For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, shall the Lord of Hosts execute in the midst of the land". The context is speaking of "the Assyrian". The same language of the last days is found in Is. 28:22: "a decisive destruction on all the earth." The latter day antichrist is therefore modelled upon the "Assyrian" of the Old Testament. Note that "the man of sin" of 2 Thess. 2:8 alludes to "the wicked one" of Is. 11:4 LXX, who is, again, "the Assyrian"! So it would appear very likely that the antichrist figure comes from 'Assyria'. And what's going on in Iraq and the territory of 'Assyria' right now is gripping the whole world's attention. See on Rev. 19:20.

2:11- see on 2 Thess. 2:7.

This passage explains clearly why the Bible is so confusing. God plagued the first century ecclesia with false brethren who could work impressive miracles; because "they received not the love of the truth (they treated it as a hobby)... God shall send them strong delusion, that they might believe a lie". God deceived brethren in the run up to AD70- it's that plain. And the events of AD70 are typical of our last days. 2 Thess. 2 has many connections with the Olivet Prophecy. The idea of

brethren being deceived at the time of Christ's "coming" connects with Mt. 24:5,11,24 describing 'the majority' (Gk.) of the latter day ecclesia being "deceived". 2 Thess. 2:11 says that this deception is sent by God because they refuse to love the Truth. The conclusion is hard to avoid: in our last days, the majority of us will be deceived because we don't "love the truth" - it's no more than a hobby. Whether we have yet reached that situation must remain an open question. God worked false miracles at the time of AD70, according to 2 Thess. 2:9-11. This means that the 'miracles' claimed by some false religions may be actual miracles; God allows them to be done because He wishes to deceive such people.

2:17- see on 2 Thess. 2:7.

3:1- see on Lk. 18:1.

Mt. 13:19 describes the evil one taking away the word out of our heart. However can we resist that evil one? Paul had his eye on this question in 2 Thess. 3:1,3, where he speaks of the word being *with them*, and also of the Lord keeping them from the evil one. Paul knew that the Lord (Jesus) will help us in keeping the word in our hearts, if we allow him to; he saw that the power of God is greater than our low nature.

There is an idiom in Scripture which concerns running. To 'run' is sometimes used to describe a man's response to God's word (Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; Jn. 8:37 RV; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.)- it must be a running, active, speedy response. Dan. 12:4 seems to imply that in the last days, God's word will be clearly understood by the brotherhood and therefore many will "run to and fro" in response. The more clearly we understand and perceive God's word, the faster we will 'run' in response. We cannot separate our Bible study from our actions. This is why we should not only do our Bible readings daily, but study and pray and strive to understand... so that we will be the more motivated in practice. It is all too easy to be apparently zealous for good causes, as are many unbelievers, because of the needs of the moment, because we are in a situation where we would feel awkward not to enthusiastically respond... but the only true and lasting motivation for good works is an understanding, a purely personal understanding, of God's will for us. When the shepherds were told that Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, they "quickly" went there- for they believed what they had understood (Lk. 2:16). Paul "immediately" went to preach in Macedonia after seeing the vision suggesting he do this (Acts 16:10), just as he "immediately" began his initial preaching commission after receiving it (Gal. 1:16).

3:5- see on Jn. 5:42.

3:7 The idea of consciously modelling, of having some characters as your heroes, your inspiration towards a closer following of God, was very much in Paul's thinking. Not only does he do it himself, but he encourages others to do it. He doesn't use the word 'modelling'; he uses the word 'mimicking', Greek 'mimicos', normally translated "follow" in the AV. This Greek word is used almost exclusively by Paul. "Ye became *followers* of us and of the Lord.... ye know how ye ought to *follow* us... an ensample unto you to *follow* us" (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9; the implication is that in the gap between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they stopped following Paul as they initially did straight after his conversion of them).

3:9- see on Acts 19:31.

3:12 We should live "quietly", and we are exhorted to do this "by our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 3:12). Our imagination of who He was and how He would have lived must be our pattern. We are in this sense in the grip of a personality cult based upon Him.

3:13- see on Lk. 18:1.

1 TIMOTHY

1:1 The most essential error, practically or doctrinally, is to "lose connection to the head [Jesus], from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together... grows" (Col. 2:19). The Lord Himself taught that what Paul called 'growing up into Him who is the head'. He commented that the end goal for His disciples was that "every one [i.e. disciple, in the context] when he is perfected shall be as his master", i.e. Himself (Lk. 6:40). This was why Paul can speak of "Jesus who is our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1), all we hope to ever become.

1:3 The purpose of keeping our understanding of the basic principles clear is that this will lead to true love and faith (1 Tim. 1:3-5). Timothy was to "charge" some that they didn't teach false doctrine, and the "end" of this charge [s.w. v.5] was "charity out of a pure heart... a good conscience... love unfeigned". This is what the true Gospel enables, and *this* is why it should be defended.

1:5 The end of the concept of commandment is love out of a pure heart (1 Tim. 1:5). This is where it all leads. All commandments are "briefly comprehended" in that of love (Rom. 13:9).

1:11 Paul uses a strong and emphatic Greek construction in 1 Tim. 1:11 when speaking of how the Gospel was "committed to my trust". The Greek means 'to me, myself, I, personally'. Those raised 'knowing the truth' should pause and reflect whether the wonder of the fact they have been given the Gospel is registering with them as it might. God believes in us; this is why He has graciously called us to know His Truth. Thus when Paul writes in 1 Tim. 1:14 about his own conversion: "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus", he perhaps means that it was the love and faith of Christ in him, Paul, that was the basis of his being converted by the Lord Jesus.

Every time Paul speaks of having been entrusted with the Gospel, he uses the common Greek word for 'to have faith in'; and within a few verses, we find him using the same Greek word again, in the context of our belief in Christ (1 Tim. 1:11,16; Gal. 2:7,16). We had faith in the Lord, and He had faith in us, He en-faithed us, with the preaching of the Gospel we have believed in. Here we see the awesome mutuality between a man and his Lord. We have been entrusted with the preaching of the Gospel; the Lord believes in us to do His work.

1:13 Paul didn't only see others in the Gospels. He saw himself, he saw his own life and experiences in the light of the words of the Gospels. He saw himself as having been like those Roman soldiers who nailed Christ to the tree trunk (Lk. 23:34 = 1 Tim. 1:13). He saw himself as "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), and therefore one of those referred to by Christ in Mt. 9:13.

1:14,15- see on Lk. 7:47.

1:16 Clearly perception of sinfulness grew in Paul after his conversion. He considered himself blameless in keeping the law (Phil. 3:6); and yet chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:16). He realized that sin is to do with attitudes rather than committed or omitted actions. I'd paraphrase Paul's personal reminiscence in Rom. 7:7-10 like this: "As a youngster, I had no real idea of sin. I did what I wanted, thought whatever I liked. But then in my early teens, the concept of God's commandments hit me. The command not to covet really came home to me. I struggled through my teens and twenties with a mad desire for women forbidden to me (AV, conveniently archaic, has "all manner of concupiscence"). And slowly I found in an ongoing sense (Gk.), I grew to see, that the laws I had to keep were killing me, they would be my death in the end". Paul's progressive realization of the nature of sin is reflected in Romans 7:18,21,23. He speaks there of how he came to *know* that nothing good was in him; he *found* a law of sinful tendency at work in him; he came to *see* another law apart from God's law at work in his life. This process of knowing, finding and seeing his own sinfulness continued throughout his life. His way of escape from this moral and intellectual dilemma was through accepting the grace of the Lord Jesus at his conversion. In one of his earliest letters, Paul stresses that he felt like the least of the apostles, he honestly felt they were all better than he

was (1 Cor. 15:9). However, he reminisces that in his earlier self-assurance, he had once considered himself as not inferior to "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). Some years later, he wrote to the Ephesians that he felt "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). This was no Uriah Heep, fawning humility. He really felt that he was the worst, the weakest, of all the thousands of believers scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean at that time. As he faced his death, he wrote to Timothy that he was "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), the worst sinner in the world, and that Christ's grace to him should therefore serve as an inspiration to every other believer, *in that* none had sinned as grievously as he had done. It could well be that this is one of Paul's many allusions back to the Gospels- for surely he had in mid the way the publican smote upon his breast, asking God to be merciful "to me *the* sinner" (Lk. 18:13 RVmg.). "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" is rooted in the Lord's words that He came to call sinners and to seek and save the lost (Mt. 9:13; 18:11; 1 Tim. 1:15).

He saw in his conversion a pattern for all those who would afterwards believe (1 Tim. 1:16). Having said that he was "chief" of the tribe of sinners, Paul goes straight on to say that this "was so that in me *as chief* might Jesus Christ shew forth *all* his longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should later believe on him" (1 Tim. 1:15,16 RV). This sounds as if Paul realized that he was being set up as the chief, supreme example to us; a template for each of us, of forgiveness and zealous response to that forgiveness. His conversion and subsequent spiritual growth are recorded as they are because they are a pattern for every subsequent believer- not just for those involved in preaching and pastoral work. It's because of this, it seems to me, that we have *so much* information about the man Paul; we really are enabled to enter into his spirit and personality. His physical appearance is stressed (Gal. 4:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:3,4; 2 Cor. 10:10; 12:5,7,9; Phil. 3:21; and especially his hands: Acts 21:11; 27:19; 1 Cor. 4:12). We imagine him as having a dark complexion, seeing he was confused with an Egyptian (Acts 21:38).

1:18 There were prophecies about Timothy which had gone before, or "led the way to thee" (1 Tim. 1:18 RVmg.). But Paul had to encourage Timothy to fulfil them, to make them come real and true for him. Likewise the fearful and timid Jeremiah was told "I have made thee this day a defenced city...be not dismayed" (Jer. 1:17,18). He had to live out the potential personality which God had enabled him to have.

2:1- see on 1 Pet. 3:7.

In view of the way believers fall away and also because of our great duty to witness to the world, *first of all* (i.e. most importantly), *prayer* must be made (1 Tim. 2:1 and context). Indeed, it is an actual sin- albeit a sin of omission- to cease to pray for our brethren (1 Sam. 12:23).

2:2 God's own Son made the point that He did not pray for the world, but for His own people (Jn. 17:9). The way He tells the Father this in prayer would seem to emphasize how strongly He felt about this. The commands to pray for the world are in the context of requesting that human Governments might permit God's people to live spiritual lives among them (Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:2); not for the Governments etc. in themselves.

2:4 Paul tells Timothy to pray for the Government to allow him to continue preaching because God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4). There is here the suggestion that Timothy's prayers would enable more men to come to the knowledge of the Truth, and thereby fulfil God's intention. But that intention and will of God had been made dependent on the prayers and preaching of the likes of Timothy. God's "will" is that all will be saved; yet not all will be. His will is that not one of the little ones perish (Mt. 18:14); but we can offend the little ones, so that they do perish. His *intention* is that the church reveals His wisdom to this world (Eph. 3:10); but it doesn't always do so. None can resist His will; and yet His will is not necessarily what He *does*, in that His will does not force men and women into obedience or compliance.

The Gospel *is* going to all the world. Not only to every nation, but to every type of person. Even in the West, men from prisoners to the highest business executives are now being baptized; and women from prostitutes to politicians. There is repeated Biblical emphasis that “all men” will hear and respond to the Gospel (Jn. 1:7; 5:23; 12:32; Acts 17:30,31; 1 Tim. 2:4). It can’t mean ‘every man, woman and child who ever live’; for many have lived and died knowing nothing of Christ. It must surely mean that a few of ‘all [types of] people’, ethnically, linguistically, socially, in terms of personality types... will be saved; just as there were representatives of all types of animal gathered into the ark [a type of baptism into Christ, as Peter informs us]. If the rain is a type of the second coming, it follows that before that time, all types of animal, clean and unclean [which Acts 10 interprets as Jews and Gentiles] must be gathered into the ark of Christ. And now in this 21st century, as we come to the end of human history, *all* types of people are realising deep within them that something is up with this world. They are starting to feel their desperation, for all their show of hedonism. There are far more believers in God today than there were 50 years ago. That’s a fact. Never say or think that people ‘just aren’t interested’. Some of them are, indeed more and more of them are, and they are *desperately* interested. Men and women are somehow turning to Him, but lack the knowledge. And if we go on with this work, the end will shortly come.

2:5- see on Heb. 4:14.

The extent of Christ's humanity is brought out by the RV translation of 1 Tim. 2:5. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus". Paul is writing this *after* the Lord's ascension and glorification. A mediator might be thought of as being somehow separate from both parties; but our mediator is actually "himself man", so on our side, as it were. Having received Divine nature doesn't take anything away from the Lord's appreciation of our humanity, to the extent that Paul here [for all the other exalted terms he uses elsewhere about Jesus] can call Him even now "himself man".

He is described even now as “the man Christ Jesus”, able to feel the pulse of our humanity. This, in passing, opens a window into what Divine nature will be like: we will be able to completely feel the human experience, to the extent of still bearing the title ‘men’ even in immortality. On this account we will be able to relate to the mortals in the Millennium.

The Jewish obsession with Angels influenced the early Christians in the area of Christology [i.e. theories about Christ], just as it did on the topic of the Devil. Chapters like Hebrews 1 and Colossians 2 deal with this in detail, stressing that Jesus was *not* an Angel [something which the Watchtower movement of today needs to consider more fully]. The Jewish *Testament Of Daniel* 6.1 exhorts Israel to "draw near unto God and unto the angel that intercedeth for you, for he is a mediator between God and man". This is alluded to by Paul in 1 Tim. 2:5, when he underlines that *to us* there is "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus". Clearly Paul is alluding to the apostate Jewish angelology and correcting it- as in Hebrews 2, the point is laboured that Jesus was a *man* and not an Angel, and He is the *only* mediator.

Much has been made of the similarities between Jn. 1:1-3 and the 'Wisdom' literature of the Jews. Judaism believed in a number of intermediaries who interceded between God and Israel- Wisdom, the Shekinah [glory], the Logos / word. The Torah [law] had become so elevated and personified that it was spoken of almost as a separate 'God'. John and Paul are picking up these terms and explaining their true meaning- Jesus is the glory [*shekinah*] of God, *He* alone is the one and only true mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). By stressing that the mediator was "the man Christ Jesus", Paul is also taking a swipe at the Greek idea of a superhuman mediator between the world and the world's creator, sometimes called a "second God". And when it comes to the Logos, John is explaining in his prologue that the theme of all God's word in the Old Testament was ultimately about Jesus, and that 'word' became flesh in a person, i.e. Jesus, in His life and death. Understanding this background helps us understand why John appears to use very 'Divine' language

about the *logos*. He's doing so because he's alluding to the mistaken beliefs of Judaism and showing where the truth really lies in Jesus.

2:6 *Ransom*- see on Rom. 3:19; Gal. 5:1.

Christ died a ransom “for all”, and yet more specifically “a ransom for many”, i.e. not all (1 Tim. 2:6 cp. Mk. 10:45). See on 1 Cor. 11:3. The Lord was “a ransom for all”, although it was only us, the redeemed, who were ransomed by Him out of sin's slavery (Lk. 1:68; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 8:13; Rev. 5:9; 14:3,4). The “all men” of *our* ‘world’ should therefore be limited to those who constitute *God's* world, as here defined. The real solution to being ‘too inward looking’ is to go out into the highways and byways, and compel men to come in to the covenants of promise.

Do we admit that we just don't preach as we should, failing to engage people with the Gospel because we assume ‘nobody's interested’? 1 Tim. 2:1-6 has something for us. The Lord's death on the cross was a ransom payment “for all men”; and in this context, Paul urges that because God therefore wishes “all men to be saved” we should therefore pray “for all men, [even] for kings and those in authority”. If the Lord's death truly was for all, in that He was representative there of all men, He there “tasted death for every man” (Heb. 2:9)... then we should pray for “all men” quite literally to be saved, knowing that God is willing that “all men be saved”. And Paul makes this point in the context of appealing for us to pray for all men, even Kings. This means that we should pray for even those we consider most unlikely- that they might be saved. For the cross of Christ has potentially saved them- if they will accept it. Thus Paul comments in 1 Tim. 2:6 that the cross was “a ransom for all, to be testified”. The testifying or witnessing to it is to be done by our preaching. Notice how Paul draws a dynamic parallel between praying for all men and witnessing to all men (1 Tim. 2:1 cp. 6). Preaching- when it is truly inspired by the cross- can never be a prayer-less exercise, a mere presentation of information. It will be done prayerfully, thoughtfully targeted at specific individuals whom we're praying will accept the message.

Paul exhorts that prayers be made “for all men”, just because “Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all”, and He thereby is the one and only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:1-6). Because of what He enabled for all, we should pray for all, that somehow circumstances might be allowed which enable all men's salvation in Jesus to indeed spread to all men.

2:8 Having reminded us that there is “one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all”, Paul drives home the practical result of understanding Christ's work: “*Therefore* I desire that the men pray every where ... without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:5-8). “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet was without sin. *Let us then* approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:15,16 NIV). Really appreciating that Christ is our personal High Priest to offer our prayers powerfully to God, should inspire us to regularly pray in faith.

Amazingly, prayer in the first century ecclesias was sometimes made with anger and in a spirit of quarrelling (1 Tim. 2:8). The words were said with an agenda, not to God but designed more for the hearing of men. This is an easy pitfall in prayer- to pray to oneself as did the Pharisee (Lk. 18:11), or to pray with attention to how our human hearers will receive the words. To begin prayer with “Our Father” and a few thoughts on the God to whom our words are being directed is surely wise advice from the Lord. We can pray with an impure heart; and yet the very practice of prayer can make us think we are somehow spiritually acceptable before God. Thus Paul had to warn that prayer should be made “without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:8). He knew that a man can pray to God with an angry heart, thinking the act of prayer cancels out his anger.

2:9- see on 1 Cor. 14:34.

Lightfoot, finding in some of the Talmudists' writings that Mary Magdalene signified *Mary the plaiter of hair*, applies it to her (as does Harry Whittaker). This would imply that she had been

noted, in the days of her iniquity, for that *plaiting of hair* which is set opposed to *modest apparel* (1 Tim. 2:9). This would imply that 1 Tim. 2:9 is saying that Mary's conversion is a pattern for us all.

2:12- see on 1 Cor. 14:34.

2:14- see on Rom. 5:12.

3:2- see on Rom. 12:13.

Paul's advice to Timothy in 1 Tim. 3 as to what constituted good eldership was shot through with reference to his address to the Ephesian elders, where he outlined what manner of man he had been: Blameless = "pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26); Husband of one wife = Paul? Sober = "serving the Lord with all humility of mind" (:19); Given to hospitality = his example was in that he was "ready to support the weak...it is more blessed to give than to receive" (:35) and his whole attitude to care for the Jerusalem poor was evidence enough. Apt to teach = "I have taught you publicly, and from house to house...I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (:20,27). Not covetous = "I have coveted no man's silver" (:33). One that ruleth his own house well = Paul as the father of so many. Not a novice = Paul. A good report of them without = "These things cannot be spoke against" (19:36), and witness his appeals to a good conscience before both God *and men* when on trial.

3:3 Let's ever remember what is the end, the goal, of the commandments to resist false teaching and practice: love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned (1 Tim. 3:3-5)- not bitterness, self-righteousness, smugness that we are pure and others aren't, thanking God that we are not sinners as other brethren are.

3:4- see on 1 Tim. 3:15.

1 Tim. 3:4,5 lays down that an elder in the house [church] of God must be one who rules his own household well. The implication perhaps is that the ecclesias of which Paul wrote were household churches. The 1st century household was governed by the *paterfamilias*, the head of the house. In terms of the household ecclesias, this person was the 'elder'; but to govern a household church required that such a person governed their own domestic household well. My point is that there is an implied equation between the 'church of God' and the domestic household; understandable, if the early churches were in fact household groups. Where things would've got awkward was if the 'elder' or leader of the household church was not in fact the *paterfamilias* of that house where the church gathered. We are left to imagine wealthy brother A opening up his home to the house church, in which poorer brother B was the leader of the spiritual house. This is the radical import of Paul's teaching that eldership in the ecclesia was to be based upon spiritual criteria and not human wealth or social position. No wonder the extraordinary unity and social bonding of the early churches proved so attractive and startling to the world. And we in our day are invited to practice similar sociological impossibilities in our ecclesias.

The commands relating to bishops (overseers) stress that he should only be treated as such if his own family is in order (1 Tim. 3:4,5,12). This could suggest that he was the one who had converted others; for the image of our converts being our spiritual children is a frequent one (1 Cor. 4:14,17; 2 Cor. 6:13; Gal. 4:19; Tit. 1:4; Philemon 10; 1 Pet. 5:13). In the same way as a father ought to be respected by his children, so converts ought to respect those who converted them. The fact Paul had made converts and founded ecclesias was used by him as a proof that he deserved at least some respect- they were his 'seal', the hallmark that showed him genuine (1 Cor. 9:2). My sense is that the first century Gentile ecclesias were very similar to many Christian groups throughout Africa, Europe and Asia today; somebody was converted by a visiting preacher, and they in turn converted a group of their associates. Such groups need leadership, and the logical leader is the one who converted. This is why elders are defined in Heb. 13:7 as those who preached the Gospel to those they lead. Yet there can be a tendency for groups of converts to forget the eternal debt they owe to those who brought them to new life in Christ, just as there can be a forgetting of responsibility to

our natural parents. The respect afforded to such leaders should, however, be qualified by their meeting of the standards Paul lays down: e.g. their own natural children should be well led by them. The integrity and manner of life of those who converted us is what inspires us to carry on

3:5 It should be noted that the bishop's qualification is that he *knows* how to rule his own house (1 Tim. 3:5). It may be that as with Samuel and other elders, their children or converts do not 'turn out' well. If this is because there was a lack of spiritual leadership, this disqualifies a brother. But if he *knew* how to rule, but they rebelled, then he is not thereby disqualified. Fathers cannot be held responsible for the spiritual failure of their children in all cases (Jer. 31:29,30; Ez. 18- and the example of Yahweh with Israel). Likewise, Paul was clearly a bishop and yet was single. "A bishop *must be* the husband of one wife" therefore requires us to again read in an ellipsis: '[If he is married he must be...] the husband of one wife'.

3:6- see on Lk. 12:49.

A new convert should not be made an elder because he may fall into "the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6,7). *Diabolos* is often used in the pastorals in relation to gossipers (1 Tim. 3:6,7,11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 2:3). Gossip is the clearest manifestation of the 'devil' within our natures, and we should be aware of this. "The condemnation of the devil" may therefore mean that the gossipers, whether within or outside the ecclesia, will more easily condemn a novice. If a brother has behind him all the qualifications listed in 1 Tim. 3, of faithful children, a reputation as stable, patient etc., then such gossips will have less power to condemn him in the eyes of others. Paul indicates that he understands the power of gossip in the church- he knew that a spiritually young elder was going to face slander, as sure as day follows night. And therefore, young elders aren't a good idea, he concludes. We too need to face up to the reality of gossip, that it will happen, and we need to seek to protect those vulnerable to it before it starts.

3:7- see on 1 Tim. 6:9.

3:10- see on Gal. 6:4.

3:13 In the process of being a deacon, faith is developed (1 Tim. 3:13). The very process of service and obedience leads to greater faith in practice.

3:15 The existence of house churches within the Ephesus ecclesia would explain the slightly unusual Greek construction in 1 Tim. 3:15, which speaks of behaviour "in a house of God". Maybe Paul refers to the same distinction between house churches and larger gatherings in Ephesus when he advises that a bishop should rule well his own house and have his children in subjection (1 Tim. 3:4,5). There is a common New Testament understanding of 'children' as referring to converts; and the Greek word translated "rule" is only used elsewhere, both in 1 Timothy and in the rest of the New Testament, about 'ruling' or 'providing for' the church in a pastoral sense (Rom. 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 3:14). This interpretation would solve a commonly observed difficulty- that the children of many fine elders aren't not always believers, they're not always "in subjection", and neither were those of many Biblical heroes. And further, seeing even the children of believers ultimately have freewill choice, how can it be that church leaders are held as it were responsible for their children's choices? If we understand the 'ruling' here to mean spiritual provision for those in ones own house church, as a qualification for appointment to being a minister of the larger, joint congregational gatherings- then this difficulty disappears. Quite how else to solve it is presently beyond me! And this idea- of being faithful over a household and then being promoted to greater responsibility- would then be an obvious allusion to the Lord's parable about the faithful house-manager [AV "steward"] who is then promoted to greater responsibility in the Master's own household (Lk. 12:42 compared with Mt. 24:45).

3:16 1 Tim. 3:16 speaks of how Christ was:
God manifest in the flesh [on the cross]
justified in the Spirit [in the resurrection- Rom. 1:4]

seen of angels [at the resurrection]
 preached unto the Gentiles
 believed on in the world
 received up into glory [the ascension].

It must have occurred to many expositors that this would be nicely chronological- were it not for stages 4 and 5. "Preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world" seems a clear reference to the great commission- to preach the Gospel of the resurrection to all the world, and whoever believes it will be saved. But the tenses are definitely past tense, not future. Indeed, the whole passage seems to have Mark's record of the resurrection, preaching commission and ascension specifically in mind [not surprising if tradition is right in saying that this Gospel was learnt by heart by candidates for baptism in the early church]. I would suggest that Paul is using a Hebraism although writing in Greek (and E.W. Bullinger provides scores of other examples of where Paul does this, in *Figures Of Speech Used In The Bible*). Paul is thinking in the Hebrew 'prophetic perfect' tense, to describe something yet future as already past, so sure is it of fulfilment. He *is* referring to the great commission when he speaks of Christ as "preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world"; and he *is* giving a chronological account of the Lord's resurrection, with reference to Mark's Gospel record. But he sees the command to go and preach to the Gentiles, to make them believe, as so sure of being obeyed that he speaks of it in the past tense. The fact the Lord asked us to do this, for all the many reasons outlined in this study...this of itself is such a strong imperative to do it that Paul sees it as *already done*. And so the Lord's bidding should weigh as heavily with us. In fact, He had just the same idea when in Luke's record of the commission He says: "Beginning at Jerusalem you *are* witnesses" (Lk. 24:48 RVmg., cp. Acts 1:8). What He meant, according to Mark's version, is that 'You are to go world-wide and be witnesses'. But He speaks as if they have already done this, as if He were saying: 'Go and be world-wide witnesses, you are witnesses, it's axiomatic to your experience of my resurrection that you will witness, so I see it as if its already being done, even as you stand here before me'.

L.G. Sargent, quoting C. Spicq, tabulates the following parallels in *The Gospel Of The Son Of God* p. 210 (Birmingham: CMPA):

Mark 16:9-19

1 Tim. 3:16

:12 appeared (i.e. was manifested) in another form

manifest in flesh

:15 preach the gospel

preached unto the Gentiles

:15 into all the world...:16 he that believeth

believed on in the world

:19 was received up into heaven

received up, into glory

1 Tim. 3:16 seems to have been a well known confessional formula in the first century church; perhaps it was recited by the candidate in the water before being baptized. It can be read as a chronological description of the Lord's death and resurrection:

1. "God was manifested in the flesh" in the Lord's *crucifixion*, not just His *life*. The manifestation of the Son was supremely in His death (s.w. 1 Jn. 3:5,8; 4:9 cp. Jn. 3:16; Heb. 9:26 Gk.; Jn. 17:6 cp. 26).
2. "Justified in the Spirit" - the resurrection (Rom. 1:4)

3. "Seen of Angels" - at the tomb (Mt. 28:2)
4. "Preached unto the Gentiles for belief in the world' (Gk.)- cp. Mk. 16:15,16
5. "Received up into glory" - what happened straight after the commission to preach the Gospel world-wide.

This chronological approach suggests that "God was manifest in the flesh" refers to the Father's especial manifestation in His Son's crucified human nature during those hours of final suffering- rather than just to His birth. There on Calvary, Almighty God Himself was supremely revealed. He, *God Himself*, was despised and rejected by men; *His* love and self-sacrifice were so cruelly spurned; *He* was spat upon and made the song of the drunkards (Ps. 69:12). The same word for "manifest" occurs in other passages which relate it to the crucifixion:

- Heb. 9:26: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he *appeared* to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself".
- 1 Pet. 1:19-20: "...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world [as the sacrificial lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. 13:8], but was *manifest* in these last times for you".
- 1 Jn. 3:5-8: "And ye know that he was *manifested* to take away our sins [on the cross]; and in him is no sin... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil", which He did through His death (Heb. 2:14-18).

It may be added in passing that the same word is also used about the final manifesting of the Lord Jesus at His return (Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2). This explains the link between the cross and His return; who He was then will be who He will be when He comes in judgment. And this explains why the breaking of bread, with its focus upon the cross, is a foretaste of our appearing before Him then. See on Jn. 1:14; 19:19.

4:1 "The Spirit (Angel?) speaketh expressly..." (1 Tim. 4:1), implying that Paul felt under especially intense inspiration in saying this. There are other examples of this: "The Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand" (an Angelic phrase; Is. 8:11). Why say this if Isaiah did not feel extraordinarily inspired to say this? Or Is. 5:9: "In mine ears said the Lord of Hosts (Angels). . .".

Are the "seducing spirits" of 1 Tim. 4:1 Angels, that God has "made spirits" (Ps. 104) like this in order to try us? See on Ez. 14:9.

1 Tim. 4:1 indicates what a big theme latter day apostasy was in the first century ecclesia: "The Spirit speaketh *expressly* that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith", due to giving heed to false teachers purposefully trying to seduce the faithful. "Some" (in the Greek) doesn't imply 'not many, just a few'. The link with Mt. 24:12 teaches that "many" (Gk. the majority) will depart- because, 1 Tim. 4:1 tells us, of 'giving heed' to false teachers.

We either depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12), or we depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19, 22; 1 Tim. 6:5). We're always moving in one direction or the other.

4:2- see on Mt. 23:28; Rev. 13:15.

4:3 We ought to be deeply, deeply moved by the fact that we have been called into God's world, into His sphere of vision. He even created the different types of meats "to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:3); they were made for us, not the world, and therefore *we* ought to give thanks for our food with this realization.

4:5 The Jewish food laws were ended by the word of God (i.e. the Gospel of Christ) *and* Christian prayer before eating meat: personal prayer was a vital component to enable the sanctifying of food (1 Tim. 4:5).

4:6 Timothy was to be "nourished up in the words of the faith [a reference to 'words' of basic doctrine which comprised a first century Statement of Faith?], and of the good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6 RV). True doctrine has the power of growth; it is the seed which is sown, leading to the fruit of

good works. The basic Gospel ("doctrine", AVmg.) of the cross is the active, outstretched arm of Yahweh the Almighty (Is. 53:1). We must let that power work. "Let your conversation (way of life) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27).

Paul taught Timothy that by nourishing others with good teaching, he would himself be "nourished up in the words of faith" (1 Tim. 4:6). Caring for others on whatever level is what stimulates an upward spiral in our personal spiritual growth. In doing so, we will ourselves find spiritual growth. Practically, this is evident- in that the brother who looks through the Bible readings before doing them with his family, or reads a chapter with his five year old daughter and then the same chapter again with his wife, who makes an effort to prepare a different sermon each time he speaks rather than re-hash an old one... the one who benefits is ultimately himself. Paul said as much to Timothy: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance... thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith... whereunto thou hast already attained" (1 Tim. 4:6). His ministry of Christ's word to others would in itself nourish *him* up, to go onwards in the upward spiral, from where he had "already attained" to higher and higher things. This is what priesthood today is all about.

4:7 It's noteworthy that public recitations were something that women were allowed to participate in; hence Paul's advice not to waste time listening to the fables / recitations told by old women (1 Tim. 4:7- cp. wasting our God-given time watching soap operas today). Slave women especially were known to make such recitations to the women of a large household, including the female freewomen. This doubtless laid the basis for the phenomenon [portrayed on some frescoes] of female house churches, with slave women leading the gatherings even when their mistress was present.

4:8 Godliness having the promise of life both now and in the future is a reflection of Christ's teaching that the life of self denial would have its present as well as future rewards (1 Tim. 4:8; Mk. 10:29).

Mt. 6:2,3 = 1 Tim. 4:8. The implication is that we aren't to take Mt. 6:2,3 ("they have their reward") as implying that we have *no* reward in this life. We do (cp. Mt. 19:29).

4:10 If we will eternally walk in God's ways then, we ought to now too. "We labour and strive *because* we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. 4:10 RV).

4:13- see on 1 Thess. 5:27.

4:16- see on Dt. 4:1,9; Acts 20:28.

Paul encouraged Timothy to take heed "to thy teaching... for in doing this [i.e. preaching] thou shalt save both *thyself*, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16 RV). Preaching is for our benefit.

By taking heed unto *himself* and unto his doctrine, Timothy would be brought to salvation; 1 Tim. 4:16 speaks as if doctrinal purity and way of life are interconnected, seeing that our life is a reflection of the doctrine we believe.

5:5 Lk. 2:37 = 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3. Widows in the ecclesia should model themselves on Anna. 1 Tim. 5:5 shows that the sign of a true widow was that she continued in prayers night and day. This is how important prayer was in the early church. She was supported materially so that she could keep up this work of praying for others (abused into the Catholic system of paying for prayers to be said). There was a specific group of "widows" in the early ecclesias, as in Acts 7. Their duty was to pray for others; so important was prayer seen.

5:8 If we selfishly build up our own possessions through ignoring the needs of others, we have denied the Faith- even if we hold on to a clear understanding of the doctrines (1 Tim. 5:8). Loving money is erring from the Faith- again, even though we may keep our theoretical understanding (1 Tim. 6:10). It is perhaps intentional that three times in the same section in 1 Tim., Paul speaks of

those who leave the Faith; once he speaks of this in the context of doctrinal error (1 Tim. 6:21); the other two references (5:8; 6:10) concern leaving the Faith through being materialistic, whilst holding on to true doctrines. The point is, the one is as bad as the other. The fact the Kingdom will be on *earth* not in Heaven is not just incidental. It means that we *now*, as we live on this planet which will be our eternal possession, will not strive for present possession of it, neither will be swayed by the pressure groups and political groups who only look at the state of the world as it *now* is. "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again [because he dies before he can repay his mortgage?]; but the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth. *For* such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:21,22 RV). Exactly because we will inherit this planet gives us strength against materialism; it means that we will be generous; we will not focus our lives upon temporarily buying a spot of land which in any case we will eternally inherit.

5:9 The fact he recommends some younger widows to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14) is proof enough that "widows" doesn't mean 'all widows'. It may be that single and widowed brethren and sisters made open statements of their decision to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus. 1 Tim. 5:9 suggests there was a specific "number" of widows in the Ephesus ecclesia who were financially supported by the ecclesia.

5:11 Consider Paul's apparently contradictory teaching about widows. They should remarry (1 Tim. 5:11,14); and yet they should only be given special respect and support if they have been the wife of one husband (1 Tim. 5:9). Surely Paul is thinking in terms of 'different levels' here; the highest level was for a widow not to remarry; but because most couldn't cope with that, especially with all the difficulties faced by single women in the first century, therefore Paul commands them to remarry. But he did that full well knowing that there was a higher level.

5:13- see on Lk. 9:4; Acts 20:20.

5:14 The New Testament speaks of households run by women: Mary (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14,40); Nympha (Col. 4:15) and Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11). These women were presumably wealthy widows or divorcees who hadn't remarried. We are left to speculate whether they were in some way the 'leaders' of the house churches which met in their homes. Women are described as ruling households in 1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:4,5. The woman of Prov. 31 clearly had autonomy within the private sphere of the household, even though the husband was the public leader. Seeing Christianity was initially a house-church, household religion, we are left to wonder how much women actually led house churches, especially seeing that the majority of early Christian members appear to have been women. The wall paintings [frescoes] found in the Christian catacombs around Rome are highly significant for our present study. The significant ones for our purposes are the catacombs of Priscilla on the Salaria Nuova, Callixtus on the via Appia Antica, and that of Domitilla on the via Ardeatine. They feature in places scenes of female Christians raising cups, with the inscription *agape* over them. Some show a woman occupying the central place in the meal, with a large cup in her hand, with the other women looking at it intently. Some of the frescoes [there are many of them] show women dressed as slaves doing this in what appears to be a wealthy home. These frescoes seem to me indicative of how groups of slave women formed house churches, and faithfully kept the breaking of bread. Some frescoes show the women sharing the bread and wine with children around the table; one shows a woman holding a scroll, as if she is reading Scripture to the others. One fresco features a woman holding a cup of wine inscribed '*nobis*'- 'for us'. Some frescoes show men in the group, but the woman in the centre, as if she is leading the meeting, or as the host of the household.

Paul encourages younger mothers to "rule their households" (1 Tim. 5:14), using a word [*oikodespoteo*] which would usually be used about the man ruling the house. His implication is surely that in Christ, husband and wife together rule the household, notwithstanding the wife being in submission to her husband.

Turned Aside After Satan

Comments

1. The widows turn themselves aside after Satan – Satan is not necessarily seeking the women.
2. Verses 12 and 13 explain that the widows “cast off their first faith” – something they did themselves. “They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house”. It was by their doing this that they “turned aside after Satan” – their evil desires.
3. Using the tongue in the wrong way is a result of an evil state of the heart – “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mt. 12:34). Their turning aside after Satan involved being “tattlers... and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not” (v. 13). Thus “Satan” refers to their evil heart.
4. Through profitless talking and not keeping hold of the true spirit of the Word of God, some at the Ephesus ecclesia where Timothy was based had “turned aside unto vain jangling” (1 Tim. 1:6). Paul is now pointing out that some of the young widows in that ecclesia had also turned aside for the same reason “unto Satan”, or their evil desires, expressed in their idle talking.
5. The phrase “*already* turned” implies “immediately”; Paul is saying that as soon as their husbands die, the young widows immediately go aside after Satan, their evil desires, therefore it is better for them to remarry.
6. “The adversary” is not the same word as “Satan”, although it may still refer to the Jews seeking opportunity to criticize the. It can mean “an adversary at law” in a legal sense, implying that the Jews could get them in trouble at a Roman court. There’s plenty of historical evidence of this.

Suggested Explanations

1. By publicly getting a bad name for “wandering about from house to house” (v. 13), these women were giving opportunity to the Jewish adversaries to “rail against” (A.V. margin) the Christians. Jude 9,10 implies that the Judaizers brought “railing accusation” against the Christians.
2. “Speaking things which they ought not” (v. 13), recalls Jude 10 about the Judaizers: “these speak evil of those things which they know not”. “Wandering” connects with Jude’s description of “wandering stars” (Jude 13). Diotrefes, one of the Judaizers who was trying to discredit the apostle John and the other apostles, (as the Judaizers did to Paul) is described as “prating against us with malicious words” (3 Jn. 10). “Prating” is from the same word translated “tattlers” in 1 Timothy 5:13 concerning these women. The women going from house to house may imply from church to church, as that is how the word “house” is often used in the New Testament (due to the many house churches then in existence). This is what the Jewish false teachers did; 2 John 7 talks about deceivers or seducers that had entered into the Christian world, i.e. the false brethren “unawares brought in” to the church of Galatia. There are many references to these “seducing spirits” (1 Tim. 4:1) – i.e. false teachers (1 Jn. 4:1) – within the church, to which the church was not to give “heed” (1 Tim. 4:1). That these were Jewish false teachers is suggested by other references to “giving heed” in the context of being watchful against Jewish infiltration of Christianity:
 - “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees” (Mk. 8:15);

- “Not giving heed to Jewish fables” (Titus 1:14);
- “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4) – the source of which genealogies was probably the Old Testament, over which the Judaizers were encouraging the Christians to argue to no profit.

The “seducing spirits” of 1 Timothy 4:1 had seared consciences (v.2), implying that they were apostate believers. They forbade to marry, “commanding to abstain from meats” (v. 3), which especially the latter, was the big contention of the Jewish element in the church in the first century. Notice that what is said here about the Judaizers is also true of the Catholics – supporting the idea that 2 Thessalonians 2 is about both Jews and Catholics.

Thus the “seducing spirits” of 1 Timothy 4:1 were the Jewish infiltrators of the church, which were doubtless amongst the “deceivers” of 2 John v.7, which 2 John v. 10 implies were going from house to house (church to church) spreading their doctrine of belittling the person of Christ. These Judaizers “subvert whole houses” (Titus 1:11). Back in 1 Timothy 5:13, the fact that the women also went from house to house is another indication that what they were doing was also what the Judaizers were doing. Thus it is an interesting possibility that when their husbands died, these women lacked spiritual leadership, and therefore turned aside after the Jewish Satan, being influenced by the Jews to undermine the church. Using such apparently innocent members of the church would have been a very effective way of infiltrating. Perhaps there is a reference to this in 2 Timothy 3.

This speaks of men within the ecclesia, “having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof” (v. 5), unsound judgment in church decisions (v. 8 A.V. margin). “Their folly shall be manifest unto all men” (v. 9) – at the Judgment, where the responsible appear. They are likened to Jannes and Jambres, who, according to Jewish tradition, were apostate Jews. These false teachers (probably Judaizers), “creep into (i.e. subtly infiltrate) houses (churches), and lead captive silly women” (v. 6). Note how the Judaizers are described as capturing Christians to become infiltrators in 2 Timothy 2:26 and in 1 Timothy 3:7. This view of the women is confirmed by the following two points:

- Acts 13:50 describes the Jews stirring up “the devout and honourable women and (thereby)... raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas”.
- There is evidence in profane history that many Gentile women were influenced by the Jews. Thus Josephus (‘Wars of the Jew’, II, 20.2) claims that when the Jews of Damascus were persecuted, the proselyte wives of the Gentiles living there were also attacked. Josephus describes the Gentile wives of the men of Damascus as “almost all of them addicted to the Jewish religion”. William Barclay says that during the first century “the Jewish religion had a special attraction for a women... round the synagogues were gathered many women, often women of high social position, who found in this (Jewish) teaching just what they so much longed for. Many of these women became proselytes” ⁽¹⁾. That the women Paul refers to were also wealthy is shown by them having time to go round from house to house, instead of having to work.

Note

(1) William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 2003) p. 114.

5:17- see on Mt. 7:24.

5:18 We find a very significant feature in both the New Testament itself, and in the historical, uninspired writings of the early Christians: *they speak about the New Testament writings as being inspired Scripture just as they speak of the inspired Old Testament writings*. So Peter, writing in A.D. 68, speaks of Paul's letters as being amongst “the other Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16), i.e. on the

same level of acceptance as the Old Testament Scriptures. In 1 Tim. 5:18, Paul combines two quotations, one from the Old Testament and another from the Gospel of Luke, and calls them both "Scripture": "For the Scripture saith 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn' [Dt. 25:4]; and, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire'" (Lk. 10:7). Polycarp, writing in about AD115, combines the Old Testament Psalms and Paul's letter to the Ephesians in a similar manner: "In the sacred books... as it is said in these Scriptures, 'Be ye angry and sin not,' and 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath'." Some years later, the [uninspired] second letter of Clement (2:4) quotes Isaiah and then adds: "And another Scripture, however, says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'" -quoting from Matthew. The first epistle of Clement, dating at the latest to AD95, quotes from many of Paul's letters and from the Gospels; but very significantly, it doesn't quote from any of the books which later were rejected at the Councils. So, the 'new' writings of the New Testament were accepted on an equal footing as the Old Testament Scriptures, from soon after they were first circulated. Notice that this was all *before* the Councils met to assemble the canon. The books were widely accepted as inspired *before* them! They didn't give those books an inspired status. It's also apparent that the 'new' books didn't go through much of a process of being recognized as inspired. As we outlined earlier, they were accepted as inspired immediately. See on 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Jn. 4:1.

5:19 The way Paul commanded Timothy not to even *consider* a complaint against an elder unless another two or three had been eye-witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19) is proof enough that he expected elders to be slandered from within the ecclesia. The more you read between the lines of Paul's letters, the more evident it is that his very own brethren almost unbelievably slandered him. See on Gal. 5:11; 1 Thess. 2:3.

5:21 Angels represent the face and presence of God; the fact they are physically present in our lives means that we should live in a sense of awe and humility at the nearness of God to us. Often this presence of the Angel is used as a means of motivating us to higher endeavour for the Lord. Jacob conceived of his guardian Angel as "the fear of my father Isaac". This then is one of the ways we should fear God- to live in constant respect and awareness of the Angel in our lives. Paul uses the idea of charging brethren "before the elect Angels that thou do these things without preferring one before another" (1 Tim. 5:21), as if to say that the physical presence of the ecclesia's guardian Angels should inspire humility and obedience in the running of ecclesial affairs. In a judgment context, Paul charges Timothy before the angels of the elect, i.e. our guardian Angels- as if to say "They are watching over you now, they will be there again at judgment and look back to your present life; so behave as you should as a man under God's judgment" (1 Tim. 5:21).

The present nature of the judgment ought to powerfully motivate us. "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things..." (1 Tim. 5:21) is full of judgment language: before God, Christ and the Angels of the elect (i.e. our 'guardian Angels'). 'Before God' is the language of the judgment in Mt. 25:32; Lk. 21:36; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:28; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5. It's as if Paul was reminding Timothy that he was present before the judgment already, and should therefore be obedient. 2 Tim. 4:1 makes the link even more apparent: he charged Timothy to preach as being before (Gk.) both the Father and Son, who *will judge* the living and dead at His appearing. Because we effectively stand before the judgment seat now, therefore preach now, because preaching is one of those things that will be taken into account at the final judgment day (Lk. 12:8). As men being before the Lord's throne, who will be finally judged just as we are now being judged, therefore act according to the principles which we know will lead to acceptance then.

5:24- see on 1 Cor. 4:5.

5:25 For the righteous, our acceptability before God now is related to our acceptability with him at judgment day. Our good works are manifest before we reach the judgment, which will manifest them again (1 Tim. 5:25). Thus David reflected on the experiences of his life: "Thou hast made my judgment; thou satest in the throne judging right... and he shall judge the world (at the second

coming, through Christ, Acts 17:11) in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness" (Ps. 9:4,8 A.V.mg.). This shows the continuity between God's attitude to him in his mortal life, and God's attitude at the coming judgment. If Christ is glorified by us now, we will glorify Him in that day (2 Thess. 1:10,12).

6:1 Paul makes an assumption in 1 Tim. 6:1, in warning believing slaves to act faithfully before their unbelieving masters, lest the doctrines of God be blasphemed by them. Paul takes it as read that the slave would have taught the doctrines of the faith to his master, and therefore any misbehaviour by him would cause those teachings to be mocked. He assumed that radical preaching would be going on. And again in Tit. 2:5, he writes that wives should behave orderly so that "the word of God be not blasphemed". He assumes that all believing men and women would be preachers of the word, yet if the wives were disorderly in their behaviour they would bring mockery upon the message preached.

1 Tim. 6:1 speaks of "the name of God and the doctrine" [R.V.]- as if the things of the name of God have a doctrine / teaching associated with them.

6:2 The Lord had warned His followers to "despise not" the 'little ones' (Mt. 18:10). Paul picks up this phrase in 1 Tim. 6:2 in warning servants not to despise their masters who were brethren; the implication that they were to treat those wealthy but perhaps not very spiritually mature masters as 'little ones', with all the patience this would require.

6:8 Because we brought nothing into the world and can carry nothing out, i.e. because of our very nature, we shouldn't be materialistic and should be content (1 Tim. 6:7,8). In saying this, Paul is alluding to how Job faced up to the reality of our condition by saying that we entered this world naked and return naked (Job 1:21). Paul is saying that we are all in Job's position, facing up to the loss of all things, and should count it a blessing to have even clothing.

6:9- see on Lk. 5:7.

Paul had thought deeply about the parables. He doesn't just half-quote them in an offhand way. For example, Mt. 13:22 says that riches choke a man's response to the word. 1 Tim. 6:9 warns that those who *want to be rich* are choked by their *desire* for riches. Likewise Paul saw the rich man of Mt. 19:23 as actually one who *wanted* to be rich (= 1 Tim. 6:9,10). So Paul had thought through the parable. He saw that possession of riches alone wouldn't choke a man; he saw that the Lord was using "riches" as meaning 'the desire for riches'. And because "riches" are relative and subjective, this must be right. And therefore the Spirit was able to use Paul's deductions. My point is that the Spirit *could* have used just anyone to write (e.g.) 1 Tim. 6:9. But it was no accident that God chose to use a man with a fine knowledge and appreciation of His Son to be His pen-man.

Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul speaks about a snare; the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7), and the snare of wanting wealth (6:9). The desire for wealth in whatever form is the very epitome of the devil, our inherent sin which we must struggle against. The idea of a snare is that it results in a sudden and *unexpected* destruction. The unexpectedness of the destruction should set us thinking: surely the implication is that those who are materialistic don't realize that in fact this is their besetting sin, and therefore their rejection in the end because of it will be so tragically unexpected. It's rather like pride; if you're proud and you don't know it, then you really are proud. And if we're materialistic and don't know it, we likewise really have a problem. The idea of riches being a snare connects with copious OT references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is surely that the desire of wealth is the equivalent of OT idolatry. But there is another, even more telling Biblical usage of the "snare". The day of the Lord will be a snare to the unsuspecting worldling, who will suddenly find that the Lord has come and destroyed him (Is. 8:14; 24:17,18; Jer. 50:24; Lk. 21:35). Yet the materialistic believer falls into the snare of riches here and now. Surely the point is that our attitude to riches is a preview of the judgment; the materialistic believer has condemned himself, right now. Not only does such a man fall into the

devil's snare, but he pierces himself through with sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10), which is the language of crucifixion. This connection suggests a powerful logic. We face a cross either way; either the cross of the Lord Jesus, with the matchless eternity it heralds; or the cross, the twisting, unsatisfied pain of a life devoted to material advancement, which finally results in the darkness of rejection.

6:10 "They that will be rich... have erred from the faith, and *pierced themselves through* with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9,10). The Greek translated "pierced themselves through" is related to the verb 'to crucify'. We are asked to crucify ourselves, to give up the brief materialism of this life. Yet if we refuse to do this, we still pierce ourselves through, we crucify ourselves, with the pain which comes from a mind dedicated to materialism and self-fulfilment, a life devoted to reaching the end of a rainbow. So what is the logical thing to do? It's crucifixion either way. The idea of piercing self through with sorrow is actually a direct quote from the LXX of 1 Kings 21:27, where Ahab was pierced with sorrow as a result of his coveting of Naboth's vineyard. And yet when Naboth was dead, Ahab tore his clothes and put on sackcloth, in sorrow for what he had done (1 Kings 21:16 LXX- omitted in the AV); but these very words are used in describing how when Ahab heard the words of his condemnation, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth (21:27). His sin brought him to tear his clothes, just as he did when his condemnation was pronounced. In his seeking for happiness he pierced himself through with the sorrow of condemnation.

6:12- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Lk. 13:24.

6:13 A nice insight into the intensity with which Paul meditated is provided by his comment on Mt. 27:11, where we read that Jesus before Pilate said just one word in Greek; translated "Thou sayest". It is stressed there that Jesus said nothing else, so that Pilate marvelled at His silent self-control. Yet Paul speaks with pride of how the Lord Jesus "before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). You'd expect him to be alluding to some major speech of Jesus. But it seems, reading his spirit, Paul's saying: 'Lord Jesus, your self control, your strength of purpose, was great. I salute you, I hold you up to Timothy as the supreme example. Just one word. What a witness!'

As He witnessed in His ministry, so must we (Rom. 2:19 cp. Mt. 4:16). As He witnessed before Pilate, so must we witness (1 Tim. 6:12,13).

6:15 Caesar was seen as king of many subject kings, Lord of many conquered and inferior lords. In this we see the radical challenge of 1 Tim. 6:15,16: that Jesus Christ is the *only* potentate, the Lord of Lords, the King of all Kings. The RV margin brings out the Greek even more radically: "them that rule as lords"- those who think they are lords when compared to the Lord Jesus they are nothing. Many of the terms used in relation to Caesar worship are deliberately used in the New Testament and redefined in an exclusive Christian context, setting the Christian view of them up against any other use of them, and insisting upon it as the only valid meaning of the term. Thus 'evangelion' was a well known concept. It meant the good news of victory, and the corresponding duty to make thank and praise offerings for it. The Imperial Cult used the word for announcing Caesar's victories, his birthdays, his accession to power, his granting of *salvation* to his people... Mark's Gospel especially uses the word *evangelion* in a way which sets it up in contrast to the way it was used in the Imperial Cult. It is the good news of the birth, victory, resurrection and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, and the *evangelion* calls men and women to make self-sacrifice in response to it.

6:16 See on Ex. 32:30-32.

When Paul exalts that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, this isn't just some literary flourish. It is embedded within a context of telling the believers to quit materialism, indeed to flee from its snare. 1 Tim. 6:6-14 concern this; and then there is the passage about Christ's exaltation (:15,16), and then a continued plea to share riches rather than build them up (:17-19). Because He is Lord of all, we should quit our materialism and sense of self-ownership. For we are His, and all we have is for His service too. And the principle of

His being Lord affects every aspect of our spirituality. Dennis Gillet truly observed [in *The Genius Of Discipleship*]: "Mastery is gained by crowning the Master as Lord and King".

6:17 God richly gives things to *all of us*, Paul says; and by our being "liberal and generous [we] thus lay up for [ourselves] a good foundation for the future, so that [we] may take hold of the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:17). "The life which is life indeed" is not the lower middle class striving-for-security life of slowly saving and occasionally splashing out on something, building, building up, watching the interest slowly grow, worrying about inflation and the possible need for a new boiler or roof... Much as those things are all part of our human experience in this age, they're not "the life which is life indeed". That life begins now, in a counter-instinctive going against the grain of being generous.

6:17-19 The rich fool was not read by Paul as referring to some Hollywood millionaire; he saw that character as being in the ecclesia (Mt. 19:21 = 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

6:19 The Spirit describes our final redemption as our "soul" and "spirit" being "saved"; our innermost being, our essential spiritual personality, who we *really* are in spiritual terms, will as it were be immortalized (1 Pet. 1:9; 1 Cor. 5:5). This means that our spiritual development in this life is directly proportional to the type of person we will be *for evermore*. If, for example, we develop a generous spirit now, this is "a good foundation" for our future spiritual experience (1 Tim. 6:19). This is a stupendous conception, and the ultimate fillip to getting serious about our very personal spiritual development. Our mortal bodies will be changed to immortal, Spirit nature bodies according to the Spirit which *now* dwells in us (Rom. 8:11 Gk.). The attitude which we have to the Lord Jesus *now* will be the attitude we have to Him at the day of judgment (Mt. 7:23 cp. Lk. 6:46). He is the hidden manna; in the Kingdom we will eat Him, in the sense of having fellowship (the idea of 'eating') with Him who is now hidden from us in many ways (Rev. 2:17).

6:21 Those who hold false doctrines have "missed the mark concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 6:21 RVmg.). The true faith has an aim, a mark to which it aims. A false 'faith' misses that aim. "Profane and vain babblings... increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:16)- they precipitate a downward spiral of practical behaviour.

2 TIMOTHY

1:1 Paul's increasing perception of sinfulness is shown by the way in which in his earlier letters he uses the greeting "Grace and peace"; but in Timothy and Titus, his last letters: "Grace, *mercy*, and peace...". He saw the overriding, crucial importance of God's grace and mercy, and he wished this on all his brethren.

1:3- see on Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 3:18.

Lk. 2:37 = 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3. Widows in the ecclesia should model themselves on Anna.

Paul claims that the Jewish forefathers served God with a pure conscience (2 Tim. 1:3 NIV). Yet the Jewish fathers, dear Jacob particularly, must have had plenty of twinges of guilt over their years. Indeed, all the Jewish fathers had a bad 'conscience' because of their sins (Heb. 9:9; 10:2). Surely Paul must mean that they had such a firm faith in forgiveness that *in God's eyes* they had a pure conscience.

Our spirit and His are united. All this speaks of an incredible personal bonding in prayer between the Creator and each, specific one of His creatures. These passages have nothing to do with miraculous gifts of the Spirit, or of men having their own will overpowered by irresistible bolts from Heaven. Only through our will, our essential person and spirit, becoming united with God's can it be possible to live a life of prayer, whereby we are praying without ceasing, constantly, every moment (Rom. 1:9; 12:12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:17; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:13; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3). Our life, our person, our spirit, our being, is read as a prayer to God.

1:5 Faith can become just vague hope for something better, rather than a "confident assurance", a seeing of the unseen. Paul's reference to "unfeigned faith" (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5) as the goal of personal and ecclesial life would suggest that he realized the temptation to have a fake, feigned faith. See on Jn. 8:30.

1:7 "Because ye are sons (already born again through response to the Gospel), God hath *sent forth* the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal.4:6). We become sons of God by birth of the Spirit/ word (1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18), and therefore God sends this Spirit of Sonship into our hearts. Notice that the prerogative in this is with God, not us. In similar vein: "God hath *given* us the spirit... of power... love... a sound mind" (2 Tim.1:7). Likewise Paul prayed that God "may *give* unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph.1:17,18).

1:8- see on Rom. 1:16. When Paul warns Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel, he is therefore exhorting him by his own example (Rom. 1:16 s.w. 2 Tim. 1:8,12). Note the theme of not being ashamed in 2 Tim. 1:8,12,16.

Being ashamed of Christ's words doesn't just apply to not speaking up for the Truth when someone invites us to a topless bar after work. It's equally true, and the punishment for it just the same, in the context of not speaking out Christ's word in the ecclesia, to our very own brethren (Mk. 8:38 = 2 Tim. 1:8).

1:9- see on Eph. 2:6.

Natural Israel was called out of Egypt by their Red Sea baptism to be "a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). After our baptism, the members of spiritual Israel likewise receive "a holy calling" (2 Tim. 1:9). After baptism we "become slaves of... holiness" (Rom. 6:19,22 and context).

1:10 Paul says that Jesus has "abolished death" (2 Tim. 1:10) in that death as the world has to face it, final and total death, does not happen to us in Christ. This is why those who truly follow the Lord will never taste of death (Jn. 8:51,52); everyone who lives and believes in Him shall never die (Jn. 11:26). It really is but a sleep. I know the hard reality of the loss still hurts, still registers. But in the end, because He abolished death in Himself, so has He done already for all those in Him.

1:12 He commits the "all things" of the Gospel to us, and we commit our "all things" to Him (2 Tim. 1:12 cp. 14; 1 Tim. 6:20).

1:14 Our overall way of life, rather than specific acts of righteousness, is what can be the motive force in overcoming the flesh. Through the spirit- the spiritual way of life- we mortify the flesh (Rom. 8:13). Through the Spirit we keep the truth (2 Tim. 1:14). This doesn't mean that somehow God's Spirit power in a miraculous sense makes us hold on. What it surely means is that if we live the Spiritual way of life, this will of itself enable us to keep walking in the true way. It's not that the temptations won't arise; but our way of life will be such that they no longer have so much power. The temptation to go drinking with the village boys on Friday night is so much less if every Friday, as part of your way of life, you go to study the Bible with someone. The spirit way of life changes us into the image of Christ progressively (2 Cor. 3:17,18); if we can make the Truth our overall way of life, we will be on an upward spiral of change. If we have the spirit within us, i.e. a spiritual mind, then the spirit of Christ will dwell within us, we will thereby be able to comprehend His love, and be filled again with the spirit... (Eph. 3:16-18 cp. 1 Cor. 3:16). Such is the upward spiral of spirituality that is possible for those who devote themselves to being spiritually minded.

1:15 Paul lamented on his deathbed that all the believers in Asia had turned away (2 Tim. 1:15; Gk. *apostropho*, to apostasize). But at roughly the same time, the Lord Jesus wrote to seven ecclesias in Asia, commending some of their members for holding on to the Truth. Paul was a man of great love, who really tried to see the best in his brethren, having been touched by the grace of God. He even would have given up his eternal life, so that the Jews would be saved (Rom. 9:3 cp. Ex. 32:32). But even Paul, in the time of his greatest spiritual maturity, thought that all the Asian Christians were apostate; when in the Lord's eyes, this wasn't the case.

1:16- see on Mt. 5:7.

2 Tim. 1:16 records Paul praying that the Lord would *give mercy* to the house of Onesiphorus; yet the same phrase is used in v. 18 about receiving mercy at judgment day. Here it seems that the whole household of Onesiphorus is to be granted mercy, at that day, because of his faithfulness. Does this imply that some will be in the Kingdom only due to the efforts of a third party?

2:1 Having exhorted Timothy to be strengthened in the Lord, Paul speaks of how the Lord has strengthened *him* in his last court appearance (2 Tim. 2:1; 4:17).

2:3 Paul tells Timothy to "endure hardness" and "endure afflictions" in the Gospel's work, and then goes on to use the same Greek word to describe how he himself 'suffered trouble' in the same work (2 Tim. 2:3,9; 4:5).

2:5 He had to warn Timothy against the tendency to think that a man can attain the crown of mastery without striving for it according to the laws (2 Tim. 2:5). We can have an appearance of spiritual progress towards the crown, as did the man who quickly built his house on the sand. But it was the man who perhaps didn't finish his house (we are left to imagine) but who had hacked away at the rock of his own heart, striving to seriously obey the *essence* of his Lord's words, who was accepted in the end.

2:7 Our obedience leads to greater obedience, in an upward spiral. The dynamic in this spiral is God's spirit. It is through the Spirit that God draws near to us if we draw near to Him (James 4:7,8). This is neatly summarized in 2 Tim.2:7: "Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things". Thus our freewill 'considering' of Scripture will result in the Lord adding to our understanding even more that we could ever achieve unaided.

2:9- see on 2 Tim. 2:3.

2:10 Speaking of how he had suffered to defend purity of understanding of the Gospel, Paul reflected: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation

which is in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10). *Their* salvation was dependent upon *his* enduring. And therefore he endured for their sakes.

Salvation is "in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10); not in any particular ecclesia or fellowship, but through being an active part of His body in the Biblical sense. See on Eph. 2:6.

Paul "endured", he held on himself, for the sake of the elect (2 Tim. 2:10). And likewise the Lord Himself died above all *for us*, His desire for *our* salvation lead Him to endure for Himself. And on a mundane level; the husband who does his Bible readings a second time for the sake of his wife or children or because a brother has paid an unexpected visit... this kind of spiritual effort for others keeps us going ourselves. See on 1 Thess. 3:8.

2:12- see on Mt. 26:70.

2:14 The wicked will be "overthrown" in the final condemnation (2 Pet. 2:6)- but this is the very same word used for 'apostasy' (Strong's) or 'subversion' (2 Tim. 2:14). If we apostatize, we are overthrowing or condemning ourselves ahead of time. Israel in the wilderness "rejected" the land- and so they didn't enter it (Num. 14:31 RV).

2:15- see on Mt. 7:24.

We must 'rightly divide', or cut straight, the word of truth in our preaching of it (2 Tim. 2:15). The LXX uses the same word in Prov. 3:6: "He will make straight your paths". We are to offer people a clear, straight way to the Kingdom; to span that gulf between the word of God and the mind of man.

The whole of Paul's exhortation to zealous service in the ecclesia in 2 Tim. 2:15-20 is based on the returned exiles, confirming that they are indeed 'types of us'.

2 Tim. 2

Nehemiah

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessek unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use" (:21)

"I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates... thus cleansed I them from all strangers" (Neh. 13:22,30). Also a reference to the cleansing of the Jews from mixed marriages.

"A workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (:15)

The workmen rebuilding Zion

"The foundation of God standeth sure" (:19)

The laying of the foundation stone

"The Lord knoweth them that are his" (:19)

The spirit of Is. 44:5- that although at the time of the restoration not all knew their genealogy, they were accepted in any case, being surnamed with the Name of Jehovah and that of Jacob

"A great house" (:20)

The temple (1 Chron. 22:5)

"Vessels of gold and of silver" (:20)

"Vessels of gold and silver" (Ezra 5:14)

2:16- see on 1 Tim. 6:21.

2:19- see on Mt. 7:23.

2:21 2 Tim.2:20,21: "In a great house (alluding to Is.22:20-24 about the temple) there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth... if a man therefore purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." That last phrase must link with 2 Tim.3:16,17, which says that the word of God enables the man of God to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". Thus the sanctifying and purging power is the word (as John 17:17; Eph.5:26). The word makes us acceptable vessels. These are elsewhere called "the vessels of glory" (Rom.9:23), filled with light, glory and treasure (2 Cor.4:6,7), which are all symbols of the word of God (Ps.119:105,130,162), filled with oil (Mat.25:4), the spirit word.

2:22 It is possible that Timothy went through a mid-life crisis, as Hezekiah did. Paul's warning to middle aged Timothy to "flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22) was a sure reference back to Joseph fleeing from the advances of Potiphar's wife. The fact that Hezekiah and perhaps Timothy faltered in their devotion to the dedicated single life when they reached middle age does not mean that we should not consider this option.

2:24 When Paul wrote that "the servant of the Lord must not strive" in his preaching ministry (2 Tim. 2:24), he was alluding back to how the servant song described the Lord Jesus in His preaching as not striving or lifting up His voice in proud argument (Is. 42:2 cp. Mt. 12:19). And Paul goes on: "...but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing...". This is all a pen picture of the Lord's witness to men in Galilee. And yet it is applied to *us*. "Apt to teach" is surely an allusion to the way in which the Lord taught the people "as he was wont" (Mk. 10:1). So it's not just that we should witness because the Lord, in whom we are, was the "faithful and true witness" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14); because we are in Him, we must witness *as He did*, with something of that same ineffable mixture of candour, meekness and Divine earnestness for man's salvation

2:24,25 Paul makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others:

2 Tim. 2:24,25

Moses

"the servant of the Lord

A very common title of Moses

must not strive

As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)

but be gentle unto all

The spirit of Moses

apt to teach

As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)

patient

As was Moses

in meekness

Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)

instructing those that oppose

at the time of Aaron and Miriam's

themselves

self-opposing rebellion

if God *peradventure* will give them
repentance [i.e. forgiveness]"

"*Peradventure* I shall make an
atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)-
and he prayed 40 days and nights for
it.

And note too: 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2:20 = Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others.

2:25- see on Acts 18:6; 2 Tim. 3:7; Tit. 1:1.

We are to patiently correct and instruct those who contradict themselves, "in the hope that" God will grant them repentance "unto the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25 RV with NIV).

2:26 It seems to me that whilst on one hand preaching can be likened to a warfare, a tearing down of the bastion of unbelief, the Lord's servant taking people captive unto the will of God (2 Tim. 2:26 RV), this is only one facet of the picture. Taken too far, we can become motivated perhaps by a fear of failure, we try harder and only get into a verbal battle, a jousting match, or worse. We will often 'lose' these exchanges, because we were unable to convince our 'adversary'. Thus such exchanges become like a court battle of who's right and who's wrong, one-upmanship and point scoring. We will then end up feeling that the person has rejected the calling of the Father simply because my argument wasn't good enough. This need to win, this fear of failure, is the way of the world not the way of God, it is not "reasoning together". There is too much ego involved. Preaching, though it might seem otherwise at times, is not a competitive sport. If we failed it's not because we did not try hard enough, nor is it because we did not know enough, perhaps it's because we tried too hard driven by a fear of failure, or perhaps we have thought too highly of ourselves, thinking we speak for our God?

3:1-3 "In the last days, fierce (Gk.) times shall come. For men (in an ecclesial context) shall be lovers of their own selves... proud... without natural affection... despisers of those that are good, traitors (cp. Mt. 24:10)... highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (implying they *do* love God); having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof". The spirit of fierce aggressiveness which is increasingly seen in the world will enter the ecclesias; brethren will become proud, argumentative, materialistic, despising the truly righteous, disregarding the needs of the household. And there are other NT passages which suggest that this was indeed the ecclesial situation in the prelude to AD70. The increasing bitterness and subdivision amongst us indicates this will all be seen in the latter day body. Ultimately, human relationships within the ecclesia will go crazy; brethren will hate and betray each other. There will be little real spiritual mindedness; the power of Godliness, the spirit / mind of Christ, will be denied, and only the outward form of Godliness remain (cp. Eph. 3:20; 6:10; Col. 1:11). The abounding wickedness of the world will so permeate the ecclesia that true agape-love will grow cold amongst us (Mt. 24:12). The antidote to this is offered in 2 Tim. 3:14 - 4:3: Love the word, hold on to the doctrine you were taught by faithful brethren, study the word, make it your life, challenge the apostate majority of the ecclesia with no fear of the result, preach to the world, look to the blessed day of Christ's coming.

3:2,3 The Old Testament as well as New is written in such a way as to encourage memorization, although this is often masked by the translation. There are several devices commonly used to assist in this. Not least is alliteration, i.e. similarly sounding syllables. In 2 Tim. 3:2,3 nearly all words end

in (-oi), the masculine plural case termination- when it would surely have been possible to construct the sentence in another way.

3:5 It may be that those who have "a [the] form of Godliness" but deny its power (2 Tim. 3:5) are those who merely accept the propositions as outlined, e.g., in a statement of faith, but deny their living power in practice. And let us note that Paul lists this as an especial temptation of the last days. 2 Tim. 3:5-8 has some telling parallels:

Having a form of Godliness	denying [Gk. 'contradicting', 'going against', the power thereof
Ever learning [Gk. Studying]	but never acknowledging the truth [the 'form of Godliness']
Resisting the truth	

All this implies that there is a power in the "form of Godliness", the basic "form" of doctrinal teaching delivered to baptism candidates. This power can be resisted in that lives remain unchanged; yet acknowledging the true implications of the Gospel will radically transform life. One can 'hold the truth' and study it academically, yet not acknowledge its power. Thus one can hold to a statement of faith and regularly study Scripture, and yet live the life outlined in 2 Tim. 3:1-3, of lying, deceit, boasting, dividing etc.- all because we do not acknowledge the power of the demands of the doctrines which we study. Hence, there is an urgent need to discern and accept the practical, lifestyle demands of each of the doctrines which are fundamental to the Gospel. If we do not see the connection between doctrine and practice, if we don't perceive how doctrine and practice are linked, then the life of thought without action reduces our faith to mere intellectualism and endless theological debate, with all the resultant division this creates.

In 1 Tim. 4:1, Paul warns of a coming apostasy in the last days. 2 Tim. 3 repeats this theme by saying that in the last days, men will be "lovers of their own selves, covetous" etc.; these men / brethren will be "holding a form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (3:5 RV). Their keeping the faith was meaningless. This "form" of teaching which they held is that of Rom. 6:17- the form of doctrine which they accepted at baptism. They will 'hold the truth' but deny its real power. "From such turn away" (3:5) is the equivalent of the command in 2:21 to separate from those vessels unto dishonour which exist in the house of God, the ecclesia. So the problem of 'holding the faith' but denying its practical meaning is going to be *the* major apostasy of the last days, Paul reasons. Continuing in and keeping the Faith is parallel with running the gruelling marathon of struggle against ourselves, wrestling not with flesh and blood in the fight for real spirituality (2 Tim. 4:7). There have been theologians at times who have argued that 'God did not command certain things because they are right, but certain things are right because God commanded them'. I sense this attitude at times amongst us too. But the Father doesn't seek obedience just for the sake of it. There is reason and purpose to His commands- hence David so praises them for this in Ps. 119. And so it is with all 'doctrine'.

3:7 There is a moral link between any falsehood and an unspiritual life. And so repentance is an acknowledgment of the truth (2 Tim. 2:25). A person can learn the theory of God's truth but never come to acknowledge it- i.e. to repent and live the life of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7), i.e. being transparent before God and brutally honest with oneself. Jer. 5:1 says that "if ye can find a man... that seeketh the truth... I will pardon it". To seek truth is therefore to repent. Those moments of realization of our sinfulness, of accurately perceiving the gap between the personas we act out and the real,

Christ-self within us- in those moments, we have come to truth. And this is the repentance that leads to true, authentic pardon.

3:9- see on Rev. 16:15.

Their *folly* will be manifest to all- not least themselves (2 Tim. 3:9). Parables like that of the rich *fool*, the *foolish* virgins... they will all be crystal clear to them. *Then* the Kingdom of Heaven will be likened to wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1), after the judgment experience. The materialist "at his end [rejection at the judgment] shall be a fool" (Jer. 17:11). The utter *folly* of the rejected is a major theme (Prov. 14:8,18; Ps. 5:5; 49:13; Mt. 7:26; 25:8). Rejected Israel were made to drink the wine of astonishment (Ps. 60:3), and the rejected in like manner will gape: "When saw we thee...?". They will be turned back from the Kingdom "in dismay... clothed with shame and confusion" (Ps. 35:5,26). Confusion will then give way to panic and then to a level of agitated dementia well beyond the paradigms of present psychiatry.

Often the Spirit points out that the sinner is only harming himself by his actions- and yet he earnestly pursues his course, in the name of self-interest and self-benefit (Num. 16:38; Prov. 19:8; 20:2; Hab. 2:20; Lk. 7:30). Sin is therefore associated by God with utter and derisible foolishness (e.g. Num. 12:11; 2 Tim. 3:9); but this isn't how man in his unwisdom perceives it at all. Indeed, to him self-denial is inexplicable folly and blindness to the essentials of human existence. "This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah (pause to meditate)" (Ps. 49:13). The *folly* of sin is only *fully* evident to God.

3:10 As he prepared to die for his Lord, Paul's openness increased yet more. He tried to motivate Timothy to resist apostasy in the ecclesia by reminding Timothy of how well he knew Paul's example: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, patience" (2 Tim. 3:10). The sense of *purpose* and *determination* in Paul comes over so often (e.g. Acts 19:21). The constant energy of his mind comes over in the record (e.g. Acts 28:23), and also in his letters (note the urgency of "today" in Heb. 3:7,13,15; 4:7; 2 Cor. 6:2). It makes a good exercise to read through the record of Paul in Acts and highlight words like "reasoned" , "persuaded" , "convinced" , "purposed" , "disputing" (e.g. 18:4,5,11,19; 19:8,9,21). And he really is our example, not just a historical figure to be admired.

Paul could say that Timothy had fully known his "purpose" (2 Tim. 3:10). The Greek *prothesis* is the same used in the New Testament about the shewbread- the bread openly on display before God. Paul is saying that his essential and real self was transparent, openly shown to both God and man. To say 'You've fully known how open and transparent I am' is really quite something. Who Paul showed himself to be was who he really was.

3:13 Allusions to Jacob in later Scripture often comment on his negative side. "Deceiving and being deceived" is surely a pointer to Jacob (2 Tim. 3:13).

3:14 The integrity and manner of life of those who converted us is what inspires us to carry on. Thus Paul urges Timothy to "continue" because he knew "of what persons" he had been taught them (2 Tim. 3:14 RVmg.). The image of a father leading his children is essentially a gentle image.

3:16- see on 2 Tim. 4:2,3.

A comparison of 2 Tim. 3:16 with 4:2,3 makes it clear that because the inspired word is profitable:
for doctrine *therefore*

preach the word; be instant in season, out of season (i.e. whether
you naturally feel in the preaching mood or not)

for reproof *therefore*

reprove

for correction *therefore*

rebuke

for instruction in righteousness *therefore*
exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

3:17 Note how Peter says that the prophet was a ‘man of God’ who was moved by God’s Spirit to write Scripture; whereas Paul says that the Spirit-inspired Scriptures are what makes a ‘man of God’- us- who he is (2 Tim. 3:17 cp. 2 Pet. 1:21). There is a mutuality here, in which even we in this age can have a part.

4:1 see on Job 19:27; 1 Tim. 5:21.

4:2 Our task of witness may seem hopeless. But we are to be prepared (“be instant”) to preach “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). “Out of season” translates a Greek word only elsewhere rendered ‘lacking opportunity’ (Phil. 4:10). Whether there is apparent opportunity or not, we must still witness- not just wait until someone asks us if we are religious. This is a common fallacy we all fall into at times. Several times the Lord invites us to “go” and preach- we are all to feel a spirit of outgoing witness, rather than the defensive, tell-them-if-they-ask attitude which has dominated so many of us for so long. We need the same spirit of heroism in our witness which Jeremiah and Ezekiel had, as they reflected the indomitable Spirit of God in this matter of human salvation. Our unbelieving families, our workmates, our neighbours, seem to be stony ground to the point that it just isn’t worth bothering. But we need a positive spirit.

The patience or *makrothumia* which God has is intended to be had by us too (2 Pet. 3:9,15; Rom. 2:4; Eph. 4:2). And especially is the preacher encouraged to have this *makrothumia* (2 Tim. 4:2; 3:10). God waits / is patient for repentance, amazingly so... and we are to have it in this same way too.

4:2,3 Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus, and his language in 2 Timothy has many allusions to his own behaviour whilst at Ephesus. He spoke at Ephesus of how he had preached the word “at all seasons” (Acts 20:18)- and he tells Timothy to do likewise (2 Tim. 4:2); Paul had taught what was profitable to others (Acts 20:20); and this was to be Timothy’s pattern (2 Tim. 3:16 RV). As he spoke to the Ephesians of the time of his departure, hard times to come and the need to use God’s word to build us up (Acts 20:29,32), so he told Timothy (2 Tim. 4:3). Paul in writing to Timothy was consciously holding himself up as Timothy’s example in the context of Ephesus.

4:4 The phrase “the truth” is used in Scripture as a summary of the Godly life; for truth telling, and being truthful with oneself and God, is the epitome of the life which God intends. I want to demonstrate this; for all too often it has been assumed that because we know and believe true propositions about the Gospel, therefore we are somehow automatically ‘of the truth’. The following passages make clear enough that “the truth” refers not so much to intellectual purity of understanding as to a righteous way of life. If someone understands a matter of Biblical interpretation differently to how we do, e.g. over matters of prophecy, this doesn’t mean they have ‘left the truth’. Yet if we [e.g.] lie, then we have ‘left the truth’ despite holding a correct understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel. Sinners turn away from truth (2 Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:14). They are bereft of the truth (1 Tim. 6:5). God has revealed the truth, indeed has sent his Son to live it and to proclaim it, but sinful people have refused to listen.

As men turn away their ears (of their own volition) from the truth, so God will turn their ears to fables (2 Tim. 4:4). If you turn away your ears from truth, Paul says that you are turned unto what is untrue (2 Tim. 4:4). He doesn’t say that a person turns their ears away from truth and then turns their ears to untruth. By turning away from truth, God confirms the person in that- and He turns them towards untruth.

4:5- see on 2 Tim. 2:3.

Paul encouraged Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" *despite* all the doctrinal and pastoral problems at Ephesus. These are never to be an excuse for not evangelizing.

Paul urged Timothy to fulfil, fully, the ministry of preaching which he had been given, just as he could say that he had (2 Tim. 4:5, 17 Gk). We each have a potential to live up to.

4:6 Paul wrote 2 Tim. 4 when news of his imminent death had just been broken to him (2 Tim. 4:6 Gk.). As Paul faced his death, there was a deep self-knowledge within him that he was ready, that he was "there". As we face the imminent return of the Lord, it should be possible for us to have a similar sense: "I am now ready...". If we don't know that we are "in the faith" and that "Christ is in you", then we are "reprobates" (2 Cor. 13:5). All those who will be accepted *must*, therefore, *will*, therefore, have a measure of self-knowledge and appreciation of how far they've grown in Christ. Growth is a natural process, it's impossible to feel it happening. But by looking back on our lives and attitudes and comparing them with the experience of successful believers, it *is* possible to get some idea of our readiness for the judgment.

Paul had earlier spoken of his "departure" (Phil. 1:23), how he must finish his course with joy (Acts 20:24); and he knew his time had come; he could speak of having reached "the time of my *departure*" (2 Tim. 4:6). The level of self-knowledge he had as he faced the end is remarkable. Yet it really is possible for each of us; for his glorious race to the finish is our pattern. Despite his surface sadness and depression, Paul was finishing his course *with joy*.

4:6-8 As Paul's sense of his own sinfulness grew, so did his confidence of salvation. These two elements, meshed together within the very texture of human personality, are what surely give credibility and power to our witness to others. On one hand, a genuine humility, that we are sinners, that we are the last people who should be saved; and yet on the other, a definite confidence in God's saving grace and the achievement of Jesus to save sinners. Paul at the very end had a wonderful confidence in the outcome of the day of judgment. He had spoken earlier of running the race (1 Cor. 9:24-26; 1 Tim. 6:12). Now he says that he has finished it, in victory. His final words consciously allude back to what he wrote to the Philippians a few years earlier:

Philippians

2 Timothy 4

What I should like is to depart (1:23)

The hour for my departure [s.w.] is come (4:6)

If my life-blood is to crown the sacrifice (2:17)

Already my life blood is being poured out on the altar of sacrifice [s.w.] (4:6)

I have not yet reached perfection [finishing] but I press on (3:12)

I have run the great race, I have finished [s.w. perfected] the course (4:7)

I press toward the goal to win the prize (3:14) Now the prize awaits me (4:8)

Paul felt that he had attained the maturity which he had earlier aimed for. To have the self-knowledge to say that is of itself quite something. May it be our ultimate end too. These parallels and Paul's commentary becomes all the more poignant if we accept the view that actually, Paul did not die soon after 2 Tim. 4 was written- rather was he released, did much work for the Lord, and died under Nero at a later date. In this case his commentary in 2 Tim. 4 is a reflection not so much of a dying man's last words and hopes, but of a mature, reasoned conviction that in fact he had arrived at a point of believing in salvation.

4:7- see on Lk. 13:24.

Paul breathes a sigh of relief at the end of his life when he says that he has "fought a good fight... finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). To keep believing true doctrine ("the faith") is likened to a lifelong struggle, a gruelling race. It hardly appears like this when we first learn the basic doctrines and are baptized. That it will be a struggle to continue believing them properly

hardly seems possible in those innocent days. But holding on to true doctrine is a pre-requisite for acceptance into the Kingdom: "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truths (AV mg.) may enter in" (Is. 26:2).

Paul felt very clearly his sense of mission. He speaks in Troas of how "none of these things move [deflect] me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20:24). Some years later at the end of his life he could write that "I have finished my course" (2 Tim. 4:7). He didn't let anything distract him- and our age perhaps more than any other is so full of distractions.

In his time of dying (at which he wrote 2 Tim.), John his hero was still in Paul's mind. Paul speaks of finishing his course (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7), using a word only used elsewhere concerning John finishing *his* course (Acts 13:25).

On a series of long Russian train journeys, I read through the Gospels and epistles, noting down all the times Paul makes a direct or indirect allusion to the Gospels. I then worked out how many times in each epistle he alludes, on average, to the Gospels. I found that on average, he did it once every six verses. But when you list his epistles chronologically, the general trend suggests that in his writing, Paul *increasingly* alluded to the Gospels. And in his time of dying (in which he wrote 2 Timothy), the intensity of his allusions to the Gospels reaches an all time high. In 2 Timothy he is referring to the Gospels at least once every 3.9 verses- and almost certainly more than that, seeing that my analysis is incomplete. As he faced death in 2 Tim. 4, he more intensely modelled his words (probably unconsciously) upon those of Christ. Thus when he speaks of how he is about to *finish* his course (2 Tim. 4:7), he is combining allusions to Mt. 26:58; Lk. 12:50; 18:31; 22:37 and Jn. 13:1. He speaks of how he wished that "all the gentiles might hear" (2 Tim. 4:17) in the language of his Lord, also facing death, in Jn. 17- where He spoke of His desire that all "the world might know".

In nearly all his letters, Paul asks his readers to pray for him. But not in these final letters to Timothy. "I am now ready to be offered". He knew he had finished the fight (2 Tim. 4:7). The Greek for "fight" occurs in Phil. 1:29,30 concerning the struggle we have to truly take up the cross of Christ, and also in 1 Cor. 9:25 regarding the battle we have for total self-control. Paul knew these were the aims his Lord had hoped to achieve in him. And Paul knew that he was through, he'd finished and achieved them. He had achieved self-control. He knew his Lord, he had been made conformable to the dying Lord Jesus on the cross, he *knew* the fellowship of his sufferings. He had filled up the whole measure of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

Paul at his bitter end could say that he had kept the Faith; but he brackets this together with finishing the race and fighting a good fight (2 Tim. 4:7; Eph. 6:12). These ideas of running the marathon and wrestling through the fight he uses elsewhere; but in the sense of striving for spiritual mastery over ourselves. It is *this* which is keeping the Faith. The need to remain in the Faith, to hold onto it, is one of the classic themes of the NT (Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 16:13; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 4:7). Jude begins by appealing for his readers to be keeping the faith, to contend for the faith; and concludes by asking them to build up each other in that faith. To preserve it is in order to build up; for our growth is on the basis of the pure Gospel which we believe. It is this which leads us on "from faith to faith" in an upward spiral of growth (Rom. 1:17). These passages do not mean that we must religiously hold on to our understanding of the doctrines of a 'Statement of Faith', *and nothing more*. It is true that the need to maintain doctrinal purity *is* taught in these passages; but those doctrines are not just things which have been delivered to us to 'keep' in the sense of maintaining a correct understanding of them. If this were the case, God would be rather like the Roman slave owner who endlessly dropped a spoon and asked his slave to pick it up, then he dropped it again, asked him to pick it up... There was no *purpose* in the exercise itself, it was simply a test of the slave's obedience. But God is not like this. He has commanded us to keep the faith, to preserve the doctrines of the Faith, but there is a reason for this. Those doctrines are not just arbitrary statements which God invented as part of the boundless theological fantasy of an

omnipotent being. They are intended to produce *behaviour*, and *this* is why they must be defended; because without the understanding of true doctrine, true spiritual behaviour is impossible. To simply hold on to the same doctrines we learnt before baptism, e.g. that God is one not three, is not holding the Faith in the sense the NT requires. This is simply clinging on to what we have always believed, just as most human beings cling on to their belief systems, especially as they grow older.

4:8 The Lord said that all those whom he finds *watching* will be welcomed into the marriage feast (Lk. 12:37). And 2 Tim. 4:8 is plain enough: "All them also that love his appearing" will be rewarded along with Paul. Paul's own confidence in salvation was because he knew the earnestness of his desire to be "present with the Lord" Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8), such was the closeness of his relationship with him. Is this really our attitude too? Can we feel like Simeon, that we are quite happy to die after we have just seen our Lord with our own eyes (Lk. 2:29)? Is there really much *love* between us and our Lord? The faithful are described as "those that *seek* (God)... such as *love* thy salvation" (Ps. 40:16). None truly seek God (Rom. 3:11- the context concerns all of us, believers and unbelievers); and yet we are those who seek Him. We must be ambitious to do the impossible. Those who truly *love* righteousness and the Kingdom will be rewarded with it. Likewise Paul in 1 Cor. 8:2,3 describes the faithful man as one who accepts he knows nothing as he ought to know, but truly loves God. Heb. 9:28 is clear: "Unto them that look for (Christ) shall he appear the second time... unto salvation". Those who truly look for Christ will be given salvation. People from all over the world, the living responsible, will see the sign of the son of man, will know His return is imminent, and wail with the knowledge that they have crucified Him afresh and must now meet Him (Mt. 24:30,31 cp. Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10). Their response to the certain knowledge that His return is imminent will in that moment effectively be their judgment. See on Lk. 12:37. The idea that whoever truly loves the Lord's coming will therefore be accepted by Him can easily be abused by those who reason that anyone who has the emotion of love towards Christ will be rewarded by him. We know that true love involves both having and keeping his commands. But for those of us in Christ, these verses are still a major challenge. If we truly "look for" Christ's second coming, if we "love his appearing", this will lead us to acceptance with him. So the point is surely clinched: our attitude towards the second coming is an indicator of whether we will be saved. Time and again in the Psalms, David expresses his good conscience in terms of asking God to come and judge him (e.g. Ps. 35:24). Was this not some reference to the future theophany which David knew some day would come?

4:10- see on Mt. 13:22; Lk. 13:27.

4:11 As Paul in his time of dying remembering his row with Mark (2 Tim. 4:11), so awareness of sinfulness is a sign of spiritual maturity in us all.

Paul must surely have had twinges of guilt over his behaviour at times (not least over the bust up with Brethren Barnabas and Mark, Acts 15:39 cp. 2 Tim. 4:11); and yet he insists that he always had a good conscience; so convinced was he of forgiveness.

We should labour to enter the Kingdom, *because* God knows absolutely every thought and action of ours and will ultimately judge them (Heb. 4:11-13). The Sermon on the Mount is really based around translating the knowledge that God sees and knows all things into practice. Our thoughts are equivalent to our actions; and yet often we think that the fact we are clever enough not to express them in action is somehow a lesser failure. And yet God sees our thought afar off. Realizing this will help us avoid the greatest danger in the religious life: to have an outward form of spirituality, when within we are dead. Fred Barling commented: "What God loves is the man who is genuine through and through; in whom the "without" and the "within" are really one; whose dominant persuasion is, "Thou God seest me"". Note how the Lord Jesus begins each of His letters to the ecclesias with the rubric: "I know..."; His omniscience of His people ought to motivate to appropriate behaviour. His criticisms of those ecclesias imply that they *didn't* appreciate the fact that He knew them and their ways. Hannah had reflected upon God's omniscience; and on this basis she

tells Peninah not to be proud and not to use hard words against her, exactly because of this: "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not hardness [AVmg.] come out of your mouth: *for* the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" here and now, *because* He sees and knows all things (1 Sam. 2:3).

4:13 There are many links between Paul's time of dying (as recorded in 2 Tim. 4) and the death of the Lord Jesus. Paul felt that he had at last approximated to the fellowship of his Lord's sufferings, and therefore he looked ahead with confidence to the day of resurrection. His awareness of his cloak, as his one treasured worldly possession, was maybe fuelled by a realization that this too was the only significant worldly possession of his Lord, at the end (2 Tim. 4:13). He saw his experiences at the hands of his lion-like persecutors as being in order that "by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear" (2 Tim. 4:17); in so saying he was alluding to the Lord's experience on the cross, as described in Ps. 22:13,21. He felt forsaken by his disciples, just as Christ had been at His arrest and judgment (2 Tim. 4:16).

4:16 Paul prayed that the fact the brethren in Rome hadn't stood with him in his court case "may not be laid to their charge" (2 Tim. 4:16). This sounds as if he expected their behaviour in this specific matter to be something which could be brought up with them in the last day and possibly be the cause of their rejection.

4:16,17 Paul says that none of the brethren 'stood with' him when he was on trial, but "the Lord [Jesus] stood with me" (2 Tim. 4:16,17). It seems to me that the Lord knew exactly what it felt like to be left alone by your brethren, as happened to Him in Gethsemane and at His trials; and so at Paul's trial He could 'stand with' him, based on His earthly experience of being left to stand alone. In our lives likewise, the Lord acts to help us based on His earthly experiences; He knows how we feel, because He in essence went through it all.

4:17- see on 2 Tim. 2:1; 4:7; 4:13.

He felt like Daniel when he said "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Tim. 4:17). His mind was full of John the Baptist, Daniel, Moses and above all his Lord. All his years, his hours and minutes, of sustained meditation, of bringing the mind back from its natural wandering, were now paying their glorious reward. The picture of Paul in prison, having reached this spiritual pinnacle, fired the minds and living of "many of the brethren in the Lord" (Phil. 1:21). And for me too, the old and brave Paul in that cell is the man I fain would be. Nero is reported as having said that the time would come, when men would call their sons Nero and their dogs Paul, as veiled with all the pomp and the power and the pride of this life, he watched Paul led out to his death. And yet that Paul is the man we fain must be; and doubtless he had in his mind words he had penned years before: "... those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things... and be found in him... being made conformable unto *his* death; if by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead...forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth... I press toward the mark for the prize" (Phil. 3). This is a far cry from the Paul who just a few years earlier had 'refused to die', who wanted to fight for his life (Acts 25:11). Now he felt ready to be offered, to be poured out as a drink offering upon the lives of his brethren (Phil. 2:17 Gk.); he held nothing back, but *gave* his life rather than have it forced from him by the inevitable death that must come to all men. What he had once counted gain- and the Greek suggests material, financial gain- he now counted loss. He came to despise the materialism of the world, as did Jacob in his maturity. The power of all this is not just in its relevance to the elderly or terminally ill. We are all old men now, we are all on borrowed time. We believe the Lord's return, the end, *the ultimate end*, is imminent. If we are living expecting the imminent second coming; *are we* ready? Have we reached the completeness?

As he faced death, Paul more intensely modelled his words upon those of Christ. Thus when he speaks of how he is about to *finish* his course (2 Tim. 4:7), he is combining allusions to Mt. 26:58; Lk. 12:50; 18:31; 22:37; Jn. 13:1; as well as to his old hero, John the Baptist (Acts 13:25). And yet despite this, perhaps because of his increasing identification with Christ and sense of Christ's supremacy, Paul's concern was constantly for doctrine; he pounded away, time and again, at the danger of apostasy. As he got older, this was a bigger and bigger theme with him. His last words just before his death are full of this theme, more than any other of his writings. And yet that same letter has more reference (relatively) to the Gospels and to the Lordship of Christ than anything else he wrote. On average, Paul refers to Christ as "the Lord" once every 26 verses in his letters. But in 2 Timothy, he calls Christ "Lord" once every six verses; and in his very last words in 2 Tim. 4, once every 3 verses, nine times more than average! His appreciation of the *excellency* and the supremacy of Christ, of the height of His Lordship, grew and grew.

Paul seems to have seen in Christ's prophecy that the Gospel would be fully known world-wide in the last days of the first and twentieth centuries as being a specific, personal command to him (Mt. 24:14 = 2 Tim. 4:17).

The Gospel is to be preached; Paul realized this in some of his very last words, as even then, he makes one of his last plays on words: "... that through me the proclamation might be fully proclaimed" (2 Tim. 4:17 RVmg.). The Gospel, the proclamation of the Kingdom, is to be proclaimed. We cannot possess a proclamation, designed to be proclaimed, without proclaiming it.

The Lord had such a wide experience of human life and suffering so that not one of us could ever complain that He does not know in essence what we are going through. This is my simple answer to the question of why, exactly why, did Jesus have to suffer so much and in the ways that He did. Take one example of how His earthly experiences were the basis of how He later administered "grace to help in time of need" for a believer. The Lord's one time close friend Judas is described as "standing with" those who ultimately crucified Jesus in Jn. 18:5. Paul says that none of the brethren 'stood with' him when he was on trial, but "the Lord [Jesus] stood with me" (2 Tim. 4:16,17). It seems to me that the Lord knew exactly what it felt like to be left alone by your brethren, as happened to Him in Gethsemane and at His trials; and so at Paul's trial He could 'stand with' him, based on His earthly experience of being left to stand alone. In our lives likewise, the Lord acts to help us based on His earthly experiences; He knows how we feel, because He in essence went through it all. John maybe has the image of Judas and Peter standing with the Lord's enemies in mind when he writes that the redeemed shall stand with Jesus on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1), facing the hostile world.

4:18 . Paul's letters are full of allusion to the Gospel records, and those allusions enable us to correctly interpret the passages alluded to. He uses the same Greek words for "deliver" and "evil" as in "Your will be done... Deliver us from evil" (Mt. 6:13; Lk. 11:4) when he expresses his confidence that "the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18).

4:21 At the bitter end, the way Paul begs nervous, spiritually and physically weak Timothy to try to get to him before he dies has something pathetic about it: "Do thy diligence to come... do thy diligence to come", he repeats twice over (2 Tim. 4:9,21). The spiritual weakness of Timothy and his need for Paul's encouragement is quite a theme (1 Cor. 16:10; 1 Tim. 4:12,14; 2 Tim. 1:6-8; 4:2). Paul laments how the other brethren had disowned him because of the possible implications for themselves if they were known to associate with him; how his soul-mate Demas had left the faith, and how the multitudes he had converted in happier days had turned away. "Only Luke is with me" says it all. Some of his last words were: "Take Mark, and bring him with you, for *he is profitable to me* for the ministry". It seems Paul was aware of his error of years before in pushing Mark away. We have seen that he alluded to it in his letters. And now, right at the very end, the memory of his earlier pride and brashness to his brethren stayed with him. Every, every one of us

has done the same thing to our brethren, countless times. Will we remember them on our deathbeds? Will our sensitivity to sin be that great? Paul in his time of dying was a man who had reached a spiritual peak, the love which was the bond of spiritual completion and maturity. Yet this didn't stop him being depressed, or from so desperately wanting his brethren, or from meditating upon past mistakes.

TITUS

1:1 Paul several times calls himself "a servant of God" (e.g. Tit. 1:1). In the light of all his other allusions to Moses, Paul is surely alluding to the frequent descriptions of Moses as God's servant.

There is a tremendous power in the basic doctrines of the One Faith. We come, over time in our spiritual growth, to acknowledge "the Truth" (2 Tim. 2:25), to be led to a Godly way of life by not only *knowing* the Truth but *acknowledging* its power (Tit. 1:1). The NIV in Tit. 1:1 speaks of "the truth which leads to Godliness". Truth doesn't save of itself. Thus true understanding *is* related to true Godly living- *if* we translate the doctrines into practice. The Passover would only be properly kept, Moses explained, if the meaning of it was understood (Dt. 6:20-25).

Whoever is baptized after believing the doctrines of the true Gospel is our brother or sister- regardless of who baptized them, or what name they go under. Titus was Paul's son "after the common (Gk. *koinos*) faith" (Tit. 1:1). The faith, the doctrines which he had been taught by Paul and been baptized upon believing, were what had made him Paul's son; and therefore that faith was what bound them together in fellowship. The Faith, as in the basic doctrines which make baptism valid, are the basis of our commonality, our fellowship, with each other.

1:3 In a sense God requires not help from man; and yet in another sense He has delegated His work to us, and limits His achievements according to what we are willing to do. C.S. Lewis in *The World's Last Night* observes: "He seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures. He commands us to do slowly and blunderingly what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye. Creation seems to be delegation through and through. I suppose this is because He is a giver". As any employer soon learns, delegation is a risk. We have been "entrusted with the Gospel" (Tit. 1:3 RV); and therefore the world God so wants to love, the world God is appealing to, may never see Him; for He makes His appeal through us, as Paul told the Corinthians.

1:6- see on Gal. 6:4.

1:7 There are many allusions to the language of priesthood in the New Testament, both as major statements and also in passing (e.g. the description of us as "blameless", Tit. 1:7, is priestly language). This usage illustrates for us the meaning of priesthood.

1:8- see on Rom. 12:13.

1:9 Mt. 6:24 = Tit. 1:9. Holding to God as your master rather than mammon is achieved through holding on to His word. Paul spoke of *holding fast* the faithful word (Tit. 1:9) with allusion to *holding to* our Master (Mt. 6:24). But- and this is an important caveat- don't deceive yourself that time spent in expounding Scripture is *necessarily* Bible study as *God* wants it- although it may make an impressive impact on a group of assembled Christians. True Bible study and understanding was what lead the Lord to the death of the cross. To *truly* love God with all our heart and understanding, not just for the intellectual fascination of it, is more than a burnt sacrifice.

1:11 The early corruption of Christianity was due to false teachers who like Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15); they taught false doctrine "for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:11). Time and again the NT warns against elders who would be motivated by the love of "filthy lucre" rather than the Lord Jesus and His people (1 Tim. 3:3,8; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2). The Greek translated "filthy lucre" is hard to understand; it doesn't just mean 'money'. It suggests profit that is somehow filthy, morally disgusting. This is what money turns into, in God's eyes, when men so love it.

1:12- see on Jn. 1:46.

1:14 Tit. 1:14 warns the first century believers not to 'give heed' to the false doctrines of Judaism which were being pedalled *within the ecclesia*. Yet the spirit of the day generally is to be more and more tolerant of doctrinal deviants, rather than 'giving heed', 'watching' against them. There is a

telling play on words here. The Greek for "giving heed" is normally used concerned taking heed, being ware, of false teachers (Mt. 7:15; 16:6; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 1:4; Tit. 1:14). Paul's implication is: 'Instead of giving heed to the *danger* of these people within the ecclesia, you gave heed to them in the sense of listening to them'.

1:15- see on Lk. 11:41.

1:16 Those described in Rom. 1:32 know the judgment of God; they know it will come. But they have a mind "void of [an awareness of] judgment" (Rom. 1:28 AVmg.). We can know, know it all. But live with a mind and heart void of it. Tit. 1:16 AVmg. uses the same word to describe those who "profess that they know God" but are "void of judgment". We can know Him, but have no real personal sense of judgment to come. These are sobering thoughts.

Knowledge is proportionate to works (Tit. 1:16); true understanding is the basis for behaviour. Otherwise works are just the result of our natural inclinations, not a desire to glorify God. God's people are described as "them of understanding" (Dan. 11:35). Evidently knowledge and appreciation *is* related to our having covenant relationship with God. Those who do not understand will ultimately be condemned by God (Rev. 1:16-18 cp. 14:10).

2:1 Being unsound in the Faith is another way of saying that in works a man is denying Christ; to be "sound in the faith" is to tell the truth and not be lazy nor gluttonous (Tit. 1:13,16). Good behaviour "adorns the doctrine of God", i.e. the basic doctrines of the Gospel (Tit. 2:10); the practical commandments of Tit. 2:2-10 are "the things which befit the sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1 RV) which Titus was to teach. It's almost as if Paul is telling Titus to bring out the practical implications of the doctrines which he was teaching.

"Doctrine" refers to a code of behaviour, not just a set of correct propositions concerning God and His plan with men. Thus we don't read about "*pure* doctrine" anywhere in the AV; but rather "*sound* doctrine": living, active doctrine. The things which become sound doctrine are soberness, etc. (Tit. 2:1-4).

2:3 Even the elderly brethren and sisters in Crete who were to be guided by specially appointed elders were to be encouraged to behave 'as those who are engaged in sacred service'- an allusion to priestly service (Tit. 2:3, M.R. Vincent 'Word Studies In The N.T.'). The idea is that the rank and file also live out the spirit of priesthood.

2:5 Wives should behave orderly so that "the word of God be not blasphemed". He assumes that all believing men and women would be preachers of the word, yet if the wives were disorderly in their behaviour they would bring mockery upon the message preached. See on 1 Tim. 6:1.

2:8 Speaking of the sudden destruction of the wicked at the future judgment, David reflected: "So they shall make their own tongues to fall upon themselves" (Ps. 64:8). Unsound speech will be condemned, or perhaps [will lead to our] condemnation (Tit. 2:8).

2:9 Grace and faith in the forgiveness of sins teaches us to look for the blessed hope and the appearing of Jesus (Tit. 2:9-11). If we aren't sure of salvation at His return, we can hardly look forward to it. A firm grasp of salvation- definite salvation- by a real grace alone means we can look to that day with confidence and expectation. See on Col. 1:5.

2:10 The believers who were in slavery were told no to 'purloin', not to steal little bits of property and money in the hope that one day they would save enough to buy their freedom (this is the background to Tit. 2:10). And yet we in our century with our mortgages and pension schemes are in just the same desperate, petty, small minded position!

2:11 "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men..." (Tit. 2:11) is an allusion to the great commission to preach salvation to all men. But here, grace is said to do this. The conclusion seems

unavoidable: grace and the preacher are inextricably linked. The experience of grace is the essential motive behind all witness.

That salvation is by grace enables us to look forward with eagerness rather than uncertainty to the second coming, and our lives are thereby changed. "The grace of God... teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts... looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:11-13). In other words- separation from the world.

2:14 He gave himself for us, *that* (so that) he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14). So, let's do the works- for the Lord imagined us, in our paltry zeal, responding to His cross. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *that* he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). That last clause covers *all* His work- the calling and guiding of men to baptism, the blessing of them and intercession for them... And He died as He did in order to be able to accomplish all this work for us. The final outbreathing of the spirit of Jesus was made toward that small body of representatives of His faithful people gathered around the cross.

3:2-6 Titus was to teach the Cretian brethren that because they had been washed and regenerated in baptism, therefore they were not to speak evil of others, because it was *in the past* that they used to be like that (Tit. 3:2-6). But they still *were* acting like that, even after baptism! They are called upon to remember the implications of their baptism, and live out the status they thus attained before God.

3:5 Baptism is a washing away of sins (cf. Acts 22:16). The descriptions of the believers as being washed from their sins in the blood of Christ therefore refers to their doing this by means of baptism (Rev. 1:5; 7:14; Tit. 3:5 [NIV] speak of this as "the washing of rebirth", referring to our being "born of water" at baptism [Jn. 3:5]).

God forgives men on the basis of their *faith* in the blood of Christ, and association with it by baptism; "*not* by works of righteousness, which we have done" (Tit. 3:4-8). God's basis of salvation is *not* works. We must be careful not to insist on 'forsaking' sins in physical terms to the extent that we too preach justification by works. Just one sin deserves death. No amount of forsaking that sin can change that sentence. God's way of escape is for us to be in Christ, so that He looks upon us *as if* we are Christ, imputing Christ's perfect character to us. Therefore forsaking sin is not in itself the basis of salvation; rather is it faith in Christ. Of course, true faith shows itself in works. But none of us has the degree of faith which we ought to have, and therefore none of us does the amount or type of works which we should. To insist that someone shows their faith by specific works, e.g. certain changes in their marital status, is to insist that there is a direct, definable relationship between faith and the precise type of works which that faith leads to. Yet we are not so strict with ourselves. The faith and works of each of us are far from complete.

Exactly because we are not saved by works but by God's mercy, *therefore* Paul wished to "affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Tit. 3:5,8). In this sense, as Paul says in Romans, grace reigns as a King. It has power over every department of human life and thinking.

"According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit.3:5) connects with Christ washing the church with the water of the word (Eph.5:26).

The grace of God guarantees our salvation. Yet we find it so hard to believe- that I, with all my doubts and fears, will really be there. Israel were warned that they were being given the land (cp. salvation) "not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart... for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Dt. 9:5,6). These words are picked up in Tit. 3:5 and applied to the new Israel: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing (baptism) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit"- by His grace alone.

The spiritual life renews (Tit. 3:5), giving us that *newness* of life, that ongoing baptism and resurrection experience, which Rom. 6:4 promises. This way of life, as it develops, creates its own momentum for further change.

3:8 Paul told Titus to affirm the faithful sayings “confidently, *to the end* that they which have believed... may maintain good works” (Tit. 3:8 RV). The congregations’ spirituality was related to the confidence of their pastor’s presentation. Those “good works”, as ours, have been “afore prepared” in the Father’s plan for us to perform (Eph. 2:10); but we have to be inspired to live up to the potential which He has prepared for us. Num. 14:20 records how the Father forgave Israel according to Moses’ word. And in just as real a sense, He has placed the reconciliation of this world in the hands of our ministry.

The belief that we will be there is the only real anchor in life’s uncertain storm. “When the kindness of God our saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us... that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life... and concerning these things I will that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works” (Tit. 3:4-8). The confident, regular reassurance of other believers was to be part of the ecclesial diet with which the Cretan brethren and sisters were constantly fed. And this assurance was to be the foundation of ecclesial growth as members individually developed the mind of Christ.

3:11 If we examine / judge / condemn ourselves now in our self-examination, God will not have to do this to us at the day of judgment. If we cast away our own bodies now, the Lord will not need to cast us away in rejection (Mt. 5:30). There is a powerful logic here. If we pronounce ourselves uncondemned, we condemn ourselves (Tit. 3:11); if we condemn ourselves now, we will be uncondemned ultimately. See on 1 Cor. 11:29.

Paul, Philemon, Onesimus

As I see it, the letter of Paul to Philemon is a lived out exposition of grace, and the John 17-style unity that arises from this.

The fact that the Lord intercedes for us means that we should be open to others interceding with *us* on behalf of another. Paul explains what I mean. In one of his countless allusions to the Gospels, he speaks of how he ‘beseeches’ Philemon to be generous and gracious to his runaway slave Onesimus (Philemon 10). Paul uses the word *parakleo*- well known for its repeated use in the Gospels to describe how the Lord Jesus is our *parakletos*, our comforter, interceder, beseecher of the Father for us. Surely he means us to get the connection. As the Lord Jesus beseeches / intercedes the Father for us, Philemon included, so we, and Philemon, should be open to others beseeching *us*- and respond with a like grace and lavish response. And there’s another allusion to the Gospels in the very next verse of the letter to Philemon. The unprofitable servant of Mt. 25:30 is all of us, the Lord taught. And so when Paul appeals to Philemon to be gracious to his unprofitable servant Onesimus (Philemon 11), he’s alluding back to that parable. And making the point that Philemon is himself an unprofitable servant, graciously received by his Lord; and so he should be likewise gracious to *his* unprofitable servant.

The point is clearly made by Paul when he says that Philemon should *receive* Onesimus (Philemon 12,17)- for Paul had written to the Romans years before that they should receive one another, as God for Christ’s sake has received us (Rom. 15:7 s.w.). It seems that the case of Onesimus gave Paul an opportunity to practically exemplify what he had meant. Paul speaks of how Philemon would “receive” Onesimus “for ever”- and yet he is implying Onesimus should be sent back to minister to him in Rome. Surely what Paul has in mind is that if someone is truly our brother, then we will eternally “receive” them as such in the Kingdom ages- and therefore we ought to be doing that right now. The baptism of Onesimus was a hard call for Philemon. He had to believe that that difficult man who had defrauded him was now his brother, even though he hadn’t baptized him. Many an ecclesial upset has been caused by this kind of thing. Paul says that if Philemon received Onesimus, then he received Paul. Paul was one with his new brother Onesimus (:12). And if Onesimus returned to Rome and served Paul there, he would be ministering to Paul as if Philemon was doing this- “in thy stead he might have ministered” (:13). So as Paul was represented by Onesimus, so likewise Onesimus would represent Philemon. This is the John 17-style unity which there is in Christ.

By receiving Onesimus with grace, there would be “benefit” and “profit” for Philemon (Philemon 11,14). Humanly speaking, there was only loss. For Onesimus had defrauded Philemon (Philemon 18 Gk.), and Paul was implying that Onesimus send him back to Rome to help him, with Philemon’s ‘agreement’ [AV “mind”] (Philemon 13,14 GK.). But by showing grace in this case, the material loss would become a spiritual profit for Philemon in the last day. And continuing the theme of ‘profit’, Paul says that Onesimus ‘owed’ him his very self because Paul had converted him; therefore any material debt that Onesimus ‘owed’ Philemon should be forgiven with pleasure (Philemon 18,19). The unpayable debt that we have should lead us to be forgiving of whatever others owe us. Note in passing how Philemon ‘owed’ his very [eternal] life to Paul. This is the power and responsibility of witnessing to others. The saviour is the Lord, and yet the preacher manifests that salvation to others to such an extent that effectively we owe our salvation additionally to the person who converted us. The same basic theme of a third party being responsible for the fortunes of another brother is reflected in verse 22. Paul trusted that through the prayers of Philemon he would be released; and he was so confident in the answer to that prayer that he asked him even to prepare a room for him ahead of time!

In the same way as God had done for us exceeding abundantly *above* all we could ask or think (Eph. 3:20), so Philemon was to do *more* [s.w.] than the grace that Paul was suggesting (Philemon 21, 16 s.w.). It's not just a case of forgiving each other because we were forgiven; it's a question of lavishing the grace upon each other which the Lord has upon us. And notice the context of all this. Paul says that as Philemon's elder, he could just "enjoin" him to do that which was required of those in Christ. But he prefers not to work through a command from an elder, demanding obedience. Instead, he appeals to Philemon's own experience of personal grace, and sees in *that* an imperative, a command to be 'obeyed' (Philemon 8,21). The picture we get of Philemon is that he was an active and good brother in many ways. He had an ecclesia that met in his house, probably, by implication, comprised of his own family / "house" whom he had converted. The "beloved Aphia" refers to a female [*agapete*]- probably his wife. He was well known for a truly generous spirit to the brethren, and for a deep faith (:5-7). And yet he his whole standing with the Lord, Paul implies, was going to be revealed, and stood now under question, over the issue of his attitude to his runaway slave who had now accepted Christ. If he wouldn't accept him, then all this good upright living was in vain. Paul was giving him a test. He could've just kept Onesimus with him in Rome. But he sent him all the way back home to Philemon, to get his 'agreement' (Philemon 14, AV "mind") that Philemon accepts Onesimus as a brother, and sends him back to Rome to serve Paul. He could've "retained" Onesimus; but instead, he seeks a "benefit" [spiritually] for Philemon by bringing the issue to a pointed head (:13,14). And so it can be with us, that providence brings one specific case or person into our lives to test whether or not we have really accepted grace in the very core of our hearts. And on this, all else ultimately depends. And these things 'God works oftentimes with man'. We find ourselves living out the situations of both Onesimus and Philemon. The crucial challenge of grace comes to us time and again in ecclesial life, and we too present it to others. Upon our response to it, our salvation-by-grace depends.

In this context, though, one final point. Paul recognized that Philemon "refreshed the bowels of the saints", and he rejoiced that this was the case. Yet there was one saint whose bowels Philemon had not yet refreshed- and that was Paul himself. For Paul uses this very phrase in asking Philemon to rejoice *his* bowels by receiving Onesimus (:7,20). Here we see grace to the extreme. Paul could rejoice that a brother was genuinely loving and encouraging to other brethren, even though that brother had not been so to him personally. It's so easy in personal disputes to write a brother off as totally no good because he was unkind or inappropriate or downright wrong in his treatment of us personally; we so easily forget that in many *other* walks of his life, he is a wonderful servant of the Lord. Yet Paul modelled the very grace which he asked Philemon to show to Onesimus.

:4 Paul speaks of 'making mention always' in prayer of his brethren (Philemon 4 etc.). This is clearly alluding to the Is. 62:6,7 passage, about always making mention of Jerusalem in prayer. But for Paul, the true city of God was now the scattered group of Christian believers around the Roman empire of the first century. Jewish minds would've picked up Paul's purposeful allusion to the 'always' prayers for Jerusalem; and would've marvelled that he saw the great holy city as now the bunch of guys whom he'd baptized around the place, and that instead of a city, it was those very real men and women who filled his thoughts, prayers and yearnings. Paul saw himself indeed as the watchman upon Zion's walls- but watching over the people of God, not a physical city.

:5 "The faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints" (Philemon 5 RV). Because Philemon believes the Lord Jesus, he must believe what His brethren say. And so it is with us. In some parts of our community there is constant doubt of our brethren and suspicions as to their motives and words; and yet this, as with *all* attitudes we adopt to our brethren, is the mind we are showing toward the Lord Jesus Himself. See on Jn. 8:42.

:6 The crucial importance of personal, Christ-like example empowering our witness is brought out in Philemon 6: "The communication [sharing] of thy faith may become effectual [Gk. 'energized'] by the acknowledgment [i.e. recognition, by others] of every good thing which is in you in Christ".

There's a lot compacted into these words, strung together as they are in a rather awkward sentence. Our sharing of the faith is energized, it takes on power and compulsion as a witness, when others can acknowledge that we are "in Christ" because they see His characteristics reflected in us. This is why effective witness can only be made by those "in Christ", those who show His personality written in theirs. This will 'energize' their sharing of the facts of the Gospel with others. As I have pointed out at such length in *The Power Of Basics*, each doctrine of the Gospel is designed to elicit practical changes in human life. Where those changes are apparent, the preaching of a doctrinal Gospel becomes empowered and energized. Proffering mere doctrinal propositions to this world and nothing else, will never be successful. It will lack power, energy and the compulsion required for conversion.

We will perceive that others too are counted as righteous because they are in Christ, and we will likewise seek to count them as having imputed righteousness even as we feel and know God has so counted us. In a poorly translated verse, Paul seeks to persuade Philemon to think more highly of his renegade brother Onesimus: "That the communication [RV fellowship] of thy faith may become effectual [through] the acknowledging of every good thing that is in you in Christ" (Philemon 6). The power to share our faith is rooted in realizing that we have been counted righteous through our being in Christ. As God reckons us righteous, so we must reckon each other (Rom. 3:28; 4:3,5,24 RV). This is an immense challenge, but it comes directly from the doctrine of imputed righteousness. Our being justified / counted righteous by God's grace is the very basis and essence of our salvation. And yet, as ever, we can't be passive to this wonder. We too are to seek to count others as righteous, seeing them for who they are as 'in Christ'. Every time we are sinned against, or perceive the weakness and spiritual incompleteness in our brother or sister who is in Christ... we have a wonderful opportunity to count them as righteous, in the same way as we are counted righteous through being in Christ. The Hebrew word *tsadaq*, to count righteous, to justify, is used about our justification of others in Dan. 12:3- those who count many as righteous will shine as the stars for ever [AV "turn many to righteousness" rather misleadingly gives the idea of converting others by preaching, but that's not the idea of the Hebrew].

:7 Paul gives an excellent pattern to us in how he dealt with Philemon, whom, it would appear, had not treated neither Paul nor Onesimus in a Christ-like way. Paul genuinely rejoices in the good deeds of Philemon in other contexts: "We have great joy...in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother". But he goes on to ask Philemon to do this to him: "Brother, let me have joy of thee...refresh my bowels" (Philemon 7,20). The two verses are clearly linked to each other- the words "joy", "brother", "refresh", "bowels" etc recur. Paul appears to be saying: 'I fully recognize, brother, that you've done many good things, given other brethren joy, refreshed their hearts. But, you've not done that to your slave, brother Onesimus, neither to me. But I acknowledge the good, Christ-like things in you that I see, in other contexts (v. 6). But please, expand that love to include me; please, treat me in the same good way you've treated other brethren; treat me too as a brother in Christ'. Now this sets a wonderful example to us. To acknowledge even in our bitterest enemy in the ecclesia, some good things. Because they are in Christ. To realize that how they are treating us is not actually how they treat all brethren. And to plead with them as does Paul, "for love's sake", to treat us in the graceful way they treat their other brethren.

:11- see on Col. 1:6.

:17 Paul parallels loving the Lord Jesus with loving "all saints" (Philemon 5). To receive Onesimus was to receive Paul (Philemon 12); and "if thou count me therefore a partner [Gk. *Koinonos*- 'one in fellowship'], receive him as myself" (Philemon 17). Paul is saying that if we receive any brother, then, we receive him. He clearly has in mind the Lord's teaching, that if we receive Him, then we are to receive His brethren. So if we receive any brother, we not only receive the Lord Jesus, but we receive all other brethren in Christ; for each brother represents the entire body of Christ. This shows the utter fallacy of division within the one body. It is an utter nonsense to accept one brother, but not

the other brethren, e.g., of his ecclesia. According to the logic of Philemon 17, if we don't accept a true brother, then we are not treating our other brethren as being in fellowship. For Paul says that if Philemon considered *him* to be in fellowship, then Philemon ought to accept Onesimus. Likewise, he reasons that he saw in Onesimus the face of Philemon; for Onesimus ministered unto Paul "in thy [Philemon's] stead" (Philemon 13). The implications of this are far reaching. For by refusing fellowship with our brethren, we are effectively declaring ourselves outside of the body of Christ. And hence Paul's sober warnings in 1 Cor. 11, to discern / recognize the Lord's body; for if we refuse to break bread with our brethren, then, he says, we are eating and drinking damnation to ourselves, because we refuse to accept our part in the Lord's body.

:19 Philemon owed his salvation to Paul's preaching, and was therefore eternally obligated to him (Philemon 19). We too can be a tree of life to those with whom we live; we can win their souls for the Kingdom (Prov. 11:30). The Thessalonians would be accepted in the final glory of judgment day simply "because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thess. 1:10). Eve, taken out of the wounded side of the first man, was a type of the ecclesia; and her name means 'source of life', in anticipation of how the church would bring life to the world.

:21 God's generosity to us in answering us "above all we ask of think" should be reflected in our doing things for others over and above what they have requested (Philemon 21).

HEBREWS

1:1- see on 1 Thess. 1:2.

The Lord was “the word made flesh”; having spoken to us through the words of the prophets, God now speaks to us in His Son (Heb. 1:1,2 RV). His revelation in that sense hasn’t finished; it is ongoing. Right now, the Lord Jesus speaks with a voice like many waters and a sword of flame- according to John’s vision of the Lord’s post-resurrection glory.

In the first century, you usually began a letter with a preface, saying who you were and to whom you were writing. The letter to the Hebrews has a preface which speaks simply of the greatness of Christ (Heb. 1:1-3). The higher critics speak of how the preface has been lost or got detached. But no, the form of Heb. 1:1-3 is indeed that of a preface. The point is that the greatness of Christ, of which the letter speaks, is so great as to push both the author and audience into irrelevancy and obscurity. It’s significant that the New Testament writers speak so frequently of Jesus as simply “the Lord”. Apparently, this would’ve been strange to first century ears. Kings and pagan gods always had their personal name added to the title ‘the Lord’- e.g. ‘the Lord Sarapis’. To just speak of “the Lord” was unheard of. The way the New Testament speaks like this indicates the utter primacy of the Lord Jesus in the minds of believers, and the familiarity they had with speaking about Him in such exalted terms.

1:2

Hebrews 1:2: "The Son... by whom [God] made the worlds"

Heb. 1:2 is a passage misunderstood to believe that Jesus created the earth. It could be argued that the prologue to Hebrews is based upon the prologue to John's Gospel. The same ideas recur- the Word of God from the beginning come to expression in Christ, "all things", glory, etc. Note the similarity between "apart from him not one thing came into being" (Jn. 1:3) and Heb. 2:8, "not one thing is not left put under him". Jn. 1:3 stated that "all things" were created by the Word, i.e. the logos / intention which God had of the Messiah. Heb. 1:2 clarifies this (because of misunderstandings in the early church?) to define the "all things" as all the ages of human history. These were framed by God with Christ in mind. Later in Hebrews we meet the same idea- Heb. 11:3 speaks of how the ages were framed and then goes on to give examples of Old Testament characters who displayed their faith and understanding of the future Messiah.

It should be noted that the 'ages' which Christ was to be involved in creating refer to "the world to come"- for Heb. 2:5 says that this passage is speaking about "the world to come". Heb. 9:26 adds indirect support by commenting that Christ died at the end of "the (singular) age"; the ages to come are the eternity of God's Kingdom which is made possible through His work. Thus the idea is not that He created the world, but rather that through His work, the ages /to come/ were made possible through Him. And therefore those ages before Him find their meaning in the context of He who was to come and open the way to eternal ages.

We read of “the Son... by whom [Gk. *dia*] He [God] also made the worlds [Gk. *aion*]”. A quick look at Strong's concordance or an online Bible seems to me conclusive. '*Dia*' can mean ‘for whom / for the sake of / on account of’. It doesn’t *always* mean that, as it’s a word of wide usage- but it very often does mean ‘on account of’ and actually frequently it *cannot* mean ‘by’. There are stacks of examples:

- In a creation context, we read that all things were created *dia*, for the sake of, God’s pleasure (Rev. 4:11). Significantly, when 2 Pet. 3:5 speaks of how the world was created “by” the word of God, the word *dia* isn’t used- instead *hoti*, signifying ‘causation through’. This isn’t the word used in Heb. 1:2 about the creation of the *aion* on account of, *dia*, the Son. Eve was created *dia* Adam- she wasn’t created *by* Adam, but *for the sake of* Adam (1 Cor. 11:9). 1 Cor. 8:6 draws a helpful

distinction between *ek* [out of whom] and *dia*- all things are *ek* God, but *dia*, on account of, Christ (1 Cor. 8:6).

- The context of Heb. 1:2 features many examples of where *dia* clearly means ‘for the sake of’ rather than ‘by’. Just a little later we read in Heb. 1:14 of how the Angels are “ministering spirits” who minister *dia*, for the sake of, the believers.

- Because of [*dia*] Christ’s righteousness, God exalted Him (Heb. 1:9).

- The Mosaic law was “disannulled” *dia* “the weakness and unprofitableness thereof” (Heb. 7:18). The weakness of the law didn’t disannul the law; the law was disannulled by God *for the sake of* the fact it was so weak.

- Levi paid tithes *dia* Abraham (Heb. 7:9), not *by* Abraham, but *for the sake of* the fact he was a descendant of Abraham.

- Jesus was not an Angel *dia* the suffering of death (Heb. 2:9). Clearly here the word means ‘for the sake of’ rather than ‘by’. Jesus was born a man *for the reason that* He could die. He was not an Angel who was then made ‘not an Angel’ *by* the fact of death. That makes no sense.

- Scripture was written *dia* us- not *by* us, but ‘for our sakes’ (1 Cor. 9:10)

- The martyrs were executed *dia*, for the sake of, their witness to Jesus (Rev. 20:4)

- Israel today are loved by God *dia* the Jewish fathers (Rom. 11:28)- clearly the word here means ‘for the sake of’ and not ‘by’.

- Cold and wet people made a fire *dia*, for the sake of, because of, the rain and cold (Acts 28:2). They didn’t make a fire ‘by’ the rain and cold.

- Timothy was circumcised *dia*, for the sake of, the critically minded Jews (Acts 16:3). He was not circumcised *by* them.

- When the voice came from Heaven, Jesus commented that the voice came not *dia* me, but *dia* the disciples (Jn. 12:30). Clearly *dia* here means ‘for the sake of’ and not ‘by’.

- “*Dia* the people that stand by I said it” (Jn. 11:42)- Jesus said ‘it’ for the sake of the bystanders; He didn’t speak ‘by’ them.

- The authorities couldn’t punish the apostles *dia* the people’s support for them- clearly *dia* here means ‘for the sake of’ and not ‘by’.

- Paul wrote *dia* many tears (2 Cor. 2:4). He didn’t write literally *by* or *with* those tears, but for the sake of his tears and grief for Corinth, he wrote to them.

- “By reason of” (Gk. *dia*) false teachers, the truth is badly spoken of (2 Pet. 2:2)

- We labour *dia*, for the sake of, the Lord’s name (Rev. 2:3). We believe *dia* Christ- not that He creates faith in us in an arbitrary way or forces us to believe; we believe *for the sake of* what we have seen and known in Christ (1 Pet. 1:21). Likewise we experience the birth of faith within us “*dia* the resurrection of Jesus” (1 Pet. 1:3). This doesn’t mean that when Christ rose, He created us as believers without any choice on our part. Rather, *for the sake of* [*dia*] Christ’s resurrection, generations of believers have come to faith and hope whenever they have encountered and believed in the fact of His resurrection.. Thus Jesus was raised *dia* our justification (Rom. 4:25). He was not raised *by* our justification, but *for the sake of* it.

- Christ was manifested “for [*dia*] you” (1 Pet. 1:20)- He was not manifested *by* us in a causative sense, but was manifested for our sakes.

- “Wherefore”- *dia*, for the sake of, Diotrephes’ behaviour, John would discipline him (3 Jn. 10). To read *dia* as ‘by’ here makes no sense.

- “For the truth’s sake”- *dia aletheia* (2 Jn. 2); “for righteousness sake”, *dia dikaiosune* (1 Pet. 3:14)

- Those who are “of the world” *dia*, “therefore”, for this reason, speak in a worldly way (1 Jn. 4:5). Because we are “not of the world”, *dia*, “therefore”, the world doesn’t accept us (1 Jn. 3:1). Persecution arises *dia* the word of God- for the sake of the word (Mt. 13:21). It’s not persecution of us *by* the word of God. Likewise men will hate us, not *by* Christ, but *for the sake of* (*dia*) Christ (Mk. 13:13).

- There was a division “because of” (*dia*) Jesus (Jn. 7:43).

- “They could not... bring him in because of (*dia*) the multitude” (Lk. 5:19). They didn’t aim on bringing the man in *by* the multitude.
- ‘For the sake [*dia*] of the elect’, and not *by* the elect, the days will be shortened (Mk. 13:20).
- Herod bound John *dia* Herodias- clearly, ‘for the sake of’ rather than ‘by’. It was not Herodias who did the binding. It was Herod.
- A ship waited on Jesus *dia* the crowd pushing on Him (Mk. 3:9)- clearly ‘because of’ and not ‘by’.
- “The Sabbath was made *dia* [for] man” (Mk. 2:24). It wasn’t man who made the Sabbath; it was made for the sake of man.

Then, *aion*, [AV "worlds"] is a plural- if this verse means 'Jesus created the earth', then, did He create multiple, plural 'earths'? That the word means 'the ages' or 'an age' is again clear from seeing how else '*aion*' is used. In almost every case where the word *aion* occurs in the New Testament, it doesn't mean 'the physical planet earth', but rather an age or situation on the earth, rather than the physical planet. In Eph. 2:7 we read of “the ages to come”- and it is the word *aion* again. The church will glorify Jesus “throughout all generations”, and this is paralleled with the phrase ‘the *aion* of the *aions*’ [Eph. 3:21- AV “world without end”; the same parallel occurs in Col. 1:26, “hid from *aions* and from generations”]. Clearly *aion* refers to periods of time rather than a physical planet. Just a few verses after Heb. 1:2, we read that the son will reign ‘for the *aions* and the *aions*’, or in English “for ever and ever” (Heb. 1:8). Surely the combined message is that the previous ages / *aions* existed only for the sake of Christ, and He will rule over all future *aions*. There is the *aion* to come [AV “the world to come”, Heb. 6:5], and Christ will be a priest “for ever” [Gk. ‘for the *aion*’, Heb. 5:6]. The *aion* to come is the eternity of God’s Kingdom. It will be, in somewhat hyperbolic language, an eternity of eternities. Later in Hebrews we read that Jesus made His sacrifice for sin “in the end of the world / *aion*” (Heb. 9:26). If an *aion* ended at the death of Jesus, then clearly the word doesn’t refer to the physical planet- but rather to the age which then ended. The Hebrew writer clinches this view of *aion* in Heb. 11:3, where he prefaces his outline of Bible history from Abel to the restoration from Babylon by saying that the ages / *aion* are framed by the word of God. Response by faith to God’s word, seeing the invisible with the eye of faith, occurred amongst the faithful in every *aion*. The *aion* [AV “worlds”] were framed by the word of God.

Consider other uses of the word *aion* where clearly it refers to the ages and not to a literal planet:

- “The cares of this world” (Mk. 4:19)
- The prophets which have been “since the world began” (Lk. 1:70). There were no prophets standing there at creation. The context clearly refers to the prophets of the Old Testament Scriptures.
- “The children of this world” (Lk. 16:8)
- “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2)
- “The wisdom of this world” (1 Cor. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:18), “the princes of this world” (1 Cor. 2:8)
- “This present evil world” (Gal. 1:4)- there’s nothing evil about the physical planet, the reference is clearly to the world-system.
- “The darkness of this world” (Eph. 6:12)
- Loving “this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10) is wrong, Paul says. Surely he wasn’t referring to the literal planet.

The whole of history, with all its ages, and all that is to come, exists solely for the sake of Christ. He is the One who gives meaning to history. Further, if this verse means 'Jesus created the earth', then OK, question: Genesis and many other passages say *God* created. If this says Jesus was the actual creator, then is Jesus directly equal to God? Also, if Heb 1:2 is saying that *Jesus* is the creator of earth, the One through whom God did the job, then, *why* do we have to wait until Hebrews to know that? There's no indication in Genesis or even in the whole Old Testament nor in the teaching of Jesus that Jesus was the creator of earth on God's behalf. That's my problem with the pre-existence

idea- it's nowhere in the Old Testament. So would believers have been held in ignorance of this fact for 4000 years? If so, then, is it so important to covenant relationship with God? I am sure David, Abraham etc. believed that *God* and *not* Messiah created the earth. If they'd have been asked: 'Did *Messiah* create the earth, or God? Does Messiah now exist?', they'd have answered 'No' both times. Surely?

It is often commented that a few verses later, Heb. 1:10 appears to quote words about God (from Ps. 102:25) and apply them to Jesus. To take a Psalm or Bible passage and apply it to someone on earth, even a normal human, was quite common in first century literature (1). It's rather like we may quote a well known phrase from Shakespeare or a currently popular movie, and apply it to someone. It doesn't mean that that person is to be equated with Romeo, Juliet, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth etc. By quoting the words about them, we're saying there are similarities between the two people or situations; we're not claiming they're identical. And seeing that the Son of God was functioning for His Father, it's not surprising that words about God will be quoted about the Lord Jesus.

Footnote: *Dia* + Genitive

It is argued by trinitarians that *dia* + the genitive, as we have in Heb. 1:2, means that the ages were made by the instrumentality of Christ. But *dia* + genitive doesn't only mean 'by whose instrumentality'. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 90 explains the uses of *dia* with genitive:

"1. With a genitive, through

- a. Used of place or medium through
- b. Used of time, during in the course of; through
- c. Used of immediate agency, causation, instrumentality, by means of, by; of means or manner, through, by, with
- d. Used of state or condition, in a state of".

Meaning (b) appears relevant to Heb. 1:2 because it is *dia* Christ that the aions (a time reference) were created. This would require us to read in an ellipsis: "Through the (period of the ministry of) the Son, God framed the ages". Or, "Through(out) the Son, God framed the ages", i.e. all God's purpose throughout the ages was framed with Christ in mind. Acts 3:18 uses *dia* + genitive to explain how God had spoken of Christ "by" or throughout the period of all His "holy prophets".

Notes

(1) Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology Of The New Testament* (London: SCM, 1971) p. 234.

1:3 It is a majestic, glorious theme of the Bible that God is revealed as a real being. It is also a fundamental tenet of Christianity that Jesus is the Son of God. If God is not a real being, then it is impossible for Him to have a Son who was the "image of His *person*" (Heb. 1:3). The Greek word actually means His "substance" (RV). Further, it becomes difficult to develop a personal, living relationship with 'God', if 'God' is just a concept in our mind. It is tragic that the majority of religions have this unreal, intangible conception of God.

Nearly all the titles of Christ used in the letter to the Hebrews are taken from Philo or the Jewish book of Wisdom. The writer to the Hebrews is seeking to apply them in their correct and true sense to the Lord Jesus. This explains why some titles are used which can easily be misunderstood by those not appreciating this background. For example, Philo speaks of "the impress of God's seal", and Hebrews applies this to the Lord Jesus. The phrase has been misinterpreted by Trinitarians as meaning that Jesus is therefore God; but this wasn't at all the idea behind the title in Philo's writings, and neither was it when the letter to the Hebrews took up the phrase and applied it to Jesus. This sort of thing goes on far more often than we might think in the Bible- existing theological ideas are re-cast and re-presented in their correct light, especially with reference to the

Lord Jesus. Arthur Gibson notes that "there is an important second level within religious language: it is a reflection upon, a criticism of, a correction of, or a more general formulation of, expressions which previously occur".

3 Enoch [also known as *The Hebrew Book Of Enoch*] spoke much of an Angel called Metatron, "the prince of the presence", "the lesser Yahweh", who appeared as Yahweh to Moses in Ex. 23:21, sat on "the throne of glory" etc (3 Enoch 10-14). Early Jewish Christianity appears to have mistakenly reapplied these ideas to Jesus, resulting in the idea the first of all Jesus was an Angel, and then coming to full term in the doctrine of the Trinity. J. Danielou devotes the whole fourth chapter of his survey of the development of Christian doctrine to the study of how Jewish views of Angels actually led on to the Trinity. Paul's style was not to baldly state that everything believed in by the Jews was wrong; he recognized that the very nature of apostasy is in the mixing of the true and the false. He speaks of how Jesus truly has been exalted and sits at God's right hand (Rom. 8:34) and has been given God's Name, as the Angel was in Exodus (Phil. 2:9-11); but his whole point is that whilst that may indeed be common ground with the Jewish ideas, the truth is that Jesus is *not* an Angel. He came into physical existence through Mary ("made / born of a woman", Gal. 4:4), and as the begotten Son of God has been exalted above than any Angel. The language of Heb. 1:3-6 clearly alludes to the Metatron myth and deconstructs it in very clear terms. For Jesus is described as "being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image / pattern of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son? And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him".

1:5 James Dunn quotes Tertullian, Justin, Epiphanius and Clement as all believing that the Lord Jesus was an Angel: "so too Jewish Christians of the second and third centuries specifically affirmed that Christ was an angel or archangel... Justin's identification of the angel of Yahweh with the [supposedly] pre-existent Christ". It was this Jewish obsession with Angels, and the desire to make Jesus understandable as an Angel, which led to the idea that He personally pre-existed and was not quite human. And hence the specific and repeated emphasis of the New Testament that the Lord was *not* an Angel but *because* He was a man and *not* an Angel He has been exalted far *above* Angels (Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:16; 2:8-10; Heb. 1; 1 Pet. 1:12; 3:22; Rev. 5:11-14). It's the same with the idea of Melchizedek, whom the Qumran community and writings understood as an Archangel. The commentary upon Melchizedek in Hebrews stresses that he was a *man* ("consider how great this *man* was...", Heb. 7:4)- therefore *not* an Angel. He was a *foreshadowing* of Christ, and not Christ Himself. It would appear that the commentary upon Melchizedek in Hebrews is actually full of indirect references to the Qumran claims about Melchizedek being an Angel and somehow being the Messiah. Sadly, too many trinitarians today have made the same mistake as the Jews- arguing that Melchizedek was somehow Jesus personally. The Jews of Qumran were quite obsessed with Angels- they also suggested that Gabriel was somehow the pre-existent Messiah. Bearing that in mind, it would appear that the descriptions of the Angel Gabriel announcing the conception and birth of Jesus are almost purposefully designed to show that Gabriel and Jesus are *not* the same but are two quite different persons (Mt. 1:20,24; 2:13,19; Lk. 1:11,19,26-38; 2:9).

Hebrews 1 can be a passage which appears to provide perhaps the strongest support for both the 'Jesus is God' and 'Jesus is not God' schools. Meditating upon this one morning, I suddenly grasped what was going on. The writer is in fact purposefully juxtaposing the language of Christ's humanity and subjection to the Father, with statements and quotations which apply the language of God to Jesus. But the emphasis is so repeatedly upon the fact that God did this to Jesus. God gave Jesus all this glory. Consider the evidence: It is God who begat Jesus (Heb. 1:5), God who told the Angels to worship Jesus (Heb. 1:6), it was "God, even your God" who anointed Jesus, i.e. made

Him Christ, the anointed one (Heb. 1:9); it was God who made Jesus sit at His right hand, and makes the enemies of His Son come into subjection (Heb. 1:13); it was God who made / created Jesus, God who crowned Jesus, God who set Jesus over creation (Heb. 2:7), God who put all in subjection under Jesus (Heb. 2:8). And yet interspersed between all this emphasis- for that's what it is- upon the superiority of the Father over the Son... we find Jesus addressed as "God" (Heb. 1:8), and having Old Testament passages about God applied to Him (Heb. 1:5,6). The juxtaposition is purposeful. It is to bring out how the highly exalted position of Jesus was in fact granted to Him by 'his God', the Father, who remains the single source and giver of all exaltation, and who, to use the Lord's very own words, "is greater than [Christ]" (Jn. 14:28).

1:9 Loved and exalted above his brethren is a Joseph allusion.

1:10 see on Ps. 102:26.

1:12 Heb. 1:12 speaks of the natural creation as a vesture which will be folded up and put away. Job likewise speaks of the natural creation as "the outer fringes" of God's garments. If God clothes Himself with them, they must to some degree be connected with Him personally, rather than being irrelevant to God's self revelation to man.

1:14 sent forth- See on Is. 37:36; Ex. 7:4.

2:1 The more we believe that we really have been redeemed, the more evident it becomes that this Saviour God demands our whole and total devotion. Let us take heed to the exhortation of Heb. 2:1,3: If we "neglect so great salvation", we will have 'drifted away' (RV) from the solid assurances which are in the Gospel we first heard. Clearly, it is a temptation to drift away from those assurances, even if we 'hold' to the doctrinal propositions of the Gospel in theory. The wonderful reality of it all for us can so easily drift away. But; we will be there!

We all have a tendency to "drift away" from "the things which we have heard [in the preaching of the Gospel to us]" (Heb. 2:1 RV). And yet it is quite possible that someone schooled in true doctrine will never forget those doctrines, even if they live a worldly life. We drift away from the doctrines in the sense that we cease to let them influence our lives. This is why we constantly need to undertake a study such as this- to remind ourselves of how basic doctrine elicits a response in practical life. The 'false teachers' of New Testament times weren't simply misunderstanding the Bible, making innocent theological errors- they were (according to the context of the passages which speak about them) advocating on this basis a wrong way of life. This theme of false teaching being associated with false behaviour is to be found in the Old Testament- for the false prophets in Jeremiah's time were condemned for how they were sexually immoral, not just for incorrect theology (Jer. 29:23).

2:3- see on Acts 1:1.

Heb. 2:3 "that great salvation" = "A great deliverance" (Gen. 45:7).

The rejected will have a desire to escape but having no place to run (Heb. 2:3, quoting Is. 20:6 concerning the inability of men to escape from the approach of the invincible Assyrian army). Rev. 20:11 likewise speaks of the rejected 'heavens and earth' fleeing from the Lamb's throne and finding no place to go. Before the whirlwind of God's judgment, the false shepherds of Israel "shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape" (Jer. 25:35). The rejected will see that the Lord is coming against them with an army much stronger than theirs, and they have missed the chance to make peace (Lk. 14:31). They will be like the Egyptians suffering God's judgments in the Red Sea, wanting to flee but having no realistic place to run to. Uzziah hasting to go out from the presence of the Lord after he was judged for his sin was a foretaste of this (2 Chron. 26:20).

"Such *great* salvation" (Heb. 2:3) might imply that a lesser salvation could have been achieved by Christ, but He achieved the greatest possible. "He is able also *to save them to the uttermost* that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25) may be saying the same thing. Indeed, the *excellence* of our

salvation in Christ is a major NT theme. It was typified by the way Esther interceded for Israel; she could have simply asked for her own life to be spared, but she asked for that of all Israel. And further, she has the courage (and we sense her reticence, how difficult it was for her) to ask the King yet another favour- that the Jews be allowed to slay their enemies for one more day, and also to hang Haman's sons (Es. 9:12). She was achieving the maximum possible redemption for Israel rather than the minimum. Paul again seems to comment on this theme when he speaks of how Christ became obedient, "*even to the death of the cross*" (Phil. 2:8), as if perhaps some kind of salvation could have been achieved without the death *of the cross*. Perhaps there was no theological necessity for Christ to die *such* a painful death; if so, doubtless this was in His mind in His agony in the garden. "If *it* be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Mt. 26:39) may not simply mean 'If it's possible, may I not have to die'. The Lord could have meant: 'If *it*- some unrecorded possible alternative to the cross- is *really* possible, then let *this* cup pass'- as if to say 'If option A is possible, then let the cup of option B pass from me'. But He overrode this with a desire to be submissive to the Father's preferred will- which was for us to have a part in the greatest, most surpassing salvation, which required the death of the cross.

2:6 Heb. 2:6 says that God is mindful of man because He visits him- which He does through His Angels (visiting is Angelic language). Thus God is mindful (literally mind-full!) of us because of the Angels "visiting" us with trials and observation "every moment" (Job 7:18). However, in the same way that for such thoughts to be powerful with God they have to go through Christ, so they also have to be presented to Him by the Angels. See on Is. 6:7.

Heb. 2:6-9 is an example of the inspired writer using expected reader response and expectations in order to make a point. Having spoken of how the world to come will be given to redeemed human beings and not to Angels, the writer goes on to quote from the Psalms to prove that point: "Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death". We begin reading the quotation assuming it's talking about humanity generally; but as it goes on, we realize it's talking about the pre-eminent Son of Man, i.e. the Lord Jesus. Notice how He is called "Jesus", with no 'Lord' or 'Christ' added on. The point of it all is to make us perceive how totally identified is Jesus with humanity as a whole; a passage which speaks in its context of humanity generally is allowed to quite naturally flow on in meaning to apply to the Lord Jesus personally. It's a majestic, powerful way of making the point- that the Lord Jesus was truly one of us.

2:7-11 Heb. 2:7,11- see on Ps. 8:5,6.

2:9- see on Rom. 3:19; Phil. 2:8.

The Greek words *charis* [grace] and *choris* [apart] differ by one very small squiggle. This is why there's an alternative reading of Heb. 2:9: "So that apart from God [*choris theou*] he [Jesus] tasted death for us". This would then be a clear reference to the way that the Lord Jesus felt apart from God at His very end. Not that He was, but if He felt like that, then this was in practice the experience which He had. Thus even when we feel apart from God- the Lord Jesus knows even that feeling.

Heb. 2:9 seems to describe Christ *in His time of dying* as "crowned with glory and honour".

The physical sufferings of the cross were an especial cause of spiritual temptation to the Lord; just as physical pain, illness, weakness etc. are specific causes of our temptations to sin. Heb. 2:9 defines

the Lord's 'sufferings' as specifically "the suffering of death", the sufferings associated with His time of dying. Heb. 2:18 RVmg. then goes on to say: "For having been himself tempted in that wherein he suffered". The sufferings of death were therefore an especial source of temptation for Him. Truly did He learn obedience to the Father specifically through the process of His death (Heb. 5:8). Let's seek to remember this when we or those close to us face physical weakness, illness and pain of whatever sort.

By God's grace, the Lord tasted death *for* (Gk. *huper*) *every man*, as our representative: "in tasting death he should stand for all" (Heb. 2:9 NEB). In His death He experienced the essence of the life-struggle and death of every man. The fact the Lord did this *for us* means that we respond *for Him*. "To you it is given *in the behalf of* (Gk. *huper*) Christ, not only to believe on Him [in theory], but to suffer *for his sake* (Gk. *huper*)" (Phil. 1:29). He suffered *for us* as our representative, and we suffer *for Him* in response. This was and is the two-way imperative of the fact the Lord was our representative. He died *for all* that we should die to self and live *for Him* (2 Cor. 5:14,15). "His own self bare our sins [as our representative] in his own body [note the link "*our sins*" and "*his own body*"] that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24,25). We died with Him, there on His cross; and so His resurrection life is now ours. He is totally active for us now; His life now is *for us*, and as we live His life, we should be 100% *for Him* in our living. He gave His life *for us*, and we must lay down our lives *for Him* (1 Jn. 3:16).

2:10 The Lord Jesus alone could say, with full meaning, "I am". Who He appeared to be, was who He essentially was. He alone achieved a completely integrated, real self. He was what Paul called the "perfect man", the completed, integrated person (Eph. 4:13). But He had to work on this. Hebrews always speaks of Him as "perfected", as a verb (Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:28)- never with the adjective 'perfect'. Apart from being a major problem for Trinitarian views, this simple fact sets Him up as *our* pattern, whom the Father seeks like wise 'to perfect'. Yet the path the Lord had to take to achieve this was hard indeed.

2:11- see on Heb. 11:26.

The very fact Christ calls us brethren in Mt. 12:50 the Hebrew writer saw as proof of Christ's humanity (= Heb. 2:11).

2:12- see on Mt. 28:10.

2:13 Isaiah is a confirmed type of Christ, and his school of prophets typical of the saints. "I (Isaiah) and the children (prophets - Is. 8:16) whom the Lord hath given me" (Is. 8:18) is quoted in Heb. 2:13 as referring to Christ and His brethren. Other instances of Isaiah being a type of Christ can be found by comparing Is. 6:10 with John 12:39-41 and by appreciating that "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me... to preach good tidings... to comfort all that mourn" (e.g. Hezekiah) is primarily concerning Isaiah's message of hope to Israel during the Assyrian invasions, although it is quoted concerning Jesus (Is. 61:1,2 cp. Luke 4:18). Is. 8:16-18 could be taken as Isaiah saying that he had decided not to teach his school of prophets any longer, but rather to just personally focus upon his own relationship with God: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him". The next verse is however quoted in Heb. 2:13 about the Lord Jesus and His brethren being of the same nature: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts". The Hebrew writer therefore understood this statement to reflect an intense unity between Isaiah and his "children", be they his literal children [Immanuel and Mahershalalhashbaz] or his spiritual children. It seems to me that Immanuel could've been some kind of Messiah figure- but for whatever reason, he didn't live up to it and the prophecy was therefore given a greater application to the Lord Jesus. Likewise, the "children" Isaiah refers to in Is. 8:18 became the faithful children in Christ under the new covenant, according to how Heb. 2:13 quotes it.

2:14- see on Gal. 1:4; Rev. 20:5.

“Him that had the power of death, that is the Devil” (Heb. 2:14) may refer to the fact that “the sting (power) of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the (Jewish) Law” (1 Cor.15:56; see also Rom. 4:15; 5:13;7:8, where ‘the Law’ that gives power to sin is clearly the Jewish law). Bearing in mind that the ‘Devil’ often refers to sin and the flesh, it seems significant that ‘the flesh’ and ‘sin’ are often associated with the Mosaic Law. The whole passage in Heb. 2:14 can be read with reference to the Jewish Law being ‘taken out of the way’ by the death of Jesus [A.V. “destroy him that hath the power of death”]. The Devil kept men in bondage, just as the Law did (Gal. 4:9; 5:1; Acts 15:10; Rom. 7:6–11). The Law was an ‘accuser’ (Rom. 2:19,20; 7:7) just as the Devil is.

Hebrews 2:14 states that the Devil was destroyed by Christ’s death. The Greek for ‘destroy’ is translated ‘abolish’ in Ephesians 2:15: “Having abolished [Darby: ‘annulled’] in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances”. This would equate the Devil with the enmity, or fleshly mind (Rom. 8:7) generated by the Mosaic Law; remember that Hebrews was written mainly to Jewish believers. The Law itself was perfect, in itself it was not the minister of sin, but the effect it had on man was to stimulate the ‘Devil’ within man because of our disobedience. “The strength of sin is the Law” (1 Cor.15:56). “Sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me (Rom. 7:8,11). Hence “the wages of sin (stimulated by the Law) is death” (Rom. 6:23). It is quite possible that the “sin” in Romans 6, which we should not keep serving, may have some reference to the Mosaic Law. It is probable that the Judaizers were by far the biggest source of false teaching in the early church. The assumption that Paul is battling Gnosticism is an anachronism, because the Gnostic heresies developed some time later. It would be true to say that incipient Gnostic ideas were presented by the Judaizers in the form of saying that sin was not to be taken too seriously because the Law provided set formulae for getting round it. The Law produced an outward showing in the “flesh”, not least in the sign of circumcision (Rom. 2:28).

This passage places extraordinary emphasis upon the fact that Jesus had human nature: “He *also himself likewise*” partook of it (Heb. 2:14). This phrase uses three words all with the same meaning, just to drive the point home. He partook “of the *same*” nature; the record could have said ‘he partook of *it* too’, but it stresses, “he partook of the *same*”.

The Lord partook in our nature, and we are made partakers in Him (Heb. 2:14 cp. 3:14; 12:10; 2 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:13). There are several examples where there is an ambiguity in the Hebrew text which reflects the suggestion of mutuality. Take Gen. 18:22:”Abraham stood yet before the Lord”. And yet, as witnessed by several translations, this can just as well mean “The Lord stood yet before Abraham”.

2:15- see on Heb. 5:7.

Christ openly shewed his ability to destroy the power of sin, on account of which we lived in fear of death, " all (our) lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15)- clear reference back to Israel in Egypt. The passage in Hebrews 2 says that Christ can deliver us from such bondage because he is our representative, our brother, of our nature, not ashamed of his connection with us (2:11). Reasoning back from this, we can see that Moses' ability to redeem Israel from Egypt, his appropriacy for the task, was because he had openly declared that he was one of them. Yet the wonder of that was lost on them. And if we are not careful, the wonder of the fact that Christ had our nature, that he was our representative and is *therefore* mighty to save, can be lost on us too. The thrill of these first principles should ever remain with us.

All the Judges in some way prefigured the Lord; for they were "saviours" raised up to deliver God's weak and failing people in pure grace, when according to God's own word, they should have received the due punishment of rejection (Neh. 9:27,28). He who delivered "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15) was typified by all those earlier

deliverers of God's people from bondage (cp. Mt. 1:21). The "great salvation" of Heb. 2:3 which the Lord achieved was foreshadowed by the great deliverance wrought by Samson (15:18).

The fear of death grips our society more than we like to admit. The Swiss psychologist Paul Tournier observed the huge "number of people who dream that they are locked in, that everywhere they come up against iron-bound and padlocked doors, that they absolutely must escape, and yet there is no way out". This is the state of the nation, this is how we naturally are, this is the audience to which we preach. And we preach a freedom from that fear. Because the Lord Jesus was of our human nature- and here perhaps more than anywhere else we see the crucial practical importance of doctrine- we are freed from the ranks of all those who through fear of death live their lives in bondage (Heb. 2:15). For He died for us, as our representative. How true are those inspired words. "To release them who through fear / phobos of death were all their living-time subject to slavery" (Gk.). Nearly all the great psychologists concluded that the mystery of death obsesses humanity; and in the last analysis, all anxiety is reduced to anxiety about death. You can see it for yourself, in how death, or real, deep discussion of it, is a taboo subject; how people will make jokes about it in reflection of their fear of seriously discussing it. People, even doctors, don't quite know what to say to the dying. There can be floods of stories and chit-chat... all carefully avoiding any possible allusion to death. This fear of death, in which the unredeemed billions of humanity have been in bondage, explains the fear of old age, the unwillingness to accept our age for what it is, our bodies for how and what they are, or are becoming. I'm not saying of course that the emotion of fear or anxiety is totally removed from our lives by faith. The Lord Jesus in Gethsemane is proof enough that these emotions are an integral part of being human, and it's no sin to have them. I'm talking of fear in it's destructive sense, the fear of death which is rooted in a lack of hope. There's a passage in *Hamlet* which speaks of not so much fearing death as "the dread of something after death" (some of the sentiments in Job 18 are similar). And modern psychoanalytical studies have confirmed this. A large part of the fear of death is the fear of what follows. For those in Christ, whilst like their Lord they may naturally fear the process of death, their future is secured; they know that death is unconsciousness and will end ultimately in a bodily resurrection at the Lord's return, after which they will share in His eternal life. For them, "the fear of death" in its ultimate form has been removed (Heb. 2:14-18).

2:16 Angels cannot die: "Death... does not lay hold of angels" (Heb. 2:16 Diaglott margin). If Angels could sin, then those who are found worthy of reward at Christ's return will also still be able to sin. And seeing that sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), they will therefore not have eternal life; if we have a possibility of sinning, we have the capability of dying. Thus to say Angels can sin makes God's promise of eternal life meaningless, seeing that our reward is to share the nature of the Angels. Heb. 2:16-18 repays closer reflection in this context of Angels and possibility to sin. It speaks of the reasons why the Lord Jesus had to be of human nature: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the [nature of the] seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted". Exactly because the Lord Jesus had to be tempted to sin, He did not have Angelic nature but human nature. His mission was to save humanity from human sin, not the Angels. So, He had to have human nature so that He could be tempted to sin; and the Hebrew writer labours the point that therefore He did not have Angels' nature. Which, by inference, is *not* able to be tempted to sin. Note again how the Bible speaks of "Angels" as if there is only one category of Angel – obedient Heavenly beings.

2:17- see on Lk. 24:6; Jn. 19:13.

Moses' persecution by Pharaoh enabled him to enter into the feelings of Israel in the slave camps; and as they fled from Pharaoh towards the Red Sea, Moses would have recalled his own flight from Pharaoh to Midian. The whole epistle to the Hebrews is shot through with allusions to Moses. "In

all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) is alluding to Dt. 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet *from among their brethren* like unto *thee* (Moses)". The brethren of Christ are here paralleled with Moses; as if Moses really is representative of not only natural Israel, but spiritual too- as well as Moses being a type of Christ. For this reason he is such a clear pattern for us, and we are invited so often to identify ourselves with him by copying his example. Moses was *made like* his brethren through his similar experiences, as Christ was progressively *made like* us by his life of temptation.

3:1 Concentration on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is something which the Hebrew writer so often encourages, in his efforts to encourage the Hebrew believers. After perhaps 25 years of believing (they were probably converted at Pentecost), they were starting to get bored with God's Truth; the will to keep on keeping on was no longer what it was. But because of the cross, because *He paid dearly for you*, because He is now thereby our matchless mediator: hold on, hold fast, *therefore* (a watchword of Hebrews) endure to the end (Heb. 3:1,6; 4:14; 10:21,23). For that great salvation will surely be realized one day. So, concentrate *personally* on the fact that He hung there for you, honour your solemn duty to at least try to reconstruct the agony of His body and soul.

3:5 If Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45).

3:7 Repeatedly, the implication of God as humanity's creator is stressed – we are therefore *His* – not the Devil's: "Know that Jehovah, he is God: it is he that hath made us, and we are his; We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Ps. 100:3 ASV); "He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" (Ps. 95:7 ASV – quoted in Hebrews 3:7 as applicable to the Christian church). Humanity is God's, as is the whole of His creation – this was the message taught to Job in the final chapters of the book, and the theme of so many of the Psalms.

3:9-11 Hebrews 3:9-11 implies that God changed His mind about letting Israel enter the land: "your fathers tempted Me, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation... So I swear in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest". Or as Num. 14:34 (A. V. mg.) says "ye shall bear your iniquity, even forty years, and ye shall know the altering of My purpose". These were the words of the Angel to Moses. We know that God cannot be tempted (James 1:13-15); therefore the passage in Hebrews referring to God being tempted and therefore swearing that they would not enter the land must be concerning the Angel which led them; and similarly the altering of purpose which this involved was the altering of the Angel's plans, not those of God Himself.

3:13- see on 1 Cor. 10:21.

3:17 The thoughts of the condemned generation in the wilderness would have gone back to Egypt and their Passover deliverance, to the glorious experience of the Red Sea crossing. It would have been hard to accept that it had all been in vain for them. But the rejected of the new Israel will likewise reason concerning their baptism and apparent salvation from the world. Significantly Dt. 2:1 records that after their rejection at the borders of Canaan, "we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea". This would have reminded them of what had happened there- as the thoughts of the rejected will return to their spiritual beginnings at baptism? Likewise, God's messages of rejection and condemnation to Israel frequently reminded them of their spiritual beginnings in the events of the Exodus (e.g. Ez. 16,20; Am. 2:10). Heb. 3:17 RVmg speaks of their "limbs [which] fell in the wilderness"- the picture is of condemned men staggering on through the desert, discarded limbs wasted by some terrible and progressive disease. This is the picture of the condemned. Israel wandering in the wilderness until their carcasses lay strewn over the scrubland of Sinai connects with Cain also being a wanderer after his rejection. He was made a "fugitive", from a Hebrew root meaning to shake, to totter, to reel. He was to wander, shaking with fear, reeling. The word is also rendered 'to bemoan'. It's an awful scene: bemoaning his lot, shaking, wandering,

reeling, nowhere. The same image is found in Prov. 14:32: "The wicked is driven away [Heb. to totter, be chased] in his wickedness".

God grieved over the carcasses of those wretched men whom He slew in the wilderness for their thankless rebellions against Him their saviour (Heb. 3:17). The apostle makes the point: "With *whom* was He grieved?". Answer: with the wicked whom He slew! A human God or a proud God would never grieve over His victory over His enemies. Even in the fickleness of Israel's repentance, knowing their future, knowing what they would subject His Son to, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (Jud. 10:16). He delays the second coming because He waits and hopes for repentance and spiritual growth from us. But He praises the faithful for patiently waiting for Him (Is. 30:18; Ps. 37:7). Here we see the humility of God's grace.

3:19- see on Jn. 3:3.

4:1 "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the Gospel preached as well as unto them" (Heb.4:1,2). As in Rom.11, there is the command to fear because of the real possibility of our being like natural Israel. There is a very powerful parable in the account of the wilderness journey through life, whereby the Red Sea represents baptism, eating the manna daily corresponds to daily feeding on the word etc. This parable is alluded to in so many parts of Scripture. However, only a minority of those baptized in the Red Sea actually reached the promised land. Can we expect the parallel with the new Israel to break down at this point? Just look back at your own Christian experience if you can't believe it. Add to this the number of those who spiritually fall asleep, and the frightening similarity between natural and spiritual Israel comes abruptly into focus.

An element of fear is not wrong in itself. Israel in the wilderness had the pillar of fire to remind them of God's close presence, and to thereby motivate them not to sin: "His fear (will) be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Ex. 20:20). Notice how Isaac's guardian angel is described as "the fear" in Gen. 31:42,53 cp. 48:15,16. The trumpet blasts which our call to judgment is likened to are based upon the Old Testament blowing of trumpets to mark "the day(s) of your gladness... your solemn days... the beginnings of your months" and also whenever the camp was to move onwards (Num. 10:10). This same mixture of emotions will fill us when we receive the call; a sense of solemnity, but also of gladness at a new beginning, a moving on towards the promised land.

4:2- see on Jn. 15:27.

4:3- see on 2 Cor. 4:6.

4:8 -see on Josh. 22:4.

4:11 "We which have believed do enter into rest... for he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His" on the Sabbath (4:3,10). Thus those who no longer relied on the works of the Law but on faith were living in the spirit of the Sabbath- they had in some sense entered the rest. But despite their reliance on faith, works were still necessary: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God... let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall." (4:9,11). This is a perfect cameo of the whole situation; in prospect we are in the Kingdom, but have a very real possibility of falling from grace, and still need to labour for the final entry into that Kingdom.

4:12 Jesus is right now "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of [our hearts]" in mediating for us (Heb. 4:12 RV). But this is how He was in His mortal life here- for then He was "of quick understanding" too (Is. 11:3). He would have had a way of seeing through to the essence of a person or situation with awesome speed- and this must have made human life very irritating for Him at times. But who He was then is who He is now. It's the same Jesus who intercedes for us in sensitivity and compassion. See on Heb. 4:15.

4:13 We must see the urgency of our position as sinners; we are condemned now and yet we can repent; but not then. Heb. 4:13 makes the point that we right now are “naked” before the eyes of Him to whom we right now give account [*logos*]. We will give that *logos* in the last day (Rom. 14:11,12); yet before the Word of God, as it is in both Scripture and in the person of the Lord Jesus, we face our judgment today, in essence. And we are pronounced “naked” before Him. Yet therefore, in this day of opportunity, we can come boldly before the throne because we have “such an High Priest”, as Heb. 4:16 continues. Lot suffered in the condemnation of Sodom when the neighbouring kings invaded (Gen. 14:12)- he was in the same situation as those who were warned to come out of Babylon lest they be consumed in her plagues. So he went through a condemnation process in this life- but later learnt his lesson and will be saved in the end.

4:14 He endured our nature and temptations *so that* He might be an empathetic High Priest (consider the implications of Heb. 2:10,17; 4:14,15; 5:1,2); Christ was fully consecrated as High Priest after His death, and it was then that He began to be the sympathetic, understanding High Priest which the Hebrew letter speaks of. The fact that Christ knows so thoroughly our feelings here and now, especially our struggles for personal righteousness, should *of itself* encourage our awareness of and relationship with Him.

The continuity between the mortal, human Jesus and the exalted Lord of all which He became on His ascension is brought out quite artlessly in Heb. 4:14: “Our great high priest, who has passed through the heavens”. The picture is of “this same Jesus”, the man on earth, passing through all heavens to ‘arrive’ at the throne of God Himself to mediate for us there. His ascension to Heaven was viewed physically like this by the disciples, and is expressed here in that kind of language of physical ascent, to bring home to us the continuity between the man Jesus on earth, and the exalted Lord now in Heaven itself. The same Jesus who once experienced temptation can thereby strengthen us in our temptations. We need to realize that nobody can be tempted by that which holds no appeal; the Lord Jesus must have seen and reflected upon sin as a possible course of action, even though He never took it. And for the same reason, several New Testament passages (e.g. 1 Tim. 2:5) call the exalted Lord Jesus a “man”- even now. Let’s not see these passages merely as theological problems for trinitarians. The wonder of it all is that Jesus after His glorification is still in some sense human. He as “the pioneer of our faith” shows us the path to glory, a glory that doesn’t involve us becoming somehow superhuman and unreal.

4:15 Note carefully the tense used in Heb. 4:15: “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities”. It doesn’t say ‘which could not have been touched...’, but rather “which cannot [present tense] be touched”. It’s as if He is *now* touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Which opens a fascinating window into what having God’s nature is all about. When we by grace come to share it, it’s not just that we will dimly remember what it was like to be human. We will somehow still be able to be touched by those feelings, in sympathy with those who still have that nature during the Millennial reign. The only other time the Spirit uses the Greek word translated “touched with the feeling...” is in Heb. 10:34, where we read of how the Hebrew Christians “had compassion of me”, the writer of the letter. The link, within the same letter, is surely to reflect how they had been so compelled by their Lord’s fellow feelings toward them, His fellow feeling for them right now, that they in turn came to feel like this for their suffering brother. A related word is found in 1 Pet. 3:8: “Having *compassion one of another*, love as brethren”. The wonder of the fact that Jesus feels for us, that He can enter into our feelings, should result in our seeing to get inside the feelings of others, empathizing with them, feeling for them and with them. It’s this feature of the Lord Jesus which enables Him to be such a matchless mediator. Stephen saw Him *standing* at the right hand of the throne in Heaven, when usually, Hebrews stresses, He *sits*. The Lord was and is so passionately, compassionately, caught up in the needs of His brethren that this is how He mediates for us. And it’s the same Jesus, who walked round Galilee with a heart of compassion for kids, for the mentally sick, for oppressed and abused women...even for the hard

hearted Pharisees whom He would fain have gathered under His loving wings, such was His desire for others' salvation.

Jesus, despite the moral splendour of Divine nature, is still able to be *touched* with the feeling of our infirmities as He intercedes for the forgiveness of our sins (Heb.4:15).

Coming boldly before the throne of grace in prayer is again judgment seat language (Heb. 4:15). Our attitude to God in prayer now will be our attitude to Him at the judgment; we are 'bold / confident' before Him now, and we can be 'bold' then (1 Jn. 2:28). Before the throne of grace we find grace to help (Heb. 4:16); whereas we will "find" [s.w.] mercy in the day of judgment (2 Tim.1:18). Each time we receive grace to help before the throne, we are anticipating the judgment day scenario.

4:16 - see on 2 Sam. 7:27.

Lk. 1:30 = Heb. 4:16. When you ask for forgiveness, be like Mary in her spiritual ambition in asking to be the mother of Messiah.

The Lord Jesus is prophetically described as He "that hath boldness to approach unto me" (Jer. 30:21 RV). This is applied to us, who boldly approach the Father in prayer likewise (Heb. 4:16). We are bidden to draw near to the Father in prayer just as the Son drew near (Heb. 4:15,16). He wishes us to share in the loving relationship which there was between Him and His Father, and prayer is crucial to this. Hebrews so often uses the word "therefore"; *because of* the facts of the atonement, we can *therefore* come boldly before God's throne in prayer, with a true heart and clear conscience (Heb. 4:16). This "boldness" which the atonement has enabled will be reflected in our being 'bold' in our witness (2 Cor. 3:12; 7:4); our experience of imputed righteousness will lead us to have a confidence exuding through our whole being. This is surely why 'boldness' was such a characteristic and watchword of the early church (Acts 4:13,29,31; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:19; 1 Jn. 4:17).

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Really appreciating that Christ is our personal High Priest to offer our prayers powerfully to God, should inspire us to regularly pray in faith.

5:2 Heb. 5:2 describes those in sin whom the Lord saved as "out of the way". The same idea is found in Lk. 11:6 AVmg., where the man "out of his way" comes knocking on the Lord's door. The image of the shut door is that of rejection; but here the door is opened, and the man given "as much as he needs" of forgiveness and acceptance.

The Lord Jesus has compassion upon those who are ignorant of His Gospel, just as He does upon those who fall out of the way to life (Heb. 5:2, alluding to Christ as the good Samaritan who comes to stricken men). It is He who brings men to faith in God (1 Pet. 1:21; 3:18), revealing the Father to men (Lk. 10:22; Jn. 14:21), calling and inviting them to the Kingdom (1 Pet. 5:10; Rev. 22:17), going out into the market place and calling labourers (Mt. 20:3-7), almost *compelling* men to come in to the ecclesia (Mt. 22:8-10), receiving them when they are baptized (Rom. 15:7). He is the sower who sows the word in men's hearts, working night and day in the tending of the seed after it has taken root (Mk. 4:27); the one who lights the candle in men's spirituality so that it might give light to

others (Mk. 4:21). He permits and sometimes blocks preaching (1 Cor. 16:7,4,19; 2 Cor. 2:12; Phil. 2:24; 1 Thess. 3:11).

5:5- see on Rom. 8:26.

5:6 The Hebrew writer alludes to and subverts the defiant language of the Maccabees in repeatedly describing Christ as "priest for ever" (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:3,17,21)- when this was the term applied to Simon Maccabaeus in 1 Macc 14:41. See on Lk. 20:25.

5:7 Heb. 5:7 comments that Christ prayed "with strong crying and tears". These words are certainly to be connected with Rom. 8:26, which speaks of Christ making intercession for us now with "groanings which cannot be uttered". One might think from Heb. 5:7 that the Lord Jesus made quite a noise whilst hanging on the cross. But Rom. 8:26 says that his groaning is so intense that it cannot be audibly uttered; the physicality of sound would not do justice to the intensity of mental striving. No doubt the Lord Jesus was praying silently, or at best quietly, as he hung there. The point is that the same agonizing depth of prayer which the Lord achieved on the cross for us is what he now goes through as he intercedes for us with the Father.

Heb. 5:7 describes Christ on the cross as a priest offering up a guilt offering for our sins of ignorance. He did this, we are told, through "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears". This must surely be a reference to "Father forgive them". Those were said with a real passion, with strong crying, with tears as He appreciated the extent of our sinfulness and offence of God. There is a connection between these words and those of Rom. 8:26,27, which describes Christ as our High Priest making intercession for us "with groanings". "Groanings" is surely the language of suffering and crucifixion. It is as if our Lord goes through it all again when He prays for our forgiveness, He has the same passion for us now as He did then. Think of how on the cross He had that overwhelming desire for our forgiveness despite His own physical pain. That same level of desire is with Him now. Surely we can respond by confessing our sins, by getting down to realistic self-examination, by rallying our faith to truly appreciate His mediation and the forgiveness that has been achieved, to believe that all our sins, past and future, have been conquered, and to therefore rise up to the challenge of doing all we can to live a life which is appropriate to such great salvation. See on Lk. 23:34.

Oscar Cullmann translates Heb. 5:7: "He was heard in his fear (anxiety)". That very human anxiety about death is reflected in the way He urges Judas to get over and done the betrayal process "quickly" (Jn. 13:28); He was "straitened until it be accomplished" (Lk. 12:50). He prayed to God just as we would when gripped by the fear of impending death. And He was heard. No wonder He is able therefore and thereby to comfort and save us, who lived all our lives in the same fear of death which He had (Heb. 2:15). This repetition of the 'fear of death' theme in Hebrews is surely significant- the Lord Jesus had the same fear of death as we do, and He prayed in desperation to God just as we do. And because He overcame, He is able to support us when *we* in our turn pray in *our* "time of need"- for He likewise had the very same "time of need" as we have, when He was in Gethsemane (Heb. 4:16). Death was "the last enemy" for the Lord Jesus just as it is for all humanity (1 Cor. 15:26). Reflection on these things not only emphasizes the humanity of the Lord Jesus, but also indicates He had no belief whatsoever in an 'immortal soul' consciously surviving death.

5:8 He had a quite genuine "fear of death" (Heb. 5:8). This "fear of death" within the Lord Jesus provides a profound insight into His so genuine humanity. We fear death because our human life is our greatest and most personal possession... and it was just the same with the Lord Jesus. Note that when seeking here to exemplify Christ's humanity, the writer to the Hebrews chooses His fear of death in Gethsemane as the epitome of His humanity.

5:10

Who Was Melchizedek?

In the commentary on Melchizedek in Hebrews; the writer admitted he was going deep, speaking of things which could only be grasped by very mature believers (Heb. 5:10,11,14). It is therefore not wise to base fundamental doctrine on the teaching of such verses; nor should the Melchizedek passages loom large in the minds of those who are still coming to learn the basic doctrines of Scripture. "This Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem), priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him" is spoken of as being "without father, without mother, without descent (genealogy), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:1,3). From this it is argued by some that Jesus literally existed before his birth, and therefore had no human parents. Jesus has a Father (God) and a mother (Mary) and a genealogy (see Mt. 1, Lk. 3 and cp. Jn. 7:27). 'Melchizedek' therefore cannot refer to him personally. Besides, Melchizedek was "made *like* unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3); he was not Jesus himself, but had certain similarities with him which are being used by the writer for teaching purposes. "After the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest", Jesus (Heb. 7:15), who was ordained a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:5,6). The language of Hebrews about Melchizedek just cannot be taken literally. If Melchizedek literally had no father or mother, then the only person he could have been was God Himself; He is the only person with no beginning (1 Tim. 6:16; Ps. 90:2). But this is vetoed by Heb. 7:4: "Consider how great this man was", and also by the fact that he was seen by men (which God cannot be) and offered sacrifices to God. If he is called a man, then he must have had literal parents. His being "without father, without mother, without descent" must therefore refer to the fact that his pedigree and parents are not recorded. Queen Esther's parents are not recorded, and so her background is described in a similar way. Mordecai "brought up...Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother...whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter" (Esther 2:7). The author of Hebrews was clearly writing as a Jew to Jews, and as such he uses the Rabbinic way of reasoning and writing at times. There was a Rabbinic principle that "what is not in the text, is not" (1)- and it seems that this is the principle of exposition being used to arrive at the statement that Melchizedek was "without father". Seeing no father is mentioned in the Genesis text, therefore he was "without father"- but this doesn't mean he actually didn't have a father. It's not recorded, and therefore, according to that Rabbinic principle, he effectively didn't have one.

The book of Genesis usually goes to great lengths to introduce the family backgrounds of all the characters which it presents to us. But Melchizedek appears on the scene unannounced, with no record of his parents, and vanishes from the account with equal abruptness. Yet there can be no doubt that he was worthy of very great respect; even great Abraham paid tithes to him, and was blessed by him, clearly showing Melchizedek's superiority over Abraham (Heb. 7:2,7). The writer is not just doing mental gymnastics with Scripture. There was a very real problem in the first century which the Melchizedek argument could solve. The Jews were reasoning: 'You Christians tell us that this Jesus can now be our high priest, offering our prayers and works to God. But a priest has to have a known genealogy, proving he is from the tribe of Levi. And anyway, you yourselves admit Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). Sorry, to us Abraham is our supreme leader and example (Jn. 8:33,39), and we won't respect this Jesus'. To which the reply is: 'But remember Melchizedek. The Genesis record is framed to show that such a great priest did not have any genealogy; and Messiah is to be both a king and a priest, whose priesthood is after the pattern of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6 cp. Ps. 110:4). Abraham was inferior to Melchizedek, so you should switch your emphasis from Abraham to Jesus, and stop trying to make the question of genealogies so important (see 1 Tim. 1:4). If you meditate on how much Melchizedek is a type of Jesus (i.e. the details of his life pointed forward to him), then you would have a greater understanding of the work of Christ'. And we can take that lesson to ourselves.

Notes

(1) See James Dunn, *Christology In The Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) p. 276 note 59.

5:11 As the Hebrew writer spoke and wrote to brethren who were not as spiritually mature as they ought to be for their time in Christ, he saw the similarity between himself and the Lord Jesus talking to the crowds, those crowds of very human people who at that time comprised God's ecclesia (Mt. 13:15 = Heb. 5:11).

The Hebrews failed to break into this upward spiral because they were "dull of hearing" the word (Heb. 5:11). The Greek word for "dull" implies 'lazy', and yet comes from the same root as the Greek for 'bastard' ('*nothros*' cp. '*nothos*'). Thus because they were not being properly born again by the word of the Gospel they were unable, in subsequent spiritual life, to receive the real power of the word.

5:12 The writer laments that some for the time they had been baptized ought to be teachers, but themselves needed to re-learn basic doctrine (Heb. 5:12). He understood that we all inevitably teach the Gospel to others over time, if we are spiritually healthy. It may well be that we have children, and it is our duty to bring them up in the knowledge of the Gospel. In this sense, therefore, every brother or sister will become a spiritual father or mother to someone; what we have written above ought to apply to *all* of us eventually.

The phrase "first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5:12)) is better rendered in the RV mg. "the beginning of the oracles...". The truth we learn and teach before baptism is but a springboard so much further. The writer seems to perceive the tendency to forever be digging up the foundations to make sure they are still there; for he says: "Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on..." (Heb. 6:1 RV). Sadly, as he goes on to say, he does have to speak to those particular readers of those basics again, but in a healthy spiritual life this shouldn't be the case. They should have used those basic doctrines to lead them further in following the example of He who was also "made perfect", who reached 'perfection'. As He was "made perfect" (5:9), so we should strive to go on unto a like 'perfection' (5:14; 6:1). The inspired writer doesn't balk at the height of this calling, unattained as it has been by us all. But it is the lofty height towards which the power of the Gospel can propel us. See on Heb. 6:1.

5:12-14 "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14) surely alludes to Jn. 16:12, although it doesn't verbally quote it: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now".

5:13 It's evident to me, from the very way the Bible is written, that an understanding of its deeper parts depends upon a correct understanding of the basic doctrines. The milk of the word leads on to the meat; Heb. 5:13,14 implies you can only understand the meat if for some time you have been properly feeding on the milk. This means that those who don't understand the basic doctrines of the true Gospel can't really understand the meat of the word.

5:14 If we stay as babes, taking only milk, we will be unable to discern good and evil (Heb. 5). The idea is that as a baby will put anything in its mouth, so does the immature convert. Those who don't mature on from the milk of the word run the risk of poisoning their spirituality. The drive to maturity isn't optional; if we lack it, our spiritual health will suffer. And by contrast, the more we grow, the more we will be able to discern what is harmful and what is nutritious.

6:1 We must not see the learning of the basic doctrines and baptism as an end rather than a beginning. It is a tragedy if a man dies knowing and appreciating little more than he did at his baptism. Sunday School Christianity isn't the stuff of the Kingdom of God. We must go on unto perfection. "Let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto full growth" (Heb. 6:1 RV). It almost implies that the Hebrews were so busy *talking* about the first principles that they had omitted to use them as the springboard to *growth*. See on Heb. 5:12.

6:5 The Spirit of God is *God in action*, God showing His power, and yet in its expression it articulates the inner mind and characteristics of God. Thus tasting the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit was tasting God's word, in that the miracles expressed the essential truths of God's inner spirit as expressed in His word (Heb. 6:4,5). The miraculous gifts expressed God's will (Heb. 2:3), as His word does. God *is* His Spirit in the sense that all He does and speaks is an expression of His essential spirit.

6:6- see on Mk. 15:15; 1 Jn. 2:28.

Open shame In the Lord's death we see the heart that bleeds, bared before our eyes in the cross. It is written of Him in His time of dying that He "poured out his soul unto death" (Is. 53:12). The Hebrew translated "poured out" means to make naked- it is rendered as "make thyself naked" in Lam. 4:21 (see too Lev. 20:18,19; Is. 3:17). The Lord's sensitivity was what led Him to His death- He made His soul naked, bare and sensitive, until the stress almost killed Him quite apart from the physical torture. To be sensitive to others makes us open and at risk ourselves. A heart that bleeds really bleeds and hurts within itself. And this was the essence of the cross. It seems to me that the Lord was crucified naked- hence those who turn away put Him to "an open [Gk. 'naked'] shame". In being sensitive to others, we make ourselves naked. The heart that bleeds is itself in great risk of hurt and pain.

6:7 The land which has drunk in the rain gives forth "herbs meet for them by whom it is tended" (Heb. 6:7 RV). The parallel is intended with "those who have tasted the good word of God" (Heb. 6:5). If the land represents those who respond to the Gospel, as in the sower parable, who are those who tend it? Surely the preachers and pastoral carers. They benefit, they are encouraged, by those whom they have cared for and converted. I've seen this so very often- one goes to exhort, and comes back home exhorted. But this is all part of the intended upward spiral in functional ecclesial life.

The husbandman produces fruit which is appropriate to his labours, and so our eternal future and being will be a reflection of our labours now (Heb. 6:7). Not that salvation depends upon our works: it is the free, gracious gift of God. But the nature of our eternity will be a reflection of our present efforts.

We are to be the ground that drinks in the rain of God's word, and yet also the husbandmen who bring forth the fruit to God's glory; and yet the ground brings forth fruit appropriate to those who have worked on it (Heb. 6:7). Does this not suggest that we each bring forth a unique and personally appropriate form of spiritual fruit?

6:8 At the time of Christ's coming, there will be tares actively growing in the ecclesia. Those tares are the "thorns and briers" of Heb. 6:8, who are "rejected... nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned"; the 'thorns' who crucify Christ again (2 Sam. 23:6,7; Heb. 6:6-8). Yet we will, in some sense, rub shoulders with this category if we are in the latter day ecclesia (Mt. 13:27-30). In the last days, the true Christian community simply won't be (isn't?) the spiritually safe place, where error is impossible, which we may have felt it to be in the past. The man of sin, the wicked one, will sit in the very *temple of God*, the ecclesia.

The "end" of the rejected is to be later "burnt" (Heb. 6:8), as if rejection occurs in the mind of God now, but will articulate the punishment later, at the judgment.

6:10 Giving a cup of cold water to the little ones had nothing to do doesn't necessarily refer to sticking banknotes in a collection for Oxfam. The Hebrew writer took it as referring to our love for Christ's little ones, within the ecclesia (Mt. 10:42 = Heb. 6:10). And the context in the Gospels says the same.

6:12 Conversion means a life of belief in the Gospel. Faith *works* through love; it naturally, by its very nature, propels action. John's letters link faith and love, as if to show that the two are inextricably linked. Having real faith means that we are not "slothful" (Heb. 6:12); the clawing

laziness of our natures will be brushed aside by the imperative to action which faith gives. And in 'the truth', the propositions of 'the one faith', we have the motivating power which no other religion can offer. I call the basic doctrines of the Gospel an "imperative" to action in that they demand action / response from us by implication, rather than for what they specifically in so many words set before us as 'requirements'.

6:18 Consider the curse upon Levi- that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ (Heb. 6:18). Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing.

6:20 The juxtaposition of the Lord's humanity and His exaltation is what is so unique about Him. And it's what is so hard for people to accept, because it demands so much faith in a man, that He could be really so God-like. The juxtaposition of ideas is seen in Hebrews so powerfully. Here alone in the New Testament is His simple, human name "Jesus" used so baldly- not 'Jesus Christ', 'the Lord Jesus', just plain 'Jesus' (Heb. 2:9; 3:1; 4:14; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2,24; 13:12). And yet it's Hebrews that emphasizes how He can be called 'God', and is the full and express image of God Himself. I observe that in each of the ten places where Hebrews uses the name 'Jesus', it is as it were used as a climax of adoration and respect. For example: "... whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (Heb. 6:20). "But you are come unto... unto... to... to... to... to... and to Jesus the mediator" (Heb. 12:22-24). The bald title 'Jesus', one of the most common male names in first century Palestine, as common as Dave or Steve or John in the UK today, speaking as it did of the Lord's utter humanity, is therefore used as a climax of honour for Him. The honour due to Him is exactly due to the fact of His humanity.

He is like the boy who brings the ship's line to shore (AV "forerunner", Heb. 6:20), and then guides the ship to dock.

7:3 Without doubt God frames the Biblical record in order to highlight certain facts. Thus there is a marked lack of information concerning the father and mother of Melchizedek in Genesis. The Spirit in Hebrews comments that he was "Without father, without mother... having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (Heb. 7:3). Now this is not literally true. God is providing us with an interpretation of how He worded the account in Genesis, making the point that Melchizedek typified Christ. But although we are not to read Hebrews 7:3 at face value, there is no explicit indication to this effect. The objection that the New Testament does not warn us against reading the 'casting out of demons' language literally is therefore not valid. Hebrews 7:3 is one of many examples of where it is imperative to understand the way in which God is using language if we are to correctly understand His word, but there is no explicit warning about this in Hebrews 7:3!

7:4- see on Heb. 1:5.

7:12 The whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Isa. 24:5; Deut. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning "the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity". It was God's

purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn't grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of "practically eternity". For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

7:19 By having this hope, we find strength against materialism and "draw nigh to God" (Heb. 7:19); and the Hebrew readership would have understood this as meaning 'drawing nigh in priestly service' (cp. Ex. 19:22). The Hope we have compels us to God's service. And that same Hope inspires us to repentance, too. For if He is soon to return, what manner of persons ought we to be? And so Mt. 10:7 and Mk. 6:12 parallel preaching the soon coming of the Kingdom with preaching repentance.

7:25- see on Heb. 2:3.

The risen and exalted Lord is spoken of as being shamed, being crucified afresh, as agonizing in prayer for us just as He did on the cross (Rom. 8:24 cp. Heb. 5:7-9). On the cross, He made intercession for us (Is. 53:11,12); but now He ever liveth to make such intercession (Heb. 7:25). There He bore our sins; and yet now He still bears our sins (Is. 53:4-6. 11). The fact that the Lord "ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25) is an allusion back to Is. 53:12, which prophecies that on the cross, Christ would make intercession for the transgressors. His prayer for us then, that we would all be forgiven (and see the prophecies of this in Psalms 22,69 etc.) was therefore His intercession for our salvation. His whole death was His prayer / intercession for us. But it was of His own freewill; He was not relaying our words then. And His intercession for us on the cross is the pattern of His intercession for us now. This is- or ought to be- a humbling thought.

He made one mediatory offering for all time (Heb. 5:7; 7:27); therefore He has nothing to offer now. The High Priest going into the Holiest is also a type of Christ entering Heaven. He is in a sense permanently in the Holiest, He bears our names *always* before Yahweh; He ever lives, all the time, to make intercession for us, all the time (Heb. 7:25).

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7:26 If the Son of God Himself prayed in such simple terms, surely we ought to likewise. He was and is "harmless" (Heb. 7:26) in His priestly mediation; the same word is translated "simple" in Rom. 16:8. He was an intellectual beyond compare, morally and dialectically He defeated the most cunning cross-questioning of His day; and yet He was a working man surrounded by masses of daily problems. But He was and is "simple" in the sense of single-mindedly committed to His priestly work. We are on earth and God is in Heaven, and therefore our words should be few (Ecc. 5:2). Not few in the sense that we don't pray for very long, but few in terms of their simplicity and directness. The Lord warned us against the complicated prayer forms of the Pharisees; and asked us to *mean* our words of 'yes' and 'no' rather than use more sophisticated assurances. The heart is deceitful and so wicked we cannot plumb its depths (Jer. 17:9); and yet the pure in heart are blessed. This must surely mean that the "pure" in heart are those who despite the intrinsic self-deception of the human heart, are nonetheless "pure" or single hearted in their prayer and motives and desire to serve God.

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Jesus was in His life "separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). The Greek word very definitely means 'to actively depart from'- it's used about a partner walking out of a marriage. Yet the Lord is always pictured as mixing with sinners, to the extent that they felt they could come to Him easily, and actually liked to do this. So how was He "separate" from them in the way the Hebrew writer understood? Here again we see one of the profoundest paradoxes in this supremest of personalities. He was with sinners, then and now; His solidarity with us, the roughest and the most obvious and the subtlest of us, is what attracts us to Him. And yet He is somehow totally separate from us; and it is this in itself which brings us to Him.

8:2 There is great emphasis in Ex. 26 that the tabernacle was "one", joined together in such a way that taught the lesson of unity. The spiritual tabernacle, the believers, was "pitched" by the Lord- translating a Greek word which suggests 'crucifixion' (Heb. 8:2). Through the cross, the one, united tabernacle was pitched. To tear down that structure by disuniting the body is to undo the work of the cross.

8:4 Because His mediation was a one-off act, Christ would not be a priest if He were now on earth (Heb. 8:4). He is given the *title* of priest, as He is given the title "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5), even though He is not now a man.

8:10 The New Covenant which is to be made with Israel on Christ's return has now been made with us in this life (Heb.8:10 cp. v.13).

8:11 If we know God in an experiential sense (and not just knowing theological theory about Him), we know that our sins are forgiven. We preach to others "Know the Lord!", exactly because "I will be merciful to their iniquities" (Heb. 8:11,12). It is our knowledge of God's mercy to us which empowers us to confidently seek to share with others our knowledge, our relationship, our experience with God. Forgiveness inspires the preacher; and yet the offer of forgiveness is what inspires the listener to respond. God appeals for Israel to respond by pointing out that in prospect, He has already forgiven them: "I have [already] blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions... [therefore] return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Is. 44:22). Likewise Elijah wanted Israel to know that God had already in prospect turned their hearts back to Him (1 Kings 18:37). We preach the cross of Christ, and that through that forgiveness has been enabled for all men; but they need to respond by repentance in order to access it. Hence the tragedy of human lack of response; so much has been enabled, the world has been reconciled, but all this is in vain if they will not respond.

In addition to prayer, let's simply *make spiritual conversation* with our brethren, overcoming our natural reserve to talk about spiritual things. All in the new covenant should be teaching every man his neighbour and brother, saying "Know the Lord" (Heb. 8:11).

Being His nation and being a priest are connected. Israel were to teach every man his neighbour and brother, saying, Know the Lord (Heb. 8:11). God therefore saw all Israel as represented by the priests (Hos. 4:9; Is. 24:2; Jer. 5:31; 8:10); He says in Hag. 2:12-14 that He saw all Israel as defiled priests. Hos. 4:1,6, in a passage directed to all Israel rather than just the priests (cp. 5:1), warns the whole nation that they can no longer be God's priest, because of their sins. There are many hints throughout the Old Testament that God encouraged all His people to behave like priests. The early chapters of Proverbs exhort the average Israelite to love God's Law, study it, talk about it to their neighbours and children... all of which was priestly behaviour. They were all to be priests, in essence. The language of the priesthood is applied in those chapters to the normal, Bible-loving

Israelite. For example, "the priests lips should keep knowledge" (Mal. 2:7); but the average Israelite was encouraged to study the Law for himself, "that thy lips may keep knowledge" (Prov. 5:2).

As part of the priesthood, our duty is to *all* teach or communicate the word of God to each other. It was God's intention that natural Israel should obey the spirit of this, so that they would "teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord" (Heb. 8:11). That was how God intended Israel of old to fulfil this idea of being a priestly nation.

8:13- see on Ps. 102:26.

9:7- see on Jn. 12:24.

9:14 The cross is attainable for us, as it was for Paul. Christ offered Himself on the cross "through the eternal spirit" (Heb. 9:14). I understand by this that it was the Spirit of God, understanding from His word what God really wanted, what He is really like and thereby demands of us, which led the Lord Jesus to the cross. And why the odd phrase "the eternal spirit"? Surely to show that this same Spirit operates today, and if we follow it, will lead us likewise to the same death of the cross. These things are challenging to the very core of our being, the very fabric of our self-understanding. We who cower in the dentist's chair, who fear and avoid pain, who would sooner die than have a surgery without anesthetic... are called to die with Jesus, the death of the cross. God was manifested in the flesh of Christ, but now Christ is living "in the Spirit", thus justifying God's righteousness (1 Tim. 3:16). He was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by (on account of) the Spirit", the Spirit-man within Him (1 Pet. 3:18). Thus Christ's sacrifice was acceptable by reason of his "eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14); his perfect spiritual character was what enabled his physical blood and death to win our salvation. His resurrection was due to his "spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4). We can only relate to Him now as a spiritual being. We can not now know Him after the flesh. Now his mortal flesh has been destroyed, He is "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 R.V.); He is called "the Spirit" in Revelation because the spiritual character He developed in his mortal life is now what He is.

The Greek word translated "conscience", *sun-eidesis*, means literally a co-perception. It implies that there are two types of perception within the believer- human perception, and spiritual self perception. The conscience that is cleansed in Christ, that is at peace, will be a conscience that keeps those two perceptions, of the real self and of the persona, in harmony. What we know and perceive humanly, is in harmony with we spiritually perceive. Our conscience, our co-perception, our real self, makes sense of the human perceptions and interprets them in a spiritual way. So, a young man sees an attractive girl. His human perception signals certain things to his brain- to lust, covet, etc. But his co-perception, his conscience, his real self, handles all that, and sees the girl's beauty for just simply what it is- beauty. Job before his 'conversion' paralleled his eye and his ear: "Mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it" (Job 13:1). He was so sure that what he heard was what he saw; he was sure that his perceptions were operating correctly. But later, he comes to see a difference between his eye and his ear. He says that he had only heard of God by the ear; but only now, he says, "mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). He had heard words, but, he realized, he'd not properly 'seen' or perceived. Finally, he had a properly functioning 'conscience', a co-perception. What he saw, was what he really heard.

Our conscience is not going to jump out of us and stand and judge us at the day of judgment. There is one thing that will judge us, the word of the Lord (Jn. 12:48), not how far we have lived according to our conscience. It's therefore unreliable (1 Cor. 4:4). And yet there is Bible teaching concerning the need to live in accordance with our 'conscience', and the joy which is possible for the believer who has a clear conscience (e.g. Acts 24:16; Rom. 14:18-22; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:21). This must mean, in the context, the conscience which God's word has developed in us- it cannot refer to 'conscience' in the sense of our natural, inbuilt sense of right and wrong; because according to the Bible, this is hopelessly flawed. The fact the "conscience" is "cleansed" by Christ's sacrifice (Heb. 9:14; 10:22) proves that the Biblical 'conscience' is not the natural sense of right and wrong within

our nature; for our nature can never be 'purged' or 'cleansed', the believer will always have those promptings within him to do wrong. The cleansed, purged conscience refers to the new man that is created within the believer at baptism. This new 'conscience' is not just a sense of guilt which is invoked on account of not living an obedient life; it is also a conscience which positively compels us *to do* something, not just threatens us with a pang of guilt if we commit a sin.

We have a conscience which in God's eyes is cleansed of sin, knowing that our sin has been overcome once and for all, and that we have access to this through baptism. Our hearts were purified by that faith (Acts 15:9); we were cleansed from the conscience of sins (Heb. 9:14); all things became pure to us (Tit. 1:15; Rom. 14:20). This is a good conscience, Biblically defined. When Paul said he had a pure conscience before God, they smote him for blasphemy (Acts 23:1,2); there is an association between a clear conscience and perfection (Heb. 9:9; 10:14). A clear conscience therefore means an awareness that in God's eyes, we have no sin. Thus Paul's conscience could tell him that he was living a life which was a response to his experience of God's grace / forgiveness (2 Cor. 1:12). The conscience works not only negatively; it insists that we *do* certain things. It may even be that the goads against which Paul was kicking before his conversion were not the pricks of bad conscience, but rather the *positive* directions from God that he *ought* to be giving his life to the service of His Son. Whilst we may still have twinges of guilt, and sins to confess, from God's viewpoint the slate is clean, and has been since our baptism. It is impossible to believe this without some kind of response. We are purged in our conscience so that we might serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

9:15 It must be remembered that the High Priest of the Old Covenant did not offer up the prayers of the people. Yahweh's ears were ever open to the cry of the individual Israelite, without an intercessor. Moses mediated the Old Covenant in the sense that he obtained it and relayed it to Israel; his mediation was a one-off act. This is the basis of the NT passages concerning the mediation of the New Covenant through Christ; He did this through His death and resurrection (Gal. 3:19,20; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Christ was the mediator of the new covenant so that the sins committed under the old covenant could be forgiven (Heb. 9:15); thus His mediation is not in the relaying of our words to God, but in the sealing of the new covenant through His own blood. The mediation between God and man by the Lord is paralleled with His giving Himself as a ransom on the cross (1 Tim. 2:5,6). This is the sense in which He is the mediator of the new covenant; He mediated it *once*, not in an ongoing sense.

Of course in real time there is a gap between the Lord's resurrection and our own. To God, this gap is unimportant, in some sense it doesn't even exist. And to the eye of faith at a believers' funeral too. This explains why Paul so often speaks of the resurrection as meaning the whole process of resurrection, judgment and glorification (e.g. Rom. 8:11), and why he speaks of the dead being resurrected incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:42-44,52), and writing as if they presently exist (e.g. Heb. 9:15 "are called" rather than 'were called'). Indeed, the NT speaks of the whole resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus as if it were one event- even though there was a gap between them (Acts 2:32,33; 5:30,31; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; 1 Pet. 3:21,22); and the Lord Himself speaks of how Messiah would suffer and enter into glory (Lk. 24:26), apparently skipping over the mechanics of the resurrection.

9:16 The death of the covenant victim was to act as a warning for what would happen to those who broke the covenant. Thus "The men who transgressed my covenant... I will make like the calf which they cut in two" (Jer. 34:18 RSV). In the account of a Babylonian covenant it was written: "This head is not just the head of the goat... it is the head of Mati'ilu... If Mati'ilu breaks the oath, then as the head of this goat is cut off... so shall the head of Mati'ilu be cut off". Thus the dead animal was seen as a representative of the person who entered the covenant. The death of our Lord, therefore, serves as a reminder to us of the end for sin. We either put sin to death, or we must be put to death for it. Gal. 3:15; Heb. 9:16 and other passages liken the blood of Christ to a covenant; and

yet the Greek word used means definitely the last will and testament of a dead man. His blood is therefore an imperative to us to do something; it is His will to us, which we must execute. Thus His death, His blood, which is also a symbol of His life, becomes the imperative to us for our lives and living in this world. Note how blood is a symbol of both life and also death (Gen. 37:26; Num. 35:19,33; Lev. 20:9). Both His death and His life form a covenant / testament / will for us to obey- in both baptism and then in living out the death and life in our daily experience. We cannot be passive to it.

9:19 Heb. 9:19 brings out the link between blood and law-giving; the people were sprinkled with blood as they heard the Law read to them. The new covenant in Christ's blood results in the laws of God being written on our hearts, in our consciences (Heb. 8:10). Then Heb. 10:14-16 goes on to say the placing of the laws on our hearts in this way is in fact a "witness" to how His blood sanctifies us. We can't be passive to His sacrifice; the conscience elicited by it, the writing on our hearts, is what propels us forward to live a sanctified life.

9:20 At the breaking of bread, it's as if Christ is sprinkling us with His blood, it's as if we are Israel assembled together, re-entering the covenant each time we break bread. No wonder we are asked to assemble ourselves together (as far as possible) to remember Christ (Mt. 26:28 = Heb. 9:20). We have elsewhere made the point that Hebrews is full of appropriate material for a breaking of bread exhortation, which we believe it to have originally been.

Far back in Mosaic ritual, the voice of command was associated with the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat; the blood of the lamb was a command to respond (Ex. 25:22). Heb. 9:20 RV speaks of "the blood of the covenant which God commanded"; the book of the law was sprinkled with that blood to show the connection between the blood and the book. To eat His flesh and blood (in evident anticipation of His coming sacrifice and the memorial meeting) was to eat *Him* and His words (Jn. 6:53,54,63). His words were all epitomized in His offered flesh and blood. In His death and sacrifice (which "the blood of Jesus" represent), we see His very essence: He Himself. On the stake He poured out His soul unto death (Is. 53:12), and yet in His life He poured out His soul too (Ps. 42:4). The cross was an epitome of who He really had been for those 33 years. To know Christ is to know His cross (Is. 53:11). See on Heb. 12:25.

9:23 It seems that Christ's sacrifice benefited the Angels. Heb. 9:23 is a key: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the Heavens should be purified" (with blood). The tabernacle and Most Holy were the "pattern showed to (Moses) in the mount" (Heb. 8:5) when he was given the details of the tabernacle (cp. Ex. 25:9; 1 Chron. 28:12 etc). These had to be purified by the sprinkling of blood; "but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these". The "blood of bulls and goats" could purify the tabernacle, but that was a replica of Heaven itself, as well as of the spiritual "heavenlies" of Christian believers. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands (the tabernacle- "the patterns of things in the Heavens" of v. 23), but into Heaven itself" (v. 24). Thus there is a parallelism between verses 23 and 24:

v. 23

v. 24

The patterns of things in

The holy places made with hands

the Heavens

the tabernacle

The Heavenly things themselves

Heaven itself. . . us

Is this talking about the "Angels that sinned"? See on Jude 6. Notice the stress of v. 24: Christ is "entered into Heaven itself". He did not only enter the spiritual Heavenlies on His resurrection, but "Heaven itself". Thus "Heaven itself" was cleansed by His blood. This interpretation would fit the

context of Hebrews, where one of the major themes is the superiority of Christ over the Angels. The fact that they were cleansed by Christ's sacrifice is surely another proof of this. The Angels knowing "good and evil" (Gen. 3:22) implies they had been on probation previously like us; thus they may have sinned like we do, and yet been forgiven through some system of reconciliation. Such a system would have been similar to the Law of Moses- the system would have depended on pointing forward to the sacrifice of Christ, as it is only through Him that sin can be overcome. Thus as Christ's death was "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament" (Heb. 9:15), so it was also for the redemption of the Angels' transgressions committed during their probations. Therefore the Angels were not actually 'in sin' at the time of Christ, because their sins were forgiven in the same way as those of people who lived before Christ. The "Angels that sinned" would have been those who "continued in sin" and were condemned, or who committed a particularly sinful act. In the same way, the unworthy in our dispensation are called "sinners" (Is. 65:20; 1 Peter 4:18), although in a sense we are all "sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 5:19).

The tabernacle, upon which the temple was based, was a pattern, or reflection, of things in Heaven itself (Heb. 9:23), i.e. "the temple which is in heaven" (Rev. 14:17). The structure and furniture of the tabernacle was an "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5); "the holy places made with hands... are the figures of the true... the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 9:24; 8:2). For this reason we read in Revelation about the Jewish feasts being kept in Heaven; of a heavenly incense altar, holy place, most holy place, incense etc., with the Angels acting as the priests. Thus Priests and Angels are both called 'Elohim'. There was a clear understanding by many Jews that the layout of the tabernacle on earth was a direct reflection of the physical organization in Heaven

9:24 It is stressed in Heb. 9:24; 8:2 that this Heavenly temple was made by God not by human hands. The Kingdom of Christ is symbolized as a stone cut without hands (Dan. 2:44). Likewise Abraham looked forward to the Kingdom in terms of a city "whose builder and maker is God"; and God, we are told, has prepared that city for Abraham and his seed (Heb. 11:10,16). The coming down of that city/temple from Heaven in Revelation 21:3 is the fulfilment of Abraham's hope. The city/temple from Heaven has foundations (Revelation 21:14), just as Abraham expected (Heb. 11:10).

The language of Romans 8 about His intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered is to be connected with Hebrews 5 speaking of the Lord groaning with strong crying and tears on the cross. The point being that the intensity of His prayer there, struggling for every breath, is the same essential intensity with which He mediates for us now. He died "for us", and yet right now He appears "before the face of God for us" (Heb. 9:24 RV). Thus there is a connection between His death and His ongoing mediation "for us". We must struggle with Him, framing and offering our words in the full realization of the agonizing effort He is willing to make to intercede.

Romans is full of legal language, of interceding, pleading, finding a favourable verdict etc., and refers this to the judgment and also to the cross. But Romans 8 uses these very ideas in relation to prayer, for in coming before the throne of grace now on account of the Lord's sacrifice, we come in essence before judgment. Coming before the throne of God in prayer (Heb. 9:24; Ps. 17:1,2) is the language of the judgment seat. If we become before His throne and are accepted, it follows that this is a foretaste of the outcome of the judgment for us, were we to be judged at that time. Our boldness before the Father in prayer will be the same attitude we have to Him at the judgment throne (1 Jn. 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14 all use the same Greek word).

Christ is in Heaven, "to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24), the Greek translated "appear" meaning to exhibit openly. We are openly exhibited to God by the Lord Jesus, he reveals our inner spirit, our essential desires, to the Father.

9:25 Heb. 9:24,25 speaks of the Lord's sacrifice as occurring in the Heavenly sanctuary, Heaven itself- as if the cross is an eternally repeated redemptive act.

9:26 On the cross, the Lord Jesus was 'manifested', shown as He really and essentially is (Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:19,20; 1 Jn. 3:5,8; 1 Tim. 3:16). But the same word is also used about the final manifesting of the Lord Jesus at His return (Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2). This explains the link between the cross and His return; who He was then will be who He will be when He comes in judgment. There He endured the spitting and hatred of men in order to save them. And the same gracious spirit will be extended to all His true people, whatever their inadequacies.

9:27 after this- see on Dt. 29:21.

9:28 If we understand something of the 'mechanics' of the atonement, and grasp something of the fact that they were outworked in a real, historical man, we will see that the final realization of the redemption achieved at the cross will be when Christ comes back. Having expounded the Lord's cross for several chapters, Paul concludes: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Here we see two fundamental first principles linked: If we understand something of the atonement, we will earnestly look for the second coming, when the redemption achieved on the cross will be brought unto us (cp. 1 Pet. 1:13). An enthusiasm for the second coming, spurred by a realization that the bringing of salvation then is an outworking of the cross, will lead to a loose hold on the things of this life.

Heb. 9:28 speaks of the faithful as waiting for Christ to "appear without sin unto salvation". This alludes to a humbled, repentant Israel on the Day of Atonement, having confessed their sins and afflicted their souls through fasting, waiting for their High Priest to appear and pronounce upon them the blessing of forgiveness. The Spirit is using this as a type of us expecting the second coming of our Lord; the motivation for our enthusiasm should be our earnest need of ultimate forgiveness and reconciliation with God. David likewise speaks of waiting and watching for the Lord in the context of asking for forgiveness (Ps. 130:5,6).

10:1 Heb. 10:18,26 states that Christ only made one sacrifice for sin, implying that the sins of those in Christ were atoned for at one moment in time. He will not make another sin offering each time we sin, and therefore we should not sin wilfully, because that assumes that he will once again sacrifice for sin. Thus we will be crucifying Christ afresh (Heb. 6:6). The sacrifice of Christ can make us perfect in God's sight, so that "once purged" we should have "no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10:1,2). This does not refer to "conscience" as the guilty streak within us. Our spiritual man ought to have no more guilt for our sins, which are now forgiven. But if we allow sin to be the governing principle in our lives, we can no longer be reckoned as sinless (Rom. 6:12; 1 Jn. 3:8).

10:5 Ps. 40:9,10 speaks of how the Lord Jesus would proclaim righteousness to the *ekklesia* and declare God's faithfulness and salvation, i.e. the things of His Name. Yet this passage is quoted in Heb. 10:5-7 about the cross. It was there above all that "thy law is within my heart" and He "preached righteousness". This is why Paul can talk of "the preaching [which is] the cross". He as He was there is the ultimate witness. And this was why the Yahweh Name was written up over Him- see on Jn. 19:13.

The Lord endured the cross which the word led Him to; and subsequently He 'prolonged his days' and saw His seed (Is. 53:10)- phrases taken straight out of Dt. 17:18-20, concerning how the King of Israel would read in the book of the law all the days of his life, "to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children (seed) in the midst of Israel". It was Christ's love of the word which made Him endure the cross and obtain that great salvation, both for Himself and for us. His crucifixion was likened to His ear (His hearing of the word) being nailed to an upright piece of wood (cp. the cross; Ex. 21:6 = Ps. 40:6-8 = Heb. 10:5-12).

10:7 Joseph readily responded to his father's desire that he go to his brethren: "Here am I" (37:13). Isaiah, another type of Christ, uttered similar words before his mission to Israel (Is. 6:8). Yet in both Joseph and Isaiah there must have been a sense of apprehension, sensing the persecution that would come. There was a point when Christ said to God: "Lo, I come..." (Heb. 10:5-7). This would indicate that in line with the typology of Joseph and Isaiah, there was a point when Christ received and responded to His Father's commission. This may have been some time in His teens; perhaps 17, as with Joseph? Or at 30 when he began His ministry and came "into the (Jewish) world"?

10:17 We need to meditate upon that lifeless body. "A covenant is of force over dead [victims or sacrifices]... it is never held to be of force while he who is the appointed [sacrifice] is alive" (Heb. 10:17 Bullinger). Over that body the personal covenant to each of us (Gen. 17:7) came into real, living operation.

The Lord Jesus made *one* sacrifice for all sins for all time, and therefore we don't need to offer any more sacrifices or use a human priesthood; we are already totally forgiven of all our sins. Sin was completely overcome by the Lord's victory; "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever (in their conscience) them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14 cp. 9:9). "Their sins and iniquities [there seems no hint that this only refers to pre-baptismal sins] will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). If we sin wilfully after knowing this, there is no more sacrifice for sins- because that sacrifice was only ever made once (Heb. 10:26). At our baptism, our conscience was cleansed of all sin. There is further evidence, apart from the reasoning of Hebrews, that all our sins, past and future, were forgiven at Calvary:

- On the cross, sin was ended, iniquity reconciled, everlasting righteousness brought in (Dan. 9:24). One sin offering was made for all time.

- We must forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake *hath* forgiven us (Eph. 4:32); not waiting for our brother to repent before we forgive him, but forgiving in advance, in prospect, even as we were forgiven. This takes this issue out of the realms of theology into the painfully practical.

- Our sins were / are forgiven by the blood of Christ- not by our repentance or words of prayer. "God's forgiveness is not just a wiping clean of the slate [from hour to hour]...if it were, prayer would be immoral- a mere incantation to bring about a magical result: and we need to be continually wary of the pagan conception which would reduce it to such a level". These words are so true. Whenever a twinge of guilt arises, we rush off a quick prayer for forgiveness- and then, at the end of the day or the week, we are left with a doubt as to whether our spirituality is valid or not. If this is our experience, we are all too similar to Israel of old; offering the sin offering (cp. praying for forgiveness), feeling guilty, coming to the day of Atonement (cp. the breaking of bread), still feeling guilty, realizing that as the sin offering couldn't cleanse sin, neither could the sacrifice at that feast, offering more sin offerings... It can become the ritual of a bad conscience, stumbling on because there seems no other way to go. But our sins (yes, yours, that snap at your wife, that curse as you spilt your coffee) really were forgiven through the Lord's work on the cross; we really do have access to this through *really believing it*- and therefore expressing our faith in baptism. Our prayerful response to failure should be to confess it (1 Jn. 1:9), and also profess our faith in the redemption already achieved for us.

All our sins were forgiven when the Lord died for us; both past and future. By baptism we identify ourselves with this work, and we are thereby in a position where we have "no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10:2,22), knowing that all is forgiven, and only if we fall from grace will this become untrue. Thus YLT speaks of "*the* conscience" in the NT, as if it is something specific which we have, rather than an occasional twinge of guilt. We have this Biblical conscience "toward God"; this is how He sees us (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Pet. 2:19; 3:21). Thus we may have a guilty feeling about something, we may doubt our salvation, but our conscience in God's eyes is pure; we are still cleansed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we have a clear conscience, God will punish those who persecute us (1 Pet. 3:16 RSV). 1 Pet. 3:21 teaches that baptism saves us not because in itself it means that we are free from the deeds of the flesh ("putting away the filth of the flesh" uses words

which elsewhere carry this connotation), but because it gives us a good conscience in God's eyes-according to the Biblical definition of conscience.

10:19 In the light of ten chapters of detailed exposition of the meaning of the blood of Christ, *therefore let us...*, the writer triumphantly drives home (Heb. 10:19-25). And he speaks of how we must transform our lives:

- Let us enter boldly "into the holiest by the blood of Jesus". This is only possible through a deep knowledge of sin forgiven. Our prayer life should be a positive and upbuilding experience: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience". Reflection on the atonement, believing it all, will result in a positive and unashamed faith.

- "Let us hold fast... without wavering". If the belief of the cross is imprinted upon our minds, reflected upon not for a few fleeting minutes on Sundays but often throughout each day, we won't waver. The natural tendency to blow hot and cold in our spiritual endeavours will be vanquished beneath an unceasing wonder at what was achieved. It is only sustained reflection upon the cross which can, in an almost mystical way, impart an unceasing verve of inspiration.

- "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching". Again the doctrine of the atonement and that of the second coming are linked. As we realize more and more clearly that very soon the final outworking of the cross will be achieved in the actual physical granting of redemption to us, so we will be inspired to more and more earnestly seek the welfare of our brethren. If we believe in the atonement, we will naturally seek to break bread. Whether it means summoning the courage to meet with those we naturally would rather not meet with, bringing the wine to the meeting, we will be motivated to rise up and serve in these ways by the eternal and personal truth of the cross.

As the blood of the ram had to be put on the ear, thumb and toe (Lev. 8:23), so the blood of Christ's atonement should transform and affect every aspect of our lives; our hearing [i.e. our perception], our doing and walking...

The smell of the incense passed through the veil, and into the Most Holy Place, where the presence of God Himself was symbolized as being over the blood-stained cover of the ark. The simple wonder of it all is that the words of our prayers really can penetrate to Heaven itself. And in Christ, the veil itself has been done away, and we can with boldness enter into that Most Holy Place and personally have direct fellowship with God (Heb. 9:7-13; 10:19). Our heart can touch the heart of God. It's a priceless wonder to know and experience this.

Under the Law, the provision for Nazariteship encouraged the average Israelite to enter into the spirit of the High Priest by imposing some of the regulations governing his behaviour upon them. *All* Israel were bidden make fringes of blue, in conscious imitation of the High Priest to whose spirit they all were intended to attain (Num. 15:38). But we are bidden now "come boldly unto the throne of grace (cp. the mercy seat in the Most Holy)... boldness to enter into the holiest" (Heb. 4:16; 10:19): to do what only the High Priest could do under the Old Covenant. This must have been a huge challenge for the Jewish believers to rise up to. The context of Heb. 10 encourages us to enter the Holiest and "consider one another". The High Priest entered the Holiest in order to make atonement for Israel, not just to bask in the fact he was allowed in there. And so with us. The marvellous fellowship with the Father which we are permitted in Christ, the entry into the Holiest, is not just for the sake of it; it is so we can do something for others. I am not suggesting, of course, that in any way we replace the one and only High Priest, the Lord Jesus. But because we are *in Him* we therefore in some ways share His honours and His work. The idea of eating the bread of the sacrifices would likewise have appeared strange in a first century context: it was as if the whole brotherhood (and sisterhood) were being invited to see themselves as priests. But in His last message, the Lord went further: He promised that those who overcome will eat of the hidden

man, concealed in the Most Holy: as if to say that we will ultimately rise up to and exceed the glory of the High Priests who saw that bread once a year. See on Jn. 10:9.

10:20 Dt. 32:36: "For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their hand is gone, and there is none shut up, or left". The hand that was with Israel was their Angel- after the Angel physically left Israel, resulting in their punishment, the very pity of their state caused the Angel to repent, and return to them. He "shall judge his people". This is quoted in Heb. 10:20 concerning the judgement seat- where we know the Angels will play an important part.

The Lord Jesus inaugurated the "new and living way" for us *dia*, on account of, "his flesh" (Heb. 10:20). It was exactly because of "the flesh" of the Lord's humanity that He opened up a new way of life for us. Because He was so credibly and genuinely human, and yet perfect, the way of His life becomes compellingly the way we are to take. Once we grasp this, we can better understand the anathema which John calls down upon those who deny that Jesus was "in the flesh" (2 Jn. 7-9).

We are cleansed by an ever 'freshly slain' sacrifice (Heb. 10:20 Gk.). The cross is ongoing.

On one level, the atonement can be logically explained. On another, it cannot be. The veil, an eloquent symbol of the flesh of Jesus, was made of mixed fibres, something which was otherwise forbidden under the Law. This perhaps reflected how the Lord's nature and the atonement God wrought through Him was and is in some ways contradictory, to human eyes.

Through His death, the veil was torn open, so that we might enter into the Holiest "by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us... through the veil, that is to say [the sacrificing of] his flesh" (Heb. 10:19-22 Gk.). This assumes that the followers of Jesus are already in the position of the High Priest standing in the Holy Place, but through what He opened through the cross, each of us must now go through into the Most Holy. And what was the purpose of the High Priest's entry? To obtain forgiveness *for others*, to *mediate for them*, just as Jesus did on the cross. His cross compels us to not merely passively contemplate our own salvation, but to go deeper into the very presence of God in our ministry *for others*. Yet the High Priest had to cleanse himself meticulously; access had been limited to the Most Holy as a result of inadequate preparation by some in the past (Lev. 16:1,2). The Lord's death opened up the veil, for us to pass through with the utmost effort made by us in personal sanctification, in order to further God's glory in the salvation of others. We cannot simply refuse to enter, turn away from the torn veil. To do so is to turn away from what the cross has achieved, and to place ourselves outside its scope. We must go forward, go onwards into the presence of God to replicate in essence the Saviour's work, with the awed and humble spirit of the High Priest entering the Holiest on the day of atonement. He would surely have carefully analyzed his motives, as to *why* he was passing through that veil, and whether he was sufficiently personally sanctified for the work he was doing. He would have been comforted by knowing that his motives were solely for the glorification of his God in the redemption for his people which he was seeking to obtain.

10:22 There is a clear NT theme: that the believer always has a good conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 1:5,19; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14; 10:22; 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16); this clear conscience is a gift from the time of baptism (Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:21; Heb. 9:14 cp. 6:1; Rom. 6:17). If a believer loses that good conscience, he has fallen from grace. Those who leave the faith have a conscience which is wounded (1 Cor. 8:12), defiled (1 Cor. 8:7; Tit. 1:15), seared (1 Tim. 4:2). It's hard to find a consistent Biblical definition of conscience. "Conscience" in the Biblical sense often refers to how God sees our conscience, rather than how we feel it. Therefore only rarely does the Spirit speak as if "conscience" is something which is good one moment, and bad the next; it is something which we have on a permanent basis. Thus to say "I watched TV last night with a good conscience, but I had a bad conscience that I didn't give out any tracts today" isn't really using "conscience" in its Biblical sense. Paul repeatedly emphasizes that he has *always* had a good

conscience (presumably, from the time of his baptism, when he stopped kicking against the goads, Acts 9:5).

The good conscience is Biblically defined in Hebrews 9, 10. Here the writer is basing his argument on how those under the Old Covenant still had a guilty conscience after their sacrifices, because the blood of animals could not take away sin; the yearly Day of Atonement required them to confess their sins once again. Their conscience was not made perfect (Heb. 9:9). In his overpowering way, the writer drives his logic home: not only is our conscience cleansed by the one sacrifice of Christ, but we are in a more exalted position than the OT worshippers; we are in the very position of the High Priest who on that Day of Atonement entered the Most Holy; *we* can enter the Holiest with *boldness* (cp. the nervousness of the Priest) because our consciences are cleansed with Christ's blood. And because of this, "let us draw near" (Heb. 10:22), the language the LXX uses about the priestly serving of God; now *we* can do the priestly work, because our consciences are cleansed. We are not like the OT believers, who had a bad conscience because of their sins and needed to offer an annual sacrifice for them, as a result of their conscience. We, by contrast, have no more conscience of sins. According to this Biblical definition of conscience, the conscience is cleansed, and we partake of that cleansing by baptism. At and in that sacrament, we make a pledge to keep that good conscience (1 Pet. 3:21 NIV); perhaps we need to point this out more to baptism candidates. We are once and for all forgiven. Our emphasis must be on confession of failure, not feeling guilty and rushing off a quick prayer, as if this will get us forgiveness. We have been cleansed and covered, we are in the new covenant of grace. Only by breaking out of this can we lose the gracious position in which we stand: we have a conscience which is free of guilt, if we truly believe in the power of the cross and our relationship to it through baptism.

10:23 We continue professing / confessing our hope "that it waver not" (Heb. 10:23 RV). It doesn't waver for us, exactly because we preach it.

10:24- see on Acts 15:39.

Our preaching to others isn't a cold-hearted witness, or a theological debate; it is a *seeking* of glory to the Father; we exhort one another, *considering* how we may provoke to love (Heb. 10:24). But let me ask: do you *consider* how you might encourage your brethren, or those in the world around you; what words to say, what to do or not to do...?

In the cross, we see self-humbling that we might be exalted. And we respond by likewise humbling ourselves, that others may be exalted. In practice this means guiding our words and example so that others are exalted, not speaking of our own achievements, *considering each other* as to how we may provoke them to righteousness (Heb. 10:24; earlier in 3:1 the writer speaks of *considering* the Lord Jesus, and this leads on to considering each other).

10:25 Gathered around the slain lamb, the memorial of their salvation, in their various homes, the command was clear: "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" (Ex. 12:22). This is surely an eloquent picture of the ecclesia of the last days, highlighting the urgent need to remain within the ecclesia, and to centre our fellowship around our Passover Lamb. The importance of physically meeting together in the last days, particularly to share the emblems of our Lord's death, is stressed in Heb. 10:25.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another... the more, as ye see the day approaching" - both of AD70 and the second coming. A laid back attitude to attending meetings designed for spiritual upbuilding was a problem then- and why is it that such events seem to have a decreasing attraction today? The immediate context of Heb.10:25 in the first century would be of the believers being ashamed to publicly associate themselves with their persecuted brethren for fear of reprisals. Paul went through the same, just a few months before AD70 (2 Tim. 4:16). Will this also be the position in the very last days?

Not assembling ourselves together is of course not a good thing. If we love our brethren, we will seek to be physically with them. There can be no doubt that we must struggle with our natural selfishness, our desire to go it alone. But is this actually what Heb. 10:25 is talking about? A glance at the context shows that forsaking the assembly is paralleled with the wilful sin which shall exclude us from God's salvation:

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith	Without wavering [going back to Judaism, according to the context in Hebrews]
Let us consider one another to provoke unto love	Not forsaking the assembly-of-ourselves
Exhorting one another	Unlike the "some" who, according to how Hebrews uses that Greek word, have turned away from Christianity
Wilful sin, with no more access to the Lord's sacrifice	
Certain condemnation- "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation"	
Despising the Law	
Treading under foot the Son of God and reviling the blood of the covenant- what had to be done by Christians who 'repented' of their conversion and returned to the synagogue, the sort of blasphemy that Saul was making Christian converts commit.	

Now are those awful things in the right hand column above really a description of someone who fervently believes in the Lord Jesus, but for whatever reason, doesn't 'make it out to meeting' on Sundays? Those terms seem to speak about a wilful rejection of the Lord Jesus. And this of course is the very background against which Hebrews was written. It was a letter to Hebrew Christians who were beginning to bow to Jewish pressure and renounce their faith in Christ, and return to Judaism. "The assembling of ourselves together" can actually be read as a noun- not a verb. Those who 'forsook' 'the assembly together of us' would then refer to those who totally rejected Christianity. The same word "forsaking" occurs in 2 Pet. 2:15, also in a Jewish context, about those who "forsake the right way". So I suggest that forsaking the assembly refers more to turning away from Christ and returning to apostasy, than to simply not turning up at church as often as we might. The writer laments that "some" were indeed forsaking the assembly (Heb. 10:25). But that Greek word translated "some" recurs in Hebrews to describe those "some" who had forsaken the ecclesia and turned back to Judaism: "Take heed... lest there be in *some* [AV "any"] of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (and returning to Judaism- Heb. 3:12)... lest *some* [AV "any"] of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13)... for *some*, when they had heard, did provoke [referring to the earlier Hebrews in the wilderness who turned away from the hope of the Kingdom- Heb. 3:16]... *some* of you should seem to fail [like the condemned Hebrews in the wilderness- Heb. 4:1]... lest *some* fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11). In fact, right after the reference to the "some" who forsake the assembly, Heb. 10:28 speaks of "*some* [AV "he"- but the same Greek word in all these places for "some"] that despised Moses' law". Clearly, those Hebrews in the wilderness who turned away from the spirit of Christ in Moses and

the hope of the Kingdom, are being held up as warnings to that same "some" in the first century Hebrew ecclesia who were turning back from the Hope of the Kingdom. Now let me get it right. I'm not in any way saying that we needn't bother about our ecclesial attendance. Far from it! But I also feel it's not right to insist that if someone doesn't attend an ecclesia, for whatever reason, they are therefore guilty of the wilful sin and certain fiery condemnation of which Hebrews 10 speaks for those who forsake the assembly. In fact, the passage has almost been abused like that- as if to say: 'If you don't turn up on Sunday, if you quit meeting with us, then, you've quit on God and His Son'. This simply isn't the case.

10:26 "The knowledge of the truth" in Heb. 10:26 refers in the context to the knowledge of forgiveness and salvation; it's parallel to the "knowledge of salvation" (Lk. 1:77). The "truth" is the ultimate, surpassing reality- that we are saved, by grace, and can look forward to that great salvation being revealed at the last day. As an aside, it seems to me that for all our dysfunction, there's a desire in us to repent, to know the truth and let the truth come out. Psychologically, it's reflected in the way that we all have of telling clumsy lies at times, wanting to be found out as it were... because there's something in us which wants to be truthful, needs to come to confession and repentance. It's why the Catholic church's idea of voluntary sessions of confession is actually popular.

10:29- see on Mk. 15:15; Heb. 12:17.

As "the cross" means more than the impalement which epitomized it, likewise "the blood of Christ" means far more than the red liquid. These concepts found their physical epitome in the crucifixion process, but there is so much more to these things than the physical. The blood of the covenant, the Son of God and the Spirit of grace are bracketed together in Heb. 10:29. The Lord *was* His blood. The pouring out of blood from His side, the trickles down His cheeks from the crown of thorns, quickly drying in the hot dust beneath... this was *Him*. We take the wine in memory of *Him*; not just His blood. And He *is* the Spirit of God's grace. By Himself He purged our sins (Heb. 1:3); and yet this purging was through His blood (Heb. 9:14). He was His blood; His cross was the essence of all He was.

10:30 David asks God to judge him *now* (Ps. 26:1; 35:24; 43:1; 54:1). He wasn't *so* afraid of the future judgment; He knew that it will only be the pronouncement of how we have now lived. He had a good conscience, and so He asked God to show how He felt about him right now. "The Lord shall judge the people [at the last day; this is quoted in this connection in Heb. 10:30]: judge me [i.e. now], O Lord, according to my righteousness" (Ps. 7:8).

10:31 "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31) may well refer to this Angelic punishment, as the hands of God is Angelic language, and "the living God" may well carry the idea in Hebrew of 'God of the living ones', i. e. the Angel-cherubim.

What is written about the toughness of God's condemnation may seem awful. But actually, the condemnation and judgment of God is far softer than that of man. It was men who created the concept of eternal torment, not God. It was men who created Auschwitz and similar perversions of 'judgment'. It is truly written in the context of God's final condemnation that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). But David said that he would prefer to fall into the hands of God rather than into the hands of man (2 Sam. 24:14). To fall into the hands of God is thus a figure for judgment / condemnation by Him. Fearful as it is, as the Hebrew writer says, it is actually far milder than the judgment of men. This is how cruel our judgment of others can be; this is how awful is human condemnation of each other. It is worse that God's. No wonder that the Lord established "Judge not..." as a foundation principle for His true people.

10:32 "Call to remembrance the [persecutions of the] former days..." because these were to recur in the period around AD70. The subsequent list of the faithful in Heb.11 focuses on those who were persecuted for their faith but endured- to prepare the readers for the last days of tribulation. This

recalls the oft repeated theme of Peter's letters: "Stir up your minds... remember" (e.g. 2 Pet.1:12-15; 3:11).

10:34- see on Mt. 5:7; Heb. 4:15.

The early Christians "joyfully accepted the plundering of [their] property" by the state (Heb. 10:34). There was a *joy* felt amongst them because of their loss. This is a totally counter-instinctive feeling- to be *joyful* because you lost or gave away 'possessions'. The Philippians likewise gave out of a deep *joy* at giving away; the abundance of their joy resulted in their liberality (2 Cor. 8:2). And let's not think that the early church were necessarily all dirt poor. The Christians of Heb. 10:34 had property which was plundered- and still they gave support to the poor saints in Palestine (Heb. 6:20).

The more we grasp that it really is God's will that we will be there, the more strength we will have to resist seeking for material things in this life. By being sure that we will be there, the Kingdom becomes our treasure, where our heart is, rather than any material treasure in this life (Lk. 9:34). The RV of Heb. 10:34,35 brings out well the same theme: "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your *possessions*, knowing that ye have your own selves for a better *possession*" (RVmg). Who we ourselves will be turned into is our better possession, "a better possession and an abiding one" (RV). And this compensates for the loss of material *possessions* in this life. Therefore the writer urges them to not cast away their confidence in the receipt of this reward at the Lord's return (:35). The more humbly confident we are in receiving the Kingdom, the less the loss of possessions now will mean to us. Hebrews also associates the hope of the Kingdom with the characteristic of patience in the small things of this life. Hence Job, when he lost his hope, could exclaim: "What is mine end, that I should be patient?" (Job 6:11 RV).

10:34-36 "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your *possessions*, knowing that ye have your own selves for a better *possession*" (RVmg). Who we ourselves will be turned into is our better possession, "a better possession and an abiding one" (RV). And this compensates for the loss of material *possessions* in this life. Therefore the writer urges them to not cast away their confidence in the receipt of this reward at the Lord's return (:35). The more humbly confident we are in receiving the Kingdom, the less the loss of possessions now will mean to us. But notice that prayer for the coming of the Kingdom is parallel with praying that God's will may be done. The Kingdom of God is not only a future issue. The principles of the Kingdom will be worked out in our lives, they will 'come' into our own daily experience, in so far as we seek to do the Father's will. God's will ultimately will be done anyway- but surely the Lord wished us to pray that in *our* lives, that will would be done, that we will be ready servants of all the Kingdom principles which the Lord taught in His parables of the Kingdom. Every other reference to the will of God being done in the NT refers to the obedient life of the believer right now (Mt. 26:42; Acts 21:14; Eph.5:17).

10:35 We must not cast away our confidence, which has great recompense of reward- and the writer uses these words about Moses, bidding us follow his example (Heb. 10:35; 11:26).

10:37- see on Eph. 3:8.

Heb. 11:1,2 defines faith as the ability to believe that the world was created by the word of God (through the Angels) so that the things which we now see were not created out of matter which previously existed. One of the most fundamental laws of science and of the human understanding of the world is that matter cannot be created or destroyed. Yet Hebrews 11 shows us that faith flatly contradicts this- God (through His Angels) did create matter. And so in every aspect of life the same challenge comes to us, that God through the Angels is greater than the natural 'laws' which we can imagine control ultimate reality.

10:39- see on Mt. 27:5.

11:4 Heb. 11:4 speaks of God bearing witness, giving a verbal testimony, to Abel's sacrifice, and that through that witness Abel is as it were still speaking to us, in that to this day God is still speaking / testifying to that acceptable act of service performed by Abel. Abel, through the account of him in Scripture, "is yet spoken of" (Heb. 11:4 AVmg.). Isaiah was prophesying directly to the hypocrites of the first century, according to the Lord in Mk. 7:6 RV. God says that He 'watches over my word to perform it' (Jer. 1:12 RV). Thus God didn't just write the Bible as we write words, and forget it. He remains actively aware of all His words and consciously fulfils them. This is another window into the way in which the word of God can be described as a living word. There is an active quality to the words we read on the India paper of our Bibles.

Who we are is in reality our judgment. After death, our works "follow us" to judgment (Rev. 14:13). According to Jewish thought, men's actions followed them as witnesses before the court of God, and this is the idea being picked up here. There is a great emphasis in Hebrews 11 on the way that each man has a "witness", "testimony" or "report" as a result of his life (Heb. 11:4,5,14,39). Because of this the dead are still spoken for, in that God keeps and knows that testimony, and it speaks for them (Heb. 11:4 AV mg.).

11:6 When we read that Enoch "had witness borne to him that he had been well pleasing unto God" (Heb. 11:6 RV), this is courtroom language. Could it not be that his representative / guardian Angel in the court of Heaven had made this testimony to God Almighty?

There are a few NT references to the Yahweh Name. One of them is in Heb. 11:6: he who comes to God must first [most importantly] believe that *He is* [a reference to He who is who He is, and will be who He will be], and that therefore, as an intrinsic part of who He is, *He is* a rewarder of His people. Surely the point is that it's not just knowing the Name theoretically, it is to believe it- that He who is, really *is* in our lives. Who God *is*, i.e. His Name, is an imperative to be like Him. If we are His sons and daughters, who He is becomes quite naturally the law of our being. Thus we should love our enemies, because God makes *His* sun [cp. 'our' goodness] to rise on both His friends and enemies. As we reflect on the massive power that every moment works to move the sun and earth around each other, so every moment we have an imperative to love. This is why belief in God cannot be merely an intellectual act occurring within certain brain cells. Belief means action in some way. Belief *and* the act of baptism are necessary for salvation; but some NT passages speak as if faith alone saves. This is reconciled by understanding that faith, true faith, includes works. James reasons that there is no distinction between true faith and works. They are part of the same nexus. Thus when we read in the NT of belief in Christ, the normal construction with a dative case was dropped and instead a preposition is used with the verb- belief *into* Christ is the idea, with implied reference to baptism *into* Him and an active life *in Him* as a result of our belief. To be brethren in Christ is not to just believe Christ or God, but to believe *into* them in practice. R.T. Lovelock comments: "The NT writers felt the importance of this utter trust in God so strongly, that they originated a new construction in their language to emphasise the concept and force it upon the attention of their readers".

11:7 Heb. 11:1,7 stresses how much Noah really believed God's prophecy about the nature of the flood; he was "moved with fear" by these predictions. The physical world around us is going to be changed beyond recognition; this ought to make it easier for us to come to terms with the fact that *all* aspects of *our* surrounding world will likewise pass away.

Noah's response was to prepare "an ark to the saving of his house... and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7). We know that the ark represents Christ. Noah's response was not to smugly reflect how that soon he would be vindicated for his separation from the world, i.e. for his own personal righteousness. Instead he took seriously God's warning that sinners were to soon be destroyed. Noah was, of course, a sinner as we all are. He therefore must have cried out to God in faith, asking for God to count him as if he were righteous, so that he would be saved from the coming judgments against sin. This is how he had righteousness imputed to him. He

showed his faith that God really had justified him by doing something physical- his faith led to the 'works' of building the ark; as our faith likewise leads us to baptism into Christ.

Noah's very example was a condemnation of his world (Heb. 11:7); the very existence of believing Gentiles judges the Jews as condemned (Rom. 2:27); and the very existence of the repentant Ninevites condemned first century Israel (Mt. 12:41). The faithful preaching of the Corinthians would judge an unbeliever (1 Cor. 14:24). Noah's very act of righteousness in building the ark condemned / judged those who saw it and didn't respond (Heb. 11:7). The fact the Pharisees' children cast out demons condemned the Pharisees (Mt. 12:27). This is why the rejected will be shamed before the accepted; they will bow in shame at their feet (Rev. 3:9; 16:15). Perhaps it is in this sense that "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3)- rejected ecclesial elders, cp. the angels of the churches in Rev. 2,3? The point is, men's behaviour and conduct judges others because of the contrast it throws upon them. And this was supremely true of the Lord. No wonder in the naked shame and glory of the cross lay the supreme "judgment of this world"

11:8 The comment "So Abram departed [Heb. 'went'- s.w. Gen. 11:31; 12:1], as the Lord had spoken unto him" (Gen. 12:4) is surely the beginning of the wonderful theme of righteousness being imputed to Abraham- for Abraham didn't leave and go to Canaan immediately! Heb. 11:8 records things from a positive perspective too, as if there was instant obedience from Abraham: "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went". Truly, the Biblical record imputes righteousness to Abraham, and thus sets a pattern for all of us, the equally faltering and stumbling children of Abraham.

Heb. 11:8 (Gk.) implies that *as soon as* God called Abram, he got up and left Ur. But a closer examination of the record indicates that this wasn't absolutely the case. It is stressed that both Abram and Sarai left Ur because "Terah *took* Abram his son... and Sarai his daughter in law" (Gen. 11:31). Abram had been called to leave Ur and go into Canaan. But instead he followed his father to Haran, and lived there (for some years, it seems) until his father died, and then he responded to his earlier call to journey towards Canaan. The Genesis record certainly reads as if Abram was dominated by his father and family, and this militated against an immediate response to the call he received to leave Ur and journey to Canaan. At best his father's decision enabled him to obey the command to leave Ur without having to break with his family. And yet, according to Heb. 11:8, Abram immediately responded, as an act of faith. But it was a moment of faith.

For some unrevealed reason, perhaps the invasion of the area by hostile tribes, the workings of providence made Terah take the decision to leave Ur. Because 'Canaan' would have been relatively unheard of (Abram "went out, not knowing whither he went", Heb. 11:8) and uncivilized compared to Ur, it is possible to speculate that Abram had told Terah about the promise he had received. Terah then may have decided that such a promise ought to involve *him* as Abram's father, and decided to go with Abram. Terah must have had a very high level of motivation to leave cosmopolitan Ur for uncivilized Canaan. "Terah *took* Abram" certainly implies that some unrecorded circumstances took the decision out of Abram's hands; he had to leave his own country, because his father had ordered a mass emigration of the family. How hard it must have been for Abram to make sense of all this! He had been told to leave his family and country, and travel to a land God would show him. At that point in time, he was unaware that that country would be Canaan. How God would lead him was unexplained. But he believed God, and "when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). Therefore when his father announced that they were emigrating to Canaan, Abram would have realized that this was the call from God to get up and leave. Unlike the rest of Terah's unrecorded family, who would have mocked such a crazy plan, Abram willingly submitted. But how was he to leave his kindred and father's house? For they were coming with him! Indeed, Terah "took Abram" . Thus Abram had faith in God's promise, yet may have balked at the command to leave his country and family. Providentially arranged circumstances

then resulted in his aging father taking him, implying some degree of compulsion, and leading him out of his native country. Whilst not fully understanding how he could leave his father's household whilst they looked set to be accompanying him on this journey to a strange land, he went ahead in faith. It is emphasized that *God* "brought out" (s.w. to lead, pluck or pull out) Abram from Ur (Neh.9:7; Gen.15:6,7). The calling came through Abram's hearing of the word of promise, and providentially arranged circumstances encouraging his faithful response to it.

11:11 This personal nature of the promises resulted in a mutuality between God and the patriarchs, as it can between Him and all Abraham's seed. God's present judgment of us is actually related to how we 'judge' God to be. There's a mutuality between God and man in this business of present judgment. This theme is played on throughout Hebrews 11. Sarah "judged" God as faithful, and He 'judged' her as faithful (Heb. 11:11). As Abraham "was offering up Isaac" (RV), with the knife raised, he was "accounting" God to be capable of performing a resurrection, just as Moses quit the riches of Egypt, "accounting the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:17,19,26 RV). And yet God 'accounts' us to be faithful, imputing righteousness to us. Through these acts and attitudes of faith, "these... had witness borne to them through their faith" (Heb. 11:39 RV). It was as if their lives were lived in the courtroom, with their actions a constant presentation of evidence to the judge of all the earth. Our judgment of God to be faithful thus becomes His judgment of us to be faithful.

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"Through faith even Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed" (Heb. 11:11 RV). "Even Sarah herself" is clearly making a point, holding up a flashing light over this particular example. There is every reason to think, from the Genesis record, that Sarah not only lacked faith in the promises, but also had a bitter, unspiritual mind. The account alludes back to Eve's beguiling of Adam when it records how "Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai" (Gen. 16:2) in acquiescing to her plan to give her a seed through Abram marrying his slave girl. The whole thing between Sarah and Abraham seems wrong on at least two counts: firstly it reflects a lack of faith in the promise; and secondly it flouts God's ideal standards of marriage. Sarai seems to have recognized the error when she bitterly comments to Abram: "My wrong be upon thee" (16:5). Her comment that "the Lord hath restrained me from bearing" (16:2) would suggest that she thought she hadn't been chosen to bear the promised seed. Yet because of her faith, says Heb. 11:11, she received strength to bear that seed. Hagar was so persecuted by Sarah that she "fled from her face" (16:6). God's attitude to Hagar seems to reflect a certain amount of sympathy for the harsh way in which Sarah had dealt with her. These years of bitterness and lack of faith came to the surface when Sarah overheard the Angel assuring Abraham that Sarah really would have a son. She mockingly laughed at the promise, deep within herself (18:15). Yet according to Heb. 11:11, she rallied her faith and believed. But as soon as Isaac was born, her bitterness flew to the surface again when she was Ishmael mocking. In what can only be described as unrestrained anger, she ordered Hagar and Ishmael out into the scorching desert, to a certain death (humanly speaking). Again, one can sense the sympathy of God for Hagar at this time. And so wedged in between incidents which belied a deep bitterness, lack of faith and pride (after Isaac was born), the Spirit in Heb. 11:11 discerns her faith; on account of

which, Heb. 11:12 implies ("therefore"), the whole purpose of God in Christ could go forward. See on Gal. 4:30.

11:11,12 Because of Sarah's faith, "therefore sprang there...so many as the stars of the sky in multitude" (Heb. 11:11,12). Those promises to Abraham had their fulfilment, but conditional on Abraham and Sarah's faith. Gen. 18:18-20 says that the fulfilment of the promises was conditional on Abraham teaching his children / seed the ways of God. Those promises / prophecies were "sure" in the sense that God's side of it was. Rom. 4:18 likewise comments that Abraham became "the father of many nations" precisely because he *believed* in this hope. Yet the promise / prophecy that he would be a father of many nations could sound as if it would have happened anyway, whatever. But it was actually conditional upon Abraham's faith. And he is our great example exactly because he had the possibility and option of *not* believing in the hope he had been offered.

11:12 According to Heb. 11:12, God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled on account of his faith; God in some way allowed Himself to be potentially limited by Abraham's faith. Indeed, the promised world-wide blessing of all nations was promised only "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:16,18). In this sense the covenants of salvation were partly due to another man [Abraham] being faithful [although above all our salvation was due to the Lord Jesus]. In this sense he is the "father" of the faithful.

11:13 Heb. 11:13 teaches that all the faithful went through the same process: persuaded - embraced - confessed to the world around them. Confessing was part of the natural response to belief of the promises. Hearing God's word in faith is associated with declaring it (Jer. 9:12).

When we read that the faithful 'saw' the promises although they didn't receive them, we are surely meant to understand that they 'saw' the *fulfilment* of the promises (Heb. 11:13). 'The promises' are so sure of fulfilment that the phrase is put by metonymy for 'the fulfilment of the promises'. And because of their utter certainty, we are to be strangers and pilgrims, and unworldly (Heb. 11:13,14). There is therefore an obvious link between doctrine and practice. A doctrine believed leads to us coming out of this tangled world. Likewise 1 Jn. 5:5 teaches that we overcome the world by believing an idea- that Jesus is the Son of God [as promised to Abraham and David].

11:13-16 Heb. 11:13-16 contains some radical demands in a first century context- to see the *true* city, when Rome was *the* city to be identified with; to be a non-citizen of any earthly state... how hard would that have been for Roman citizens to read, hear, and say 'Amen' to!

11:15 Abraham was called to leave Ur and travel to Canaan, the land promised to him. If his heart had remained in his native land, God would have worked in his life to make it possible for him to return to it, and thereby reject God's covenant with him. The fact Abraham wasn't given this opportunity indicates his faith (Heb. 11:15). This shows that God gives us the opportunity to renounce our faith if that is what we want in our hearts (cp. Balaam).

11:16 *not ashamed*- "One shall say, I am Yahweh's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Yahweh, and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Is. 44:5). The Name of Jacob / Israel is paralleled with Yahweh. Remember how Jacob in his doubt promised God: "If God will be with me... then shall Yahweh be my God" (Gen. 28:20,21); and at the end, Yahweh was Jacob's God. God seems to recognize this by describing Himself as the God of Jacob / Israel so very often. His joy, His sheer delight at Jacob's spiritual achievement is recorded throughout the Bible. The way God describes Himself as "the God of Israel" (201 times) or "the God of Jacob" (25 times) infinitely more times than anyone else's God is proof enough that God saw His relationship with Jacob as very special. "God of Abraham" occurs 17 times; "God of Isaac" 8 times; "God of David" 4 times. Remember that whenever we read "Israel", we are reading of the man Jacob and his children. That God was the God of mixed-up, struggling Jacob is a sure comfort to every one of us. God is not ashamed to be surnamed the God of Jacob (Heb. 11:16 Gk.).

Right now, God is ashamed or not ashamed of us, according to our separation from the spirit of this world (Heb. 11:16); and yet His not being ashamed of us will also be apparent at the final judgment. We have our judgment now, from His point of view.

11:17- see on Heb. 11:11.

11:19 Abraham 'accounted' that God was able to raise Isaac (Heb. 11:19); his faith involved an intellectual process. Israel were to hear / understand "the statutes and judgments... that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them" (Dt. 5:1). Understanding is related to obedience. See on Rom. 10:10.

11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come" (11:20). Yet the record of this in Gen. 27 doesn't paint Isaac in a very positive light. "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28). The AVmg. seems to bring out Isaac's superficiality: "Isaac loved Esau, because venison was in his mouth". This seems to connect with the way Esau threw away his birthright for the sake of food in his mouth. Esau was evidently of the flesh, whilst Jacob had at least some potential spirituality. Yet Isaac preferred Esau. He chose to live in Gerar (Gen. 26:6), right on the border of Egypt- as close as he could get to the world, without crossing the line. And he thought nothing of denying his marriage to Rebekah, just to save his own skin (Gen. 26:7). So it seems Isaac had some marriage problems; the record speaks of "Esau his son" and "Jacob (Rebekah's) son" (Gen. 27:5,6). The way Jacob gave Isaac wine "and he drank" just before giving the blessings is another hint at some unspirituality (Gen. 27:25). Isaac seems not to have accepted the Divine prophecy concerning his sons: "the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23), seeing that it was his intention to give Esau the blessings of the firstborn, and thinking that he was speaking to Esau, he gave him the blessing of his younger brothers (i.e. Jacob) serving him (Gen. 27:29 cp. 15). Isaac didn't accept the sale of the birthright, and yet God did (Heb. 12:16,17). *And yet*, and this is my point, Isaac's blessing of the two boys is described as an act of faith; even though it was done with an element of disbelief in God's word of prophecy concerning the elder serving the younger, and perhaps under the influence of alcohol, and even though at the time Isaac thought he was blessing Esau when in fact it was Jacob. Yet according to Heb. 11:20, this blessing of Esau *and* Jacob (therefore Hebrews doesn't refer to the later blessing) was done with faith; *at that very point in time*, Isaac had faith. So God's piercing eye saw through Isaac's liking for the good life, through Isaac's unspiritual liking for Esau, through his marriage problem, through his lack of faith that the elder must serve the younger, and discerned that there was some faith in that man Isaac; and then holds this up as a stimulant for our faith, centuries later! Not only should we be exhorted to see the good side in our present brethren; but we can take comfort that this God is our God, and views our Christian hypocrisy in the same way as He viewed theirs.

11:21 It may be that Jacob considered Joseph to be the special Messianic seed (which he was, in type), and this would explain why Heb. 11:21 adds the detail that at the end of his life, as he was dying on his bed, Jacob showed his faith (i.e. his faith in Christ, which is the theme of Heb. 11) by worshipping Joseph, propping himself up on the bed head with his last energy to do it (Gk.). He clearly saw in him a type of his future redeemer. He finally accepted the truth of Joseph's dream: that Jacob must bow down to his greater son- although he reached this humility, this bowing before the spirit of Christ, in his very last breath. It seems probable that meditation on Joseph's experience was what brought Jacob to Christ; he had managed to scheme and plot his way out of every other crisis, but the loss of Joseph brought him to his knees helpless.

11:24- see on Acts 7:35

"When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens... when he *was full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren.

" ...[Moses] *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh... *choosing* rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-28). Moses could have been the next Pharaoh; according to Josephus, he was the commander of the Egyptian army. But he walked away from the possibility of being the richest man on earth, he "refused" it, because he valued "the reproach of Christ" and the recompense of the Kingdom to be *greater* riches. Yet what did he know about the sufferings of Christ? Presumably he had worked out from the promises of the seed in Eden and to the fathers that the future Saviour must be reproached and rejected; and he saw that his own life experience could have a close association with that of this unknown future Saviour who would surely come. And therefore, it seems, Moses counted the honour and wonder of this greater than the riches of Egypt. Both Paul and Moses rejected mammon for things which are abstract and intellectual (in the strict sense): the *excellency* of the understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ and His cross, and the Kingdom this would enable. Living when we do, with perhaps a greater knowledge of the Lord's victory and excellency, our motivation ought to be even stronger.

11:24,25 "(Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern. He "forsook" Egypt uses the same word translated "leaving" when we read of a man leaving his parents to be joined to a wife, or of the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to find the lost one.

11:24-26 At age 40, Moses came to a crisis. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God's people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but he consciously refused this, as a pure act of the will, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which invite us to follow Moses' example in this. Paul was motivated in his rejection of worldly advantage by Moses' inspiration. And as in all things, he is our example, that we might follow Christ, who also turned down the very real possibility of temporal rulership of the world- for the sake of living the life of the cross, and thereby securing our redemption. Even within Hebrews, the description of Moses' rejection of Egypt for the sake of Christ is shown to be our example: "Esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures (i.e. Pharaoh's treasures, which he could have had if he succeeded as Pharaoh) in Egypt... let us go forth therefore unto (Jesus) without the camp, *bearing his reproach*" (Heb. 11:26; 13:13). We should be even eager to bear 'reproach for the name of Christ' as Moses did (1 Pet. 4:14), knowing it is a surety of our sharing his resurrection. For Moses, "the reproach of Christ" was his having "respect unto the recompense of the reward" . He therefore must have understood in some detail that there would be a future Saviour, who would enable the eternal Kingdom promised to Abraham through his bearing the reproach of this world. Such was Moses' appreciation of this that it motivated him to reject Egypt. His motivation, therefore, was based upon a fine reflection upon the promises to Abraham and other oblique prophecies of the suffering Messiah contained in the book of Genesis. Moses knew he could have a share in the sufferings of the future saviour and thereby share his reward, because he saw the implication that Messiah would be our representative. Yet those promises are the very things which Christians now say they are bored of hearing every few weeks on a Sunday evening. No wonder we lack Moses' desire to share Christ's reproach, and thereby reject the attractions of this world. The way Moses had "respect unto the recompense of the reward" is our example; for again, even within Hebrews, we are exhorted: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great *recompense of reward*" (Heb. 11:26; 10:35). The Greek for "respect" means to look away from all else;

indicating how single-mindedly and intensely did Moses look ahead to the Kingdom; the knowledge of which was, in terms of number of words, scant indeed. All he had was the covenants of promise.

11:26- see on 10:35; Phil. 3:8.

Moses fought with the temptation to just observe from a distance, but then he came out into the open, declaring that he was a Hebrew, rejecting his kind Egyptian foster mother, openly declaring that he was not really her son, as both she and he had claimed for 40 years. He would have borne the shame of all this, "the reproach of Christ" (Heb. 11:26). But he was not ashamed to call Israel his brethren, as Christ is not ashamed of us (Heb. 2:11- one of many allusions to Moses in Hebrews). All this suggests that like Moses, our Lord came to a point where he "came down" from obscurity to begin his work of deliverance. The references to 'coming down' in John's Gospel allude to this

It is possible that Moses appreciated that he was a type of Christ the future Messiah; he considered "the reproach of Christ" enough to motivate him to reject the attractions of Egypt (Heb. 11:26); he knew he was sharing the sufferings of the future, ultimate saviour, and the wonder of that alone was enough to motivate him to leave the attractions of this world- even the possibility of being the next Pharaoh, the most powerful man on earth. The similarities between Jesus and Moses are too many to sensibly tabulate. There is ample opportunity to enter deeply into the attitude of Moses towards Israel, and it is this which perhaps most valuably deepens our appreciation of the love of Christ for us, and of our own liability to failure after the pattern of Israel.

Moses reached a similar height, being one of the foremost Old Testament examples of selflessness. He was willing to give both his physical and *eternal* life for the salvation of Israel (Ex. 32:29-32), that God's Name might be upheld. He so loved and respected God's character, His personality (all bound up in His Name) that he was willing to forego all personal blessings, even life itself, just because of the wonder of God. A less spiritually mature Moses had been motivated 40 years earlier by his respect of the recompense of the reward (Heb. 11:26). But now his motive is the glory of God's Name. Personal possession of the Kingdom *is* held up as a motivator in our lives; but surely, like Moses, we ought to progress towards a desire to see the achievement of God's glory, rather than being obsessed with personally finding our place in the political Kingdom

11:27 "By faith (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King" (Heb. 11:27). But Moses *did* flee Egypt, because he feared the wrath of the King (Ex. 2:14,15). It seems that Moses had at best a mixture of motives, or motives that changed over time; yet God sees through his human fear, and discerns an element of calm faith within Moses as he left Egypt. In similar vein, at the time of the burning bush, Moses seems to have forgotten God's covenant name, he didn't immediately take off his shoes in respect as he should have done, and it seems he feared to come close to God due to a bad conscience, and he resisted God's invitation for him to go forth and do His work (Ex. 3:5-7,10,11,18; 4:1,10-14). And yet at this very time, the New Testament says that Moses showed faith in the way he perceived God (Lk. 20:37). But it was a momentary faith, valid all the same. Moses fled from Egypt, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh; he went in faith (Heb. 11:27). But the Exodus record explains that actually he couldn't keep this level of faith, and fled in fear (Ex. 2:14,15).

Hupomone is generally translated "patience" or "endurance"; the idea is of the staying power that keeps a man going to the end. The meaning of *hupomone* grows as we experience more trials (Rom. 5:3; James 1:3). We find that the longer we endure in the Truth, the more we can echo the words of Peter, when the Lord asked him (surely with a lump in His throat) if he was going to turn back: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (Jn. 6:68). There is no third road in the daily decisions we face. Over the months and years, *hupomone* becomes part of our essential character; keeping on keeping on is what life comes to be all about, no matter what short term blows and long term frustrations we face. The longer we endure, the stronger that force is, although we may not feel it. Moses is described as having it at the time he fled from Egypt (Heb. 11:27), even though in the short term his faith failed him at the time and he fled in fear (Ex. 2:14,15). Yet God counted him as having that

basic ability to endure, even to endure through his own failure and weakness. *This* is what God looks at, rather than our day-to-day acts of sin and righteousness. See on Heb. 12:28.

Moses forsook the possibilities of Egypt not just for the reproach of Christ"; he was also motivated by the fact that "he endured (Gk. was vigorous), as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It was *as if* he had seen the invisible God, as he later asked to. When the disciples asked to see God, Christ said that the manifestation of His character which they had seen in him was the same thing (Jn. 14:8). Our experience of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with unveiled face like Moses, ought to be a *wondrous* experience. When Moses asked to physically see God, the Angel proclaimed the characteristics of God before him. So when we read of Moses *as it were* seeing God at the time he decided to forsake Egypt, this must mean that he so appreciated God's Name and character, he so had faith in the future Kingdom which this great Name and character promise, that he left Egypt. The Lord Jesus fed for strength on the *majesty* of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4). Therefore an appreciation of the Name of Yahweh is what will motivate us to forsake the attractions of this temporal world. This does not mean, of course, that simply pronouncing that Name in our prayers and readings is enough. We must develop an appreciation of God's righteousness, so that we read of His demonstration of grace, of mercy, of truth, of judgement for sin, and love it, revel in it, respect it. As Paul says, if we behold the glory of the Lord as Moses did, we will by that very fact be changed into the same image of that glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Yet such an appreciation needs constant feeding and development. It is tragic, absolutely tragic, that over the next 40 years Moses lost this height of appreciation, until at the burning bush he seems to have almost completely lost his appreciation of the Name. Whatever spiritual heights we may reach is no guarantee that we must inevitably stay there.

Several Old Testament anticipations of the crucifixion involve a time of great darkness when God Himself 'came down', in a way reminiscent of the theophany on Sinai. There God Himself in person in some form 'came down' to earth. Moses saw His back parts, but not His face; for no man can see the face of God and live. He saw the face of the Angel and spoke to him as a man speaks with his friend. Moses seeing the back parts of God could even mean that God Himself came down to earth. If He did this at the institution of the Old Covenant: how much more at the death of His very own Son? The reference in Heb. 11:27 to Moses as having endured seeing the invisible may lend support to this idea that Moses did in fact see the God who cannot be seen by men. I submit that He was there, almost physically, at the cross. The blood of the covenant was shed before Him, in His presence, just as countless sacrifices in the tabernacle had foreshadowed for centuries beforehand. See on Jn. 19:19.

11:28- see on 1 Cor. 10:10.

Israel's deliverance through the Red Sea seems to be attributed to Moses' faith (Heb. 11:28,29; Acts 7:36,38). Yet in the actual record, Moses seems to have shared Israel's cry of fear, and was rebuked for this by God (Ex. 14:15,13,10). Yet in the midst of that rebuke, we learn from the New Testament, God perceived the faith latent within Moses, beneath that human fear and panic. we can as it were do the work of the Saviour Himself, if we truly live as in Him. In this spirit, *Moses'* faith in keeping the Passover led to *Israel's* salvation, they left Egypt *by* him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf (Dt. 9:20). Israel were intensely disobedient to God from the time of their exodus from Egypt, even before their deliverance from the Red Sea (Dt. 9:24 = Ex. 20:5,6). Only because of Moses' faithful keeping of the Passover did the Angel which destroyed the (Egyptian and Hebrew- see on 1 Cor. 10:10) firstborn not destroy the whole of Israel as God had initially planned (Heb. 11:28).

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11:28,29 "By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Israel). By faith *they* (Israel) passed through the Red Sea". Yet at this time Israel were weak in faith, they passed through the Red Sea cuddling the idols of Egypt, from the day God knew them they were rebellious against Him; so runs the refrain of the prophets. It seems that due to Moses' faith Israel were saved by the Passover lamb, through his faith they passed through the Red Sea; his faith was so great, his desire for their salvation so strong, that God counted it to the rest of Israel. Thus "he (Moses, in the context) brought them (Israel) out" of Egypt (Acts 7:36,38). This points forward to Christ's redemption of us, and also indicates how quickly Moses' faith rallied. And yet just prior to crossing the Sea, God rebuked Moses: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" - even though Moses calmly exhorted the people to have faith (Ex. 14:15 cp. 13). Yet by faith he brought them through the Red Sea. Therefore as with his first exit from Egypt (he feared the wrath of the King, and then he didn't), his faith wavered, but came down on the right side.

11:30 Heb. 11:30, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down ...". Whose faith? What faith? Was Joshua-Jesus' faith counted to the people? Or was their very weak, hope-for-the-best faith all the same accepted as faith by God's grace?

11:31 The spies were sent out "secretly" (Josh. 2:1). I'd argue that the sending out of the 12 spies about 40 years earlier was essentially a lack of faith- in the fact that God's Angel had gone ahead of them anyway to spy out the land, and Yahweh Himself had told Israel how good the land was. Perhaps the secrecy involved a sense that this was in fact not really a very spiritual decision and Joshua was somehow furtive about it. Israel had never known urban life nor perhaps even seen walled cities like Jericho. The spies entered the city at evening time, and the gate was shut. Strangers always attract attention in such places- let alone when the city was in the direct line of attack of the Hebrews. The language / accent of the two spies would've given them away. According to the record in Joshua 2, it seems they entered the city gates at dusk, the gates were shut, and they'd have perceived that they were being watched and had been noticed as suspicious strangers. And so they used some desperate initiative, and dived into a whorehouse nearby to the gate. This was the sort of place strangers would go to, as it would be today. We imagine them entering the house, and meeting the madame of the house. "What do you want?" was as dumb a question as the doctor asking the patient "How are you feeling today?". Rahab was a smart woman, accustomed to strangers, and knew what was going on. Within the first couple of sentences, she'd have figured who they were. And it seems they spoke for a short time, maybe an hour or so, realized they were busted, understood they were in a death trap within that walled city, and threw themselves on her mercy. And there, providence kicked in. James 2:25 calls those men "messengers", with a message Rahab believed. They hardly had an hour to tell her the message, before men were knocking on the door enquiring what Rahab knew about the spies. In that brief time, she believed a very sketchy and incomplete Gospel of the Kingdom. And her works reflected that faith, in telling the men [whom local culture would've barred from entering the house of a single woman] that the spies had come and gone. "That was *quick!*", we can imagine the King's men joking. There was weakness and dysfunction all around this story. The men "lodged" with Rahab (Josh. 2:1)- but the Hebrew term is often translated "slept with..." in a sexual context. In fact, whenever the term is used in relation to a woman, let alone a prostitute, it implies intercourse. As a word it does mean simply to sleep... but it is strange that no other term for 'lodging the night' is used, and that the term in the context of a female or prostitute does usually carry a sexual meaning. Whilst I don't believe the spies did sleep with Rahab, it's strange that no other word for 'lodging' is used. The ambiguity is, I suggest, purposeful. But they and their message were 'welcomed in peace' by Rahab (Heb. 11:31), she 'received' their message and justified herself by works by protecting them (James 2:25). This would contribute to an overall theme in the book of Joshua of Israel's weakness- the land wasn't fully possessed, Joshua appears himself as weak in many ways, he didn't fully follow the admittedly hard-to-follow act of Moses, Rahab believed the very words of promise which Israel didn't believe, the spies were sent out secretly by Joshua with no command from God to do this, when God had

promised to go before Israel and give them victory... and yet God worked through all this. Even to the extent of using the weakness of the spies in going in to a brothel and "sleeping" with the madame... in order to save that woman and her family, and the lives of the spies, all in a manner which through human weakness glorified the God of Israel. Rahab had an extensive knowledge of parts of Moses' words and law, and this was the basis for her faith. Yet where did she, a whore in Jericho, get that knowledge from? Presumably from her clients, who would've been travellers who had heard these things and passed them on to her. All this is wonderful encouragement for all sinners- that God has a way of working through sin to His glory, and He doesn't give up so easily with human weakness.

Heb. 11:31 comments that "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace". Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amorite and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them- only death (cp. Dt. 7:2). Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her- she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship ("deal kindly with me", Josh. 2:12 cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a way. Remember that she was also aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and *not* make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). Rahab was told to bind the scarlet cord in her window "when we come into the land" (Josh. 2:18). But Rahab bound it there immediately when they left- as if she recognized that her land was already in Israel's hands (Josh. 2:21). Considering the whole town was wondering how the spies had escaped, and she was under suspicion, to leave the escape rope dangling there, indeed to take it up and then place it there again immediately (so 2:21 implies), was really stupid. She didn't need to do that at that stage. But the joy of the Gospel should make us fools for Christ's sake. But does it, in our postmodern age? When was the last time the joy of the good news we know, lead you to do something humanly foolish? It could be gathered from Heb. 11:31 that Rahab preached to others the message she had received from the spies- for the inspired commentary there notes that Rahab did not perish with those "that believed not"- *apeitheo* suggesting disbelief, a wilful refusal to believe. What message did Jericho not believe? There was no particular message for them from the words of Moses or Joshua. The message was presumably an appeal from Rahab, to repent and accept the God of Israel as she had done- to cast themselves upon His mercy. And in any case, as a prostitute estranged from her family, either due to her profession or because estrangement from them had led her to it, she must have gone to her estranged family and preached to them, bringing them within her despised house. The question, of course, is: 'Why then was not Rahab killed by the people of Jericho if she openly preached to them about the God of Israel?'. The ancient law code of Hammurabi contains the following statute: "If felons are banded together in an ale-wife's [prostitute's or innkeeper's] house and she has not haled [them] to the palace, that ale-wife shall be put to death" (S.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1956], 2:45). Perhaps she was so despised that she was untouchable, or treated as mad. Perhaps former clients of hers in the city's leadership decided it would be better to let her 'get religion' rather than spill any beans about them. But it could be said that it was a miracle she wasn't murdered for her witness. She certainly ran the risk of it. If men and women with a far less complete understanding of the Gospel could risk their lives for it... what does our understanding and faith convict *us* to do for the sake of witnessing to it? Give money towards it? Risk our lives, health, convenience in travelling for it? Risk our embarrassment and loss of standing in the workplace or family by preaching it...? Our knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom is far more detailed than that of Rahab, who picked up snatches of it from her clients, and had at most an hour's pressured conversation with the spies before she had to show whether or not she believed it. If it motivated her to do all she did- what about us?

There are times when circumstances do change the appropriacy of behaviour which in more normal life we should practice. Take lying as an example. To lie is wrong. We should be truthful. Of

course. But think of Rahab. She lied- and her lie and acts of deception are quoted in the New Testament as acts of faith! Further, Rahab implied that the Israelite spies were her clients- "there came men unto me" (Josh. 2:4) appears to be a euphemism- and she gave the impression that of course, as they were merely passing clients, how did she know nor care who they were nor where they went? Her male interrogators would've found it hard to press her further for information after she said that. So she not only lied but she gave the impression that the messengers of the Kingdom of God were immoral- in order to protect both them and her. Of course the way she left a red cord hanging from her window, as if almost inviting people to imagine the spies had been let down over the wall from her home on the wall, was a tremendous act of faith and witness by her, but she presumably kept to her story that they were her anonymous clients. For she was still living in her home when the city was taken. Her witness was thus an indirect one to those who wished to perceive it, but it was made within the context of a major series of untruths. The Hebrew midwives lied to the Egyptians- and were blessed for it. And we could give other examples. If we probe further, and ask *why* such lies were acceptable and even required, we find that often those lies were connected with saving life. To do anything that would cause the loss of human life when it is in our power to save it is dangerously close to murder.

11:32 The idea of binding the strong man must surely look back to Samson. The language can't just be accidentally similar (cp. Jud. 16:21). This means that the Lord saw Samson as the very epitome of Satan, even though ultimately he was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32). Thus the Spirit doesn't forget a man's weakness, even though ultimately he may be counted righteous.

The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was graciously counted as full faith by later inspiration (Jud. 4:8,9 cp. Heb. 11:32).

11:32-34 Samson killed a lion, escaped fire and killed many Philistines by his faith (Heb. 11:32-34)- so the Spirit tells us. Yet these things were all done by him at times when he had at best a partial faith, or was living out moments of faith. He had a worldly Philistine girlfriend, a sure grief of mind to his Godly parents, and on his way to the wedding he met and killed a lion- through faith, Heb. 11 tells us (Jud. 14:1-7). The Philistines threatened to burn him with fire, unless his capricious paramour of a wife extracted from him the meaning of his riddle. He told her, due, it seems, to his human weakness and hopeless sexual weakness. He then killed 30 Philistines to provide the clothes he owed the Philistines on account of them answering the riddle (Jud. 14:15-19). It is evident that Samson was weak in many ways at this time; the Proverbs make many allusions to him, the strong man ruined by the evil Gentile woman, the one who could take a city but not rule his spirit etc. And yet underneath all these weaknesses, serious as they were, there was a deep faith within Samson which Heb. 11 highlights.

11:33 Heb. 11:33 says that the likes of Abraham obtained promises by their faith. Yet the Old Testament record clearly enough states that the promises were just given to them by God; they weren't requested by the patriarchs. Indeed, David was surprised at the promises God chose to make to him. Conclusion? God read their unspoken, unprayed for desires for Messiah and His Kingdom as requests for the promises- and responded.

11:34 The stress is on the way in which the Spirit came upon Samson (14:6,19; 15:14), as it did on other judges (3:10; 6:34; 11:29). "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" (Zech. 4:6) may be referring to these incidents; demonstrating that when God's spirit acts on a man, it is not human muscle at all that operates. He is even listed amongst those who out of weakness were made strong (Heb. 11:34). A character study of Samson must remember this about him. This could suggest that he was even weaker than a normal man; or it could be a reference to the way in which out of his final spiritual weakness and degradation he was so wonderfully strengthened (16:28).

11:35 The widow woman's son was resurrected because God heard Elijah's faithful prayer (1 Kings 17:22); and thus Heb. 11:35 alludes to this incident by saying that through faith- in this case, the

faith of Elijah, a third party- women received their dead raised to life. The Centurion's servant was healed for the sake of *his* faith; Jairus' daughter was healed because of *his* faith (Mk. 5:36). Heb. 11 cites women receiving their dead back to life as an example of faith. Because of the faith and prayers of the women, a third party, their dead loved ones were at times resurrected. Lazarus being raised because of his faithful sisters Martha and Mary is the obvious example we know about, but the Hebrew writer may well have had his mind on unrecorded Old Testament examples too. Our faith in prayer in some sense limits God's ability.

Some were tortured "not accepting redemption" (Heb. 11:35); by implication they accepted the true redemption of the blood of Christ rather than the pseudo-redemption offered by this world. Again, the redeeming work of Christ is what fortifies men against the fake Kingdom and redemption of the anti-Christ anti-Kingdom of this world.

11:37 John is presented as a cameo of all the faithful (Heb. 11:37 = Mk. 1:6 and 1 Cor. 15:47 = Jn. 3:31).

11:38 "The children of Israel made them the dens ('dry river channels') which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds" (Jud. 6:2). Identical language is found in 1 Sam. 13:6 concerning Israel's pining away when under attack by the Philistines. There can be no doubt that these incidents are the focus of Heb. 11:37,38, which describes nameless men of faith as being "slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins... being destitute, afflicted, tormented... they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth". The Israelites who fled to the dens and caves in Jud. 6:2 are described as heroes of faith because of what they did (Heb. 11:38). And yet their domination by the Philistines was a result of their idolatry. They were idolatrous, and yet some had faith; and it was this faith which was perceived by God.

11:39- see on Heb. 11:11.

11:40 "They (dead believers) without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39,40)- i.e. all the believers are rewarded *together*, at the same time. Alternatively this may teach that the number of 'the believers' is completed only by our development of faith- implying that the sooner this happens, the sooner the united perfection of the faithful can occur.

12:1- see on Rom. 14:8,9.

Heb. 11:1,2 defines faith in absolute terms; as the real mental vision of the invisible. This doesn't just mean occasionally achieving a vivid imagination of (e.g.) the future Kingdom, or the present bodily existence of the Lord Jesus, or other moments of faith and insight. It means living, hour by hour, with these things actually existing in our mental vision. Without this faith, the apostle reasons, we cannot please God. He cites a whole string of Old Testament examples, and then goes on to say that we too, like them, are surrounded by this great cloud of faithful examples, and therefore this should inspire us to the life of faith, as it did them (Heb. 12:1).

Heb. 12:1 could imply that before each of us an individualized racetrack is set, and we are to run that race having laid aside every distraction. Ask God to reveal to you His intentions and specific plans for you.

When the writer wrote of shedding *the* sin which doth so easily beset us (Heb. 12:1), he may have been suggesting that we each have our own specific weakness to overcome. This is certainly a comfort to us in our spiritual struggles. We aren't alone in them. They were given to us. We aren't alone with our nature. The purpose and plan of God for us is articulated even through the darkest nooks of our very essential being. Understanding this should make us the more patient with our brethren, whose evident areas of weakness are not ours.

12:2 The shame of the cross is a theme of the records. The reproach broke the Lord's heart (Ps. 69:20). It could even be that He suffered a heart rupture, a literal broken heart, some hours prior to His death- hence when His side was pierced, blood flowed out- and corpses don't usually bleed. It

has been commented that severe emotional trauma is enough to cause such a rupture. He wasn't hard and impervious to it all. He knew who He was, and where He was going. To be treated as He was, was such an insult to the God of all grace. And He keenly sensed this. Heb. 12:2,3 parallels the Lord's enduring of the cross with His enduring "such contradiction of sinners against Himself". These mockings were therefore part of "the cross". The "cross" process began before His impalement; in the same way as some verses which evidently concern the crucifixion are applied to the Lord's earlier life. His was *a life* of cross carrying. And we are asked to live the same life, not just the occasional 'cross' of crisis, but a life embodying the cross principles.

There's significant Old Testament emphasis upon the fact that those who are truly on the Lord's side shall not be put to shame. It was prophesied of the Lord Jesus that He set His face like a flint, "that I shall not be ashamed" (Is. 50:7). Perhaps His lack of destructive anger was because He didn't let Himself be shamed by men, instead taking His self-worth and values from God's acceptance of Him. To avoid "anger" in the wrong sense, we need to avoid being wrongly shamed. And we can do this by ensuring we ourselves aren't led into shame, due to placing too great a value upon the opinions of men. Our shame should be before God for our sins against Him, and not before men. Hence the prophets often criticize Israel for not being ashamed of their sins before God (Jer. 6:15). Our shame before men leads to anger; our shame before God is resolved in repentance and belief in His gracious forgiveness. Thus Jeremiah recalls how his repentance involved being ashamed, and yet then being "instructed" (Jer. 31:19). It's through knowing this kind of shame before God that we come to a position where we are unashamed. Thus Joel begins his prophecy with a call to "be ashamed" before God for sin, and concludes with the comfort that in this case, "my people shall never [again] be ashamed" (Joel 1:1; 2:27). In this sense we can understand the comment that the Lord Jesus 'despised the shame' of the cross (Heb. 12:2). He 'thought against' it [Gk.], he refused to be shamed before men, even though naked and bedraggled and humanly defeated; for He believed that He was being 'lifted up' in glory from God's viewpoint. Paul could say that it mattered very little to him how men thought of him, for the Lord's judgment was all that mattered (1 Cor. 4:4); and the Lord Jesus gave somewhat the same impression, for He evidently "regarded not the person of men" (Mt. 22:16). If our value, validation, self-worth etc. are dependent upon men's opinions of us, then we're likely to be easily shamed; and this sets us up for all manner of anger feelings, and makes us the more easily woundable by those whose acceptance we crave. Quite simply- if God has accepted us, then don't let ourselves be shamed by men.

"For the joy that was set before him" Christ endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). "Set before" can imply a vision, as if Christ saw something in front of Him as He hung on the cross. The spirit of Christ in Ps. 16:11 describes Christ looking forward to fullness of joy in God's Heavenly presence, because "at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore". Christ is now at God's right hand interceding for us. Therefore we suggest that the joy set before Christ in vision as He hung on the cross was the joy of His future mediation for our sins as we repent of them and confess them in prayer.

"For the joy set before Him He endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2) may seem on first reading to mean that He did serve for a reward. Until we understand that the Greek word *anti* translated "for" really means 'in place of'. With evident reference to the wilderness temptation to take the Kingdom joys without the cross, the writer is making the point that instead of the joy that the tempter of His own flesh set before Him, He endured the cross.

12:4- see on Col. 2:1.

We must balance ourselves against Him who endured such contradiction, and the more freely confess that we "have not yet resisted unto blood (in our) striving against sin" (Heb. 12:3,4 Gk.). Only by a personal reconstruction and reliving of the cross, and a serious, sustained attempt to live out something of its spirit in our lives, will we come to a recognition of the depth of our own failure, our need for His grace, and an appreciation of what really was done for us. And if we realize all this,

we will respond- mightily. As the forgiveness suggested by the sin offering led on to the burnt offering (with its message of dedication), so our desperation leads to our dedication (Lev. 5:7).

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood (in your) striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4, alluding to His sweat as blood drops) is a call for us to recognize this, and to have the picture of our Lord in Gethsemane as a motivation "lest we be wearied, and faint in (our) minds". The writer is saying: 'You've never got anywhere near that intensity. So don't get tired of the unending mental battle against your natural mind. Consider him there'. We have not yet resisted unto blood in our striving against sin, as the Lord did in Gethsemane (Heb. 12:4 cp. Lk. 22:44); but, the implication is, we ultimately should. We bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body (2 Cor. 6:10)- not just at resurrection, but now. And it is through this that we bear witness to the resurrected Jesus. He can be seen as alive because He lives in us. The disciples in Gethsemane slumbered and slept when the Lord had specifically asked them to struggle on in prayer. A stone's throw from them, the Son of God was involved in a height of spiritual struggle utterly unequalled. And they dozed off in the midst of their half-serious prayers. This incident is alluded to here in a powerful appeal to us: "Consider him that endured [as the kneeling disciples should have watched the distant Lord Jesus as an inspiration to themselves]... lest ye be wearied, and faint in *your* minds [as they did]. *Ye* have not yet resisted unto blood [cp. the Lord's sweat as drops of blood], [in your] striving against sin" (Heb. 12:3,4). Time and again Paul alludes, sometimes perhaps even subconsciously, to the record of Gethsemane. He evidently saw in those garden prayers and the disciples' sleepiness a powerful cameo of our every battle and failure; and a strong, urgent plea for us to rise up and catch the fire of real spiritual struggle.

12:5 Heb. 12:5 alludes to the idea of a living word by speaking of an Old Testament passage as 'reasoning' (R.V.) with us. We are a separate people. We have been redeemed from them by the precious blood of Christ. We are spiritual Jews. What God spoke to men like Jacob, He therefore spoke to us (Hos. 12:5; Gen. 28:15 cp. Heb. 12:5,6).

All Scripture is recorded for *our* learning and comfort (Rom. 15:4). The exhortation of Prov. 3:11 "speaketh unto *you* as unto children..." (Heb. 12:5). Hebrews 3 quotes Psalm 95 as relevant to all readers. The warnings there for its "today" were also be a warning for the first century "today", and yet likewise we can still take hold of the past word of God and relate it to the needs of our "today". We can fail to personalize God's word, in the sense of realizing that it speaks to us personally. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what would happen to him unless he repented; and he wouldn't listen. When his judgment came, God told him: "O King Nebuchadnezzar, *to thee it is spoken*: The kingdom is departed from thee" (Dan. 4:31). We have a way of reading and hearing, and yet not making the crucial connection with ourselves.

12:8 Heb. 12:8: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever". Paul saw the three elements of the Yahweh Name supremely manifest in the Lord Jesus. Which is surely why 'Jesus' in the NT becomes the Name above every Name (Phil. 2:9,10; Eph. 1:21); for only 'Yahweh' was exalted above every other name (Neh. 9:5; Ps. 148:13).

It is through the power of the word that we become sons of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet.1:23); yet Heb.12:8 says that the scourging of our Heavenly Father is a sure sign that we are His children, showing that the word and our trials work in tandem to make us sons of God.

12:10 Heb.12:10 shows that our chastening by God is so "that we might be partakers of His holiness". The ideas of sanctification and holiness are parallel (e.g. "sanctify yourselves... for I am holy", Lev.11:44). It is the word that sanctifies (Jn.17:17), thus enabling us to be partakers of God's holiness. The effects of the word and God's chastening are parallel.

12:11 There is a parallel between the action of the word upon a man and the effect of trials: "Chastening... yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby" (Heb.12:11). Yet "the word of righteousness... strong meat" leads to Bible students "by reason of use

(having) their senses *exercised* to discern both good and evil" (Heb.5:13,14); and the word abiding in us also yields the fruits of righteousness (Jn.15:4,7).

12:12 Heb.12:12: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees". Now if Scripture interprets Scripture at all, this just has to be an allusion back to feeble-kneed Moses, with his hanging-down hands being held up. And the apostle says: 'You are the one with feeble knees and hands, represented by Moses in Ex.17!'.

12:13 The unbelieving world is repeatedly characterized as walking in a crooked path (Lk. 3:5; Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:15 and often in Proverbs). Quietly starting every day right is part of our walking in a *straight* path, following the way of the cherubim, walking in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); and by walking in that straight daily path we will not have opportunity to stumble (Heb. 12:13).

12:15- see on 1 Jn. 2:28.

12:17 Esau before Isaac, pleading with him to change his irrevocable rejection, is picked up in Heb. 12:17 as a type of the rejected at the day of judgment. The implication is that Jacob at this time symbolized the saints; yet he was no saint at that time. If Esau's rejection by Isaac is indeed a picture of the rejection of the goats at the final judgment (Heb. 12:17), Isaac there becomes a hazy prefigurement of our future judge. And yet the record presents a scene of both father and rejected son as shaken and helpless, both dearly wishing it could be different (Gen. 27:33). The sadness of Isaac becomes a figure of the pathos and sadness of God in rejecting the wicked. Note how the LXX of Gen. 27:38 adds the detail: "And Isaac said nothing; and Esau wept". We are left to imagine the thoughts of Isaac's silence. Truly our God takes no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11).

Esau's great and bitter cry for blessing is quoted in Heb. 12:17 as typical of the attitude of all the rejected. He had earlier shrugged at the implications of selling his birthright, but now his self-rejection was being worked out in practice. The rejected argue back "When saw we thee...?". Surely they wouldn't have bothered doing so, unless they were upset at their rejection, and desiring to see the verdict altered. Israel's passing through the Red Sea is a definite type of baptism, and their largely unsuccessful wilderness journey therefore becomes a pattern of failed Christian lives. Yet when they were told that they were unworthy to enter the land, obvious as it must have been to them, they repented and were willing to make any sacrifice to enter it (Num. 14:40-48). When they disobeyed God's word and fled to Egypt from the Babylonians, they then so wanted to return to their land [cp. the Kingdom]- but it was all too late (Jer. 44:14). Cain is another type of the rejected- instead of going as far away from Divine things as possible after his condemnation, he went to live on the east of Eden- where the cherubim were, guarding the barred entry to God's paradise (Gen. 4:16). The Hebrews were warned not to follow Esau's sinful example (Gen. 27:34), otherwise at the judgment they would experience what he did: "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing (cp. our desiring the Abrahamic promises of entry into the Kingdom), he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it with tears" (Heb. 12:17). In view of this, the weeping of the rejected at judgment may be as a result of desperate pleading with the Lord to change his mind. Earlier in Hebrews the point is made that "he that despised Moses' law died without mercy". The phrase "without mercy" is surely included to point out that the condemned would have earnestly pleaded for mercy, after the pattern of Cain, the foolish virgins pleading for entry... The next verse continues: "Of how much sorer punishment... shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the son of God?" (Heb. 10:28,29), indicating that the sad picture of those condemned under the old Covenant, pleading for mercy, will be repeated at the judgment of those under the new Covenant.

12:18 There is a real and living power in the blood of Christ. We have come "unto a palpable and kindled fire... unto the voice of words... unto the blood of sprinkling" (Heb. 12:18 RVmg., 19, 24).

The blood of Christ is as palpable as fire, and as real and actually demanding as words booming from Sinai.

12:22- see on Jud. 5:19,20; Gal. 4:26; Eph. 2:19.

12:23 spirits- See on Dan. 5:23.

Israel's exodus from Egypt on Passover night was a type of our exodus from the world at the second coming (Lk. 12:35,36 = Ex. 12:11). The firstborns represent us, the ecclesia of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.). Perhaps 90% of the firstborns failed to be delivered because they murmured (see on 1 Cor. 10:10), they allowed themselves to be distracted from the fundamental basis of their redemption: the blood of the lamb. What percentage will it be for the new Israel?

Heb. 12:23 written/ enrolled may imply the Angels wrote a book of life for the faithful: "The general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are enrolled in Heaven... the spirits of just men made perfect". These "spirits" are the guardian Angels of the righteous. These Angels enrolled the names of the responsible at the beginning of the world, but they are capable of removal from the book. It is as if God informed the Angels of all those they would be dealing with during human history, and they subsequently have kept a record of the works of each of them as they guide them through life. Ps. 56:8 may explain things a bit more: "Thou tellest my wanderings (through life); put Thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?", as if to imply that David knew that God had a record of what he was presently going through "in Thy book" already, but wanted the Angel to make a special note of it now: "put Thou my tears into Thy bottle", which seems to be equated with "Thy book".

Only the firstborn was saved at the Passover. We are the church of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.), a paradox as it stands written. For there can be only one firstborn. A whole community can't be "firstborns". But we are, through being in Christ.

The priests weren't part-timers. They gave their lives to God in recognition of the fact that God had saved the lives of the firstborn at the Passover and Red Sea deliverance (Num. 3:12). Our deliverance from the world at baptism was our Red Sea. We have been saved. Those firstborns represent us, the ecclesia of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.). We are now being led towards that glorious Kingdom, when by rights we ought to be lying dead in that dark Egyptian night. The wonder of it all demands that like the Levites, we give our lives *back* to God, in service towards His children.

We are come *now* "to God the judge of all" (Heb. 12:23); God is *now* enthroned as judge (Ps. 93:2; Mt. 5:34 "the heaven *is* God's throne"). We are now inescapably in God's presence (Ps. 139:2); and 'God's presence' is a phrase used about the final judgment in 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10. Hence "God is [now] the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another" (Ps. 75:7) – all of which He will also do at the last day (Lk. 14:10). So "The day of the Lord is coming, but it is even now" (Mic. 7:4 Heb.). God isn't passive to human behaviour- right now "To every matter there is a time and a judgment (LXX *krisis*)" (Ecc. 8:6 RVmg.). He perceives our actions right now as critically important. And this should highlight to us the crucial importance of life and right living today.

12:24 The blood of Christ speaks a message, better than that of Abel. It is a voice that shakes heaven and earth (Heb. 12:24,26). This is after the pattern of how the commanding voice of Yahweh was heard above the blood sprinkled on "the atonement cover of the ark of the Testimony" (Num. 7:89 NIV). It shows forth, as a voice, God's righteousness (Rom. 3:25,26 RV). The ark was made of shittim wood- from a root meaning 'to flog, scourge or pierce', all replete with reference to the cross. And it was there on that wooden box that Yahweh was declared in the blood sprinkled upon it. Note how there is an association between the blood of atonement and the throne of judgment in 2 Sam. 6:2 and Is. 37:16, as if we see a foretaste of our judgment in the way we respond to the Lord's outpoured blood for us. The Lord Jesus in His time of death is the "propitiation", or rather 'the place of propitiation' for our sins, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. "There I will meet with thee, and I will

commune with thee from above the mercy-seat... of all things which I will give thee in commandment" (Ex. 25:20-22). The blood of Christ is therefore to be associated with the commanding voice of God, such is the imperative within it. Rev. 19:13 draws a connection between Christ's title as "the word of God" and the fact His clothing is characterised by the blood of His cross. Ps. 40:9 describes how the Lord Jesus accomplished God's will as the ultimate sacrifice, through the death of the cross. That death is foretold by the Lord, in the prophetic perfect, as 'preaching righteousness to the great congregation' [LXX *ekklesia*]. In living out the dying of the man Christ Jesus in our daily lives, we are making the witness of Christ.

12:25 The events of the crucifixion are an epitome of who the Lord most essentially was and is. His soul was made 'sin' in that He "poured out His soul unto death" (Is. 53:12). The Hebrew for "poured out" also means to make naked, to stretch out. The Lord bared His soul, who He essentially was, was displayed there for all to see; the wine was His blood which was Him, in the sense that the cross is who the son of God essentially was and is and shall ever be. "This is Jesus" was and is the title over the cross. There, for our redemption, He died (Heb. 9:15), He gave us *Himself* (1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14), His life (Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45), His blood (1 Pet. 1:18,19; Eph. 1:7). His death, His life, His blood, these are all essentially *Himself*. The blood of Jesus speaks to us as if *He personally* speaks to us; He is personified as His blood (Heb. 12:24,25). This is the preaching (Gk. the word) of the cross. Paul makes the connection between the voice of Christ's blood and the earthquake that shook all things at the time of the Old Covenant's inauguration. The voice of that blood can shake *all things* with the exception of the Kingdom, which cannot be shaken. This is the power of the cross. Human words, platform speaking, magazine articles- all these are so limited, although our communal life is inevitably built around them. See on Jn. 6:51; Heb. 9:20.

12:28 It is our holding fast that is our acceptable service (Heb. 12:28 mg.); not the occasional heroics of outstanding acts of obedience. See on Heb. 11:27.

12:29 "Our God is a consuming fire [as manifested in the AD70 burning of Jerusalem]. Let brotherly love continue". This would imply that there was a marked lack of brotherly love in the lead up to AD70- also mentioned in Rev.2:4; Lk.12:45. And with the need to fight the inevitable apostasy in the body in these last days it is so easy for an unloving, bitter attitude to develop. Sadly this prophecy is proving far too true.

13:1- see on Lk. 12:42.

13:2- see on Rom. 12:13.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers (i. e. the itinerant spirit gifted prophets, cp. 2 Jn. 10): for thereby some have entertained Angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2) refers to preachers being entertained as if they are Angels- suggesting that in the preaching of the Gospel we are as it were following where the Angel has gone before?

13:3 If we are truly members of the one body, we will be affected by the sufferings of others in that body. The fact we are members of the one body of Jesus should exclude all self-centred feelings, in the sense that if one other part of the body suffers or rejoices, then we are to be affected by this. Heb. 13:3 tells us to "*remember* them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body". We are to feel as if we are inside the body of our brethren. This is quite something. There is a purposeful ambiguity here. Whose body? The body of Jesus, or that of the suffering brother? Effectively, the one is the other. We can truly place ourselves in the place of others. The only other time the Greek word translated "remember" occurs is in Heb. 2:3: "What is man that thou art *mindful* of him". Because of the almost senseless mindfulness of God for us down here on this speck of a planet, dust and water as we are... we must be inspired to likewise be mindful of our suffering brethren.

13:5 Moses recalled how God had said to him "The LORD thy God He will go over before thee", and then said to Joshua "be strong and of a good courage, fear not nor be afraid of them: for the

LORD *thy* God (the same Angel called 'the LORD thy God' in relation to Moses), He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee nor forsake thee" (Dt. 31:3,6,7). These words are quoted in Heb. 13:5, and it is good to note the original Angelic context in which the words were used: "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I (the Angel) will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord (i. e. the Angel) is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me". Later on we see that Joshua did conceive of God in terms of the Angel- he took Moses' exhortation. Joshua was encouraged that " As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5). But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God.

Heb. 13:5 combines quotes from Gen. 28:15; Josh. 1:5 and Dt. 31:16. Heb. 13:5 doesn't quote any of them exactly, but mixes them together. See on Rom. 11:26.

Those Old Testament promises are surely relevant to us: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said (to you, as well as Joshua), I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). Notice once again that it isn't the actual possession of wealth that is condemned, but the way of life that seeks more than what we have been given. This is the real danger of materialism.

"Marriage is honourable in all... but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" - i.e. they were within the ecclesia and responsible. This is matched by 1 Pet.3:1-5 warning that the sisters were increasingly rebelling against their great prototypes of Eve and Sarah, unwittingly egged on by their unspiritual husbands. So many other New Testament passages imply a surge of marriage and sex related problems in the run up to AD70. The ecclesia of Israel was an adulterous generation; this was their main characteristic (Mt. 16:4). Looking around our sisterhood and brotherhood today there can be no doubt about the reference of all this to our last days. Add to this the parallels with Sodom and the times of Noah in this respect too. No wonder Paul advocated the single life for the last days.

13:7- see on 1 Tim. 3:4.

Elders are especially responsible. They can shut up, or open, the Kingdom to men. They watch "in behalf of" the souls of the ecclesia (Heb. 13:7 RV). Their very examples can influence the flock positively or negatively- for "like priest like people" is a Biblical idea. When the leaders "offered themselves willingly", so did the people (Jud. 5:2,9).

Respect must be earned by elders, never demanded. Their way of life is the basis of their authority (Heb. 13:7); in this sense, we have the choice whom to consider as our elders, whom we will respect and follow. Jesus taught as one who had authority, unlike the scribes (Mk. 1:22). Yet the Scribes had authority in terms of their position, and yet they were not respected; and hence they couldn't teach with authority as Jesus could.

"Remember them that have the rule over you" implies there was a tendency to despise ecclesial elders- also mentioned as a last days problem in 1 Pet.5:5; 2 Pet.2:10 etc. The world's spirit of independence and self-determination seems to have affected the latter day ecclesias too.

13:8 There will be many "ages" to come, as there have doubtless been many "ages" of previous creations already (Rom. 1:25; 9:5; Heb. 13:8); but for our "age" alone was the only begotten Son of God given as a representative of *us*, the humans who live in this brief "age". God thus describes Himself as a first timer falling in love with His people; as a young man marries a virgin, so God marries us (Is. 62:5); Israel were as the lines graven on a man's palm, with which he was born (Is. 49:16). Thus from absolute eternity, we were the great "all things" to Almighty God, the God of all, all past and future creations.

13:9 It's easy to assume that the arguments about "regulations about food" (Heb. 13:9) in the first century hinged about what *types* of food should be eaten, i.e. whether the Mosaic dietary laws should be observed or not. But the angst about "food" was more passionately about *with whom* you ate. Peter explains in Acts 11:3 how utterly radical it was for a Jew to eat with a Gentile. Bearing this in mind, the way Jew and Gentile Christians ate together at the Lord's supper would've been a breathtaking witness of unity to the watching world. And yet ultimately, Jew and Gentile parted company and the church divided, laying itself wide open to imbalance and every manner of practical and doctrinal corruption as a result. The problem was that the Jews understood 'eating together' as a sign of agreement, and a sign that you accepted those at your table as morally pure. The Lord's 'table manners' were of course purposefully the opposite of this approach. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue With Trypho* 47.2-3) mentions how the Jewish Christians would only eat with Gentile Christians on the basis that the Gentiles firstly adopted a Jewish way of life. And this is the nub of the problem- demanding that those at your table are like you, seeing eating together as a sign that the other has accepted your positions about everything. The similarities with parts of the 21st century church are uncanny.

13:10 In the same way as the Jews were connected with the altar by reason of eating what was upon it, so all who are connected with the Christ-altar (Heb. 13:10) show this by eating of the memorial table. If we deny the breaking of bread to brethren, we are stating that they are outside covenant relationship with God, that they have no part in Israel.

13:12 The Lord died that He might "sanctify" us to God. This is the word used by the LXX to describe the consecration of the priests to service of the body of Israel (Ex. 28:41). If we reject the call to priesthood today, we reject the point of the Lord's saving suffering for us.

13:13- see on Mt. 27:32; Jn. 8:56.

We may boldly say that we will *not* be fearful, as Joshua was, because God has addressed to *us* the very words which He did to Joshua: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5,6). In this especially, Joshua is our example. When Heb. 13:13 speaks of *us* going forth outside the camp, perhaps there is a reference to Joshua who dwelt with Moses outside the camp- thus making Joshua symbolic of us all.

We are to go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach, his 'having it cast in the teeth' (Gk.; Heb. 13:13). It's as if He is still there, outside the city gates, and we shoulder our crosses and His reproach as He walked the Via Dolorosa, and go out to be crucified next to Him, as we endure being fools for Christ's sake in our worldly decisions. It's a rather strange idea, at first consideration. But His sufferings are ongoing. The cross is still there- wherever we go, and however far we fall away from Him.

The cross convicts of sin, for we are impelled by it to follow Christ in going forth "without the camp" (Heb. 13:13), following the path of the leper who had to go forth without the camp (Lev. 13:46).

We'd sooner skip over the words of Deuteronomy 23:12-13 than analyze them closely: "Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith". Yet there can be no doubt that this is one of the source passages for the words of Hebrews 13:13: "Let us go forth therefore unto him (Jesus) without the camp, bearing his reproach". When the Israelite soldier had a call of nature, he went forth "without the camp", doubtless with a sense of sheepishness as he carried his spear-cum-spade with him. Everyone knew what he was doing. This commonplace incident is picked up by the Spirit and made relevant to the Jewish Christians going forth from the camp of Israel, carrying with them the obvious reproach of the cross of Christ. Again, we labour the point: this just isn't the way we use language.

13:14- see on Eph. 2:19.

13:15- see on 1 Pet. 2:5.

The peace offering was offered with unleavened cakes as well (cp. the Passover, a clear type of the memorial meeting). The bitterness of sin was to be ever remembered, amidst the joy of peace with God. The description of the peace offering as "the sacrifice of thanksgiving" is alluded to in Heb. 13:15: "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God"- praise and thanks for our spiritual peace with God, our forgiveness through His grace.

True sacrifice is praise of God; thus Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac was "praise" (Gen. 22:5). Israel in their repentance "will account our lips as calves" (Hos. 14:3 LXX, RVmg.), i.e. as sacrifices. The "fruit of the lips" there was repentance. Which is why the Hebrew writer says that we "make confession to his name" with the fruit of our lips (13:15 RV). Continually we should offer this sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), the thankfulness that wells up from knowing we are forgiven, the joy born of regular, meaningful repentance. And we do this "by" or 'on account of' the sacrifice of Jesus for us, which enables this forgiveness and thereby repentance (Heb. 13:12,15).

"Continually" in itself suggests that "praise" does not mean singing or musical expression. This "sacrifice of praise" is a quotation from Jer. 33:11, which describes our offering "the sacrifice of praise... for his mercy" at the beginning of the Kingdom. Praise will [and does] bring forth sacrifice / action. Yet "praise" here is the same Hebrew word translated "thanksgiving"; and the sacrifice of thanksgiving was the peace offering, a commemoration of our free conscience and the peace of sin forgiven (Lev. 7:12-15). If we seriously confess our sins and believe in forgiveness, we should be experiencing a foretaste of the praise we will be offering at the start of the Kingdom, as we embark upon eternity. Our offering of this sacrifice of praise will be "continual" if we continually maintain a good conscience through the confession of our sins. This is surely a high standard to have placed before us: to *continually* confess our sins, to *continually* receive God's mercy, and therefore to live *continually* in a spirit of grateful praise. The way David praises God so ecstatically for immutable things and principles (e.g. His character) is a great example in this (e.g. Ps. 33:3-5); our tendency is to only seriously praise God when He resolves the unexpected crises of life.

The Name of God of itself elicits repentance. Faced with the wonder of who He is, we can't be passive to it. We realize and are convicted of our sin sheerly by the reality of who He is, was and shall be. Heb. 13:15 speaks of the fruit of our lips, giving confession to His Name. The "fruit of lips" in Hos. 14:2 RVmg. to which the writer alludes is clearly enough, in the context, the confession of sin. And the context in Heb. 13:12 is that Christ's blood was shed to sanctify us. That declaration of the Name elicits a confession of sin, albeit in words of praise, to His Name. Mic. 6:9 has the same theme. When the Lord's voice calls to the city demanding repentance, "the man of wisdom shall see [perceive] thy name"- i.e. repent. We come to know God's Name in practice through the cycles of sin-repentance-forgiveness by God which we all pass through. It is through this process that we come to know the very essence of God's Name. Thus Is. 43:25 LXX: "I am "I AM", who erases your iniquities". We come to know His Name, that it really *is* ("I am") all about forgiveness and salvation of sinners. See on Eph. 3:15.

13:16 The letter to the Hebrew Christians describes salvation and the Kingdom with the idea of inheritance. The believers had possessions (Heb. 10:34), had been generous to others (Heb. 6:10), and yet needed the exhortation to "not live for money; be content with what you have" (Heb. 13:5) and to "share what you have with others" (Heb. 13:16). We could surmise that this audience weren't unlike many of us today- not overly wealthy, but sorely tempted to be obsessed by possessions and material advantage. And to them, as to us, the writer emphasizes that salvation in Christ is the ultimate inheritance or possession (Heb. 1:2,4,14, 6:12,17; 9:15; 11:7; 12:17); this is the ultimate "profit" (Heb. 13:17). Hence Esau was quoted as an example- he gave up his inheritance for the sake of a material meal (Heb. 12:15-17). The *eternal* inheritance which is promised to us in the Gospel, rooted as it is in the promises to the Jewish fathers, should make us not seek for great material inheritance in this present world.

13:17 Elders must give an account for their flock (Heb. 13:17)- implying that there will be a 'going through' with them of all in their care. The drunken steward was condemned because he failed to feed the rest of the household and beat them.

13:18 Heb. 13:18 seems to imply that the more they prayed and the more Paul lived honestly, the sooner he would be released from prison: "Pray for us: for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring to live honestly in all things. And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner" (RV). Thus prayer can hasten things, given certain preconditions are fulfilled. So it is in our experiences, and so it may be with the Lord's return.

It was accepted in Judaism, as well as in many other contemporary religions, that faithful saints [e.g. the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets etc, in Judaism's case] could intercede for the people. Yet in the New Testament, *all* believers are urged to intercede for each other, even to the point of seeking to gain forgiveness for others' sins (1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18; James 5:15). They were *all* to do this vital work. The radical nature of this can easily be overlooked by us, reading from this distance.

13:21 We work God's will, and He works in us (Heb. 13:21 Gk.). There is a mutuality between God and man.

13:22

Hebrews: Breaking Of Bread Sermon

Introduction

Sometimes it's best to present the end conclusion and then the evidence. I want to suggest that the letter to the Hebrews is actually a breaking of bread sermon first given by Paul to the Jerusalem ecclesia, against a background of Judaist pressure to return to the Law, and also bearing in mind some specific moral and doctrinal problems which were in the ecclesia. If you read it through out loud, the "letter" takes about 45 minutes. The last few verses seem to be 'tacked on' to turn it into a letter. Paul asks them to "suffer the word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22), although, he says, it was a brief one. This would imply that usually "the word of exhortation" was a lot longer. Remember how Paul exhorted all night at Troas at the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7-9).

There is evidence that the early breaking of bread service was based upon the Synagogue Sabbath service. Heb. 13:17,24 speak of "them that have the rule over you" , the language of the 'ruler of the synagogue' (cp. Lk. 8:49; 13:14; Acts 18:8). There were weekly portions of readings which were read, similar to the *Bible Companion* ⁽¹⁾ and then expounded by the Rabbi and any others who would like to offer a "word of exhortation" (Acts 13:15). Acts 13:15 is the only other place apart from Heb. 13:22 that "the word of exhortation" occurs. It is clearly a synagogue phrase. It is possible that "suffer the word of exhortation" was also a Synagogue phrase, said at the end of the 'exhortation' on the Sabbath. This suggests that the whole of Hebrews was a "word of exhortation" at a Sabbath breaking of bread (probably this was the day the Jewish ecclesias met in Jerusalem), being a commentary on the readings for that week (perhaps the Melchizedek passages and parts of the Law), constantly bringing the point round to the death of the Lord Jesus. In this, Hebrews is an ideal sermon: it continually comes round to the work of Christ.

Hebrews is also a series of quotations and allusions (over half the sermon is comprised of these), interspersed with commentary and brief practical exhortation (e.g. to disfellowship false teachers, 12:15,16), all tied together around the theme of Christ's sacrifice and our response to it. Our sermons should be Bible based, after this same pattern. This is surely the way to construct sermons: re-reading verses from the chapters in the readings, commenting on them, bringing it all round to the work of Christ. A recurring theme of the Hebrews sermon is a reminding of the hearers of the reality of their future reward, made sure by Christ's work (4:9; 5:9; 6:10,19; 9:28; 10:34; 11:40; 12:10). This should surely be a theme embedded in our sermons: the personal Hope of the Kingdom, made sure for us by the work of Christ.

Obvious Relevance

So much in Hebrews is obviously relevant to the memorial meeting. The wine represents the blood of the new covenant. That new covenant is repeated in 8:10,11; and the word "covenant" occurs 14 times, and the parallel "testament" 7 times. The blood of the covenant is explicitly referred to in 7:22; 8:6; 9:1 and 13:20. 12:24-26 personifies that blood as a mighty voice speaking to us, manifesting the voice of God, capable of shaking Heaven and earth. This is truly the power of appeal behind a consideration of Christ's blood, as symbolised in the wine. There are 22 references to "blood", 4 to "body", 8 to "sacrifice" i.e. the body of the animal, and 9 to "offering", also a reference to the body of the animal. The breaking of bread is designed to remember the body and blood of our Lord's sacrifice. And this is exactly the theme of Hebrews. Yet at the same time as doing this, Paul was getting over his specific point to the Jerusalem ecclesia: the utter supremacy of Christ's sacrifice ought to obviate the need for any other theory of reconciliation to God. If only we could exhort like this: make the specific points we need to make under the umbrella of a *sustained* emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ.

Partakers Of Christ

1 Cor. 10:17,21 (probably an epistle known to the Jerusalem ecclesia) speaks of us being *partakers* of the one bread at the breaking of bread, *partaking* of the Lord's table there. The same word is used in Heb. 3:14 concerning being *partakers* of Christ, again suggesting that Hebrews was first spoken in a breaking of bread context. The same word occurs in Heb. 12:8: we are *partakers* of Christ's sufferings. We are Christ's *partakers* (AV "fellows"; 1:9); Christ *partakes* of our nature (2:14). Yet we are only ultimately *partakers* of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence (3:14). All these ideas are brought together in our *partaking* of the emblems of Christ at the memorial meeting. In them, Paul is reasoning, we should see our partaking of Christ's sufferings as a response to His partaking of our nature, and thereby our partaking of the promised reward, the "heavenly calling" (3:1).

Oral Style

The references to "let us" do this or that are all so appropriate to a verbal sermon, encouraging the listeners to respond to the work of Christ. "We see Jesus" (2:9), "Consider... Jesus" (3:1; 7:4; 12:3) would fit in well to the context of a sermon given with the emblems before the audience. "Concerning whom in our discourse..." (Heb. 5:11 Diaglott) would certainly fit in to an oral discourse. "And, so to say..." (Heb. 7:9 RV) is another example. Saying above, Sacrifice and offering..." (Heb. 10:8 RV) sounds as if a scroll is being read and quotation made from passages "above" in the scroll. "Of the things which we have *spoken* (RV we are saying) this is the sum" (8:1) is language more appropriate to a transcript of an address than to a written composition. "As I may so say" (7:9) is another such example. "One in a certain place..." (2:6) is an odd way to write in a formal letter. Yet it fits in if this is a transcript of a sermon; it's the sort of thing you would say verbally when you know your audience can't turn up the passage. The word of exhortation contained in Hebrews was in "few words" (13:22); but this is a bad translation. Strong defines it as meaning "a short time, for a little while" ⁽²⁾ - i.e. Paul is saying 'It won't take long in terms of time to hear this, but consider the points carefully'. Note that the RV speaks of "suffer the exhortation", unlike AV "the word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22). One almost gets the impression that Paul is speaking with great constraints on his time: "the cherubims... of which we cannot now speak particularly... what shall I more say? for the time is failing me, running out" (Heb. 9:5; 11:32 Gk.). These sort of comments would surely be irrelevant in a written letter. But as a transcript of a live sermon, they make perfect sense. M. R. Vincent in his *Word Studies Of The NT* observed in Hebrews "a rhythmical structure of sentences (with) sonorous compounds", as if what is written had first been spoken.

"Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God" (13:15) would be appropriate to communal praise at a memorial meeting. Likewise "Let us draw near... we draw nigh... let us come boldly before the throne of grace" (4:16; 7:19) is appropriate to the congregation coming before God in collective and private prayer, culminating in the 'drawing nigh' of taking the emblems (cp. the idea of 'coming to God' in 11:6). The emphasis on the power of Christ as a mediator (7:25; 9:24) would be appropriate in this context of rallying the congregation's faith in their prayers and confessions of sin. The encouragement to "exhort one another *daily*" (3:13; 10:25) takes on a special relevance if said at the breaking of bread; Paul would have been implying: 'Don't just listen to me exhorting you today, or a brother doing it once a week; you must *all* exhort each other, every day, not just on Shabbat!'.

Self Examination

There is another sustained theme in this sermon, in addition to all the stress on our Lord's sacrifice. It is the repeated warning as to the likelihood of apostasy (2:1-3; 3:12; 4:1; 6:4-8; 10:26-30,38; 12:15-17,25,27) and the possibility of abusing the blood of Christ (10:26-30)- exactly after the pattern of 1 Cor. 11:26-30, which explicitly makes this warning in the context of the breaking of bread. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye [again, oral style], shall he be thought worthy, who hath...counted the blood of the covenant... as unholy thing?" (Heb. 11:29) is almost allusive to 1 Cor. 11:29, warning of drinking damnation to oneself through an incorrect attitude to the memorial cup. This kind of emphasis in a 45 minute sermon wouldn't go down well in a Western church. Yet the more we consider the wonder of the work of Christ, the more we will be driven to consider our own weakness, and the need to "hold fast" our connection with it. This is why we should examine ourselves at the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 11:28). "Hold on" is another related theme (3:6,14; 4:14; 10:23). And here and there we find brief, specific practical warnings which were doubtless especially relevant to the initial audience. It's amazing that Paul got so much in 45 minutes. Yet this is what is possible. Note that all the exhortations in Hebrews, the comfort, the warnings, are all an outcome of a consideration of first principles, especially relating to the atonement. Thus Paul turns the fact that Christ is our *representative* round to teach the need for unity amongst us whom He represents (2:11).

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" (3:12) is very relevant to a call for self-examination in the presence of the emblems. "Let us" boldly ask for forgiveness (4:16) could be read in this context too. The reminder that Christ examines us, that we are naked and opened in His sight, would have encouraged them to be open with him in their self-examination (4:12). Paul reminds them of their initial conversion (3:6,14; 6:11; 10:22,32), in the same way as the Passover was intended to provoke national and personal self-examination, looking back to their spiritual beginnings at the Red Sea (cp. baptism). He encourages them with a reminder that Christ is such a powerful priest that He can really cleanse our conscience (9:14; 10:2,22); the blood of the *new* covenant can destroy an evil conscience (10:22 cp. 9:20). Therefore, Paul reasons, with this clear conscience, "let us draw near" - to the emblems, to the reality of our relationship with God. Again we see a marked emphasis on the need for self-examination at the breaking of bread.

Having created this background of self-examination, Paul is able to more easily hand out explicit rebuke; e.g. "Ye are dull of hearing" (5:11-14; 12:5). Yet at the same time Paul expressed a very confident view of his audience; e.g. "We are persuaded better things of you" (6:9; 10:38,39). This is an important aspect of exhortation; to convey to the brethren and sisters the fact that we genuinely respect them as brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, with the sure Hope and possibility of salvation.

There is an emphasis on the good works which a true understanding of the first principles should bring (4:11; 9:14; 10:24; 12:28). This is exactly in harmony with the idea presented above: that exposition of first principle doctrine is the basis for practical exposition. This emphasis on the need for works in response to the doctrines of the atonement could suggest that Paul expected the congregation to make resolves at the breaking of bread concerning their future behaviour. Maybe

this is behind his appeal for them to appreciate that Christ offers our works to God as the priests did the sacrifices in the past (5:1; 8:3,4; 9:9).

Personal Relevance

The Hebrews sermon is shot through with internal connections; just as our preaching sessions should constantly refer back to each other. Paul is trying to get the brethren and sisters to see that if they respond to his exhortations as they should, they will be connected in spirit with the faithful heroes of the Old Testament; they will become connected with "the spirits of just men made perfect" (12:23). Thus Noah was moved with fear, Paul says (11:7), just as we should be (4:1); Sarah "judged him faithful who had promised" (11:11), just as we should (10:23); as Moses bore the reproach of Christ (11:26), so should we (13:13). The breaking of bread is the equivalent of the Passover under the Old Covenant; therefore 11:28 highlights how Moses kept the Passover in faith as to the power of the sprinkled blood of the lamb. The implication is that if we take the wine with a similar faith in Christ's blood, we will come become united with the spirit of Moses.

There are many of these inter-connections within Hebrews. Our "afflictions" (10:32) uses the same word translated "suffering" in the context of Christ's sufferings (2:9,10); we are to "endure" (10:32) as Christ "endured" the shame of the cross (12:2,3 same word). Through these inter-connections, Paul is trying to make the sufferings of Christ relevant to them. We may never hope to achieve as much as Paul did in those 45 minutes. But the principles remain for us to try to copy. Therefore we should try not to offer unconnected comments on the readings, we should seek to tie them together under the umbrella of the work of the Lord Jesus, we should relate His sufferings to those of our brethren and sisters, we should seek to inspire them with the fact that they are fellowshipping the hope of the faithful recorded in the Bible records.

A Pattern For Us

The sermon to the Hebrews becomes more significant for us as we consider its likely background. In his book *The Jewish War*, Josephus explains in detail how the Jews in Palestine revolted against the Romans in AD66-70. Initially, everything went well for them. The Romans were defeated at the foot of the temple mount, the legions of Cestius Gallus were defeated, and the Jewish zealots attributed these successes to God's rewarding of their loyalty to the Law. They purified and rededicated the temple, and appointed a High Priest who was not a collaborator with Rome. The zealots spoke of the liberation of Israel in strong religious terms; there was a great wave of enthusiasm for the Law. It seems that Hebrew Christians were caught up in this revival, and of course all Jews were expected to take up arms and fight. The exhortation to the Hebrews therefore stressed the passing of the Mosaic Law, the need to rally around Christ as the true altar and the only true, pure High Priest (Heb. 4:14; 10:19-25; 13:10). There was the command to move outside the camp of Israel, i.e. Jerusalem (Heb. 13:13). And the institutions of the temple, which the Jewish nationalists were so glorifying, are shown to be of no value compared to the blood of Christ. The references to the temptations of Jesus (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15) may be references back to the wilderness temptations, where He faced the same choice that the Jewish Christians had- to opt for a Kingdom here and now, throwing off the Roman yoke; or to hold fast our faith in the Kingdom which is surely to come. The speaker / writer to the Hebrew Christians doesn't specifically tackle the issues affecting them in bald terms. He instead sets a masterful example of how we should approach issues and weaknesses which need our comment. He adopts a Christ-centred and Biblical approach, demonstrating that he is exactly aware of the issues which face them, and reasoning from unshakeable principles towards specific applications of them.

The Final Appeal

All good sermons have a strong final appeal and focus on the sacrifice of Christ. Heb. 12:23 appears grammatically and structurally to be a climax: "Ye are come unto... the general assembly and church of the firstborn". It is possible to understand this 'general assembly' as a reference to the combined

ecclesia present at the breaking of bread. Indeed the Orthodox churches use this verse in this sense in their eucharist liturgy, rendering it "the festival of the firstborn" (3). Chapter 13 contains a series of brief practical exhortations just before the final appeal to home in on the body and blood of our Lord. 13:10 then goes on to compare us to the priests eating the sacrifice on the altar; a picture so appropriate to partaking the emblems at the memorial meeting. 13:11-15 is surely a fitting climax to the sermon, as the audience prepared to take the emblems: "The *bodies* of those beasts...Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own *blood, suffered*...let us go forth therefore unto Him, bearing his reproach... by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually* (not just at this meeting)" . Notice the emphasis on the *body* and *blood* of Christ, and an appeal for our response in praise rather than further self-examination. The whole sermon started with God (the very first word in 1:1), and ends with God; reflecting the fact that Christ's work is a manifestation of God, and is intended to bring us to the Father, and eternally reconcile us with Him.

Indeed, a fair case can be made that most of the NT epistles are in fact based upon sermons read out at the breaking of bread service. Given that most Christians would have been illiterate, the memorial meeting would have been the logical time and place to read out the latest letter from Paul or Peter, in any case (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). Consider how Paul writes to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 5:3-5 as if he is present with them at their memorial meeting ["ye being gathered together..."]. Many of the endings and greetings of the letters have some reference to the memorial meeting. The commands to pray and kiss each other which conclude some of the letters must be compared to the information we find in Justin Martyr's description of the early communion meetings: "When we have ceased from prayer, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president bread and a cup of wine" (*Apology* I, 65). The strange ending of 1 Corinthians 16:20-24 is an obvious allusion to the passage in the *Didache*, describing the words spoken at the breaking of bread meetings in the first century: "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maranatha...Amen". According to the *Didache*, the president at the memorial meeting said: " If any man is holy, let him come; if any be not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen". Indeed, it is possible that the book of Revelation is a series of prophecies initially given at ecclesial gatherings. The whole book is punctuated by passages of liturgy and worship (4).

Homework

The evidence provided here that 'Hebrews' was a sermon at the breaking of bread is to me quite strong. As we've said, in an oral culture of illiterate converts, it is to be expected that the majority of Paul or Peter's letters would've been read aloud to the assembled congregations when they gathered for worship. There is reference to a "holy kiss" at the end of some of the letters (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14). This was understood by Justin, Tertullian and Hippolytus to be a signal to the hearers that now the sermon had ended, and they were to kiss each other and begin partaking of the Lord's supper (5). Whether that's the case or not, there's some major homework here for the enthusiast- to study each of the New Testament letters as a sermon appropriate to the breaking of bread service.

Notes

- (1) See Joe Hill, 'An Ancient Bible Companion', *Tidings*, series 1994/5.
- (2) The only other times this construction occurs is in Heb. 2:7,9, where we read that Christ was for "a little while" (RV mg.) lower than Angels.
- (3) Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom Of Morality* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996) p. 107.
- (4) This idea is developed further in Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM, 1953).
- (5) References provided in Martin Hengel, *Studies In The Gospel Of Mark* (London: SCM, 1985) p. 176.

13:23- see on 1 Thess. 2:17.

13:37- see on Mk. 13:37.

JAMES

1:1 A good case can be made that James was written as a follow up to the Council of Jerusalem. It's interesting to observe all the connections between the letter of James and the Acts 15 council. Note some of the more obvious: The salutation (James 1:1 = Acts 15:34); "Listen, my brothers" (James 2:5 = Acts 15:13); "The name which was called upon you" (James 2:7 = Acts 15:17); "Keep unspotted from the world" (James 1:27 = Acts 15:29); and there are at least three Greek words which occur only in James and Acts 15 (James 1:27 = Acts 15:14; James 5:19 = Acts 15:19; James 1:16,19,25 = Acts 15:25). Perhaps the letter of James is in some way his retraction of his wrong attitude, an example of where a man comes to understand what works are really important... or perhaps it was to dissociate himself from those who are called "certain persons who came from James" (Gal. 2:12), as if he was not actually behind them. Perhaps, however, it was that James saw through church politics for what they were, and focused upon the need for real, practical spirituality, the works of faith and spirit rather than mere legalism.

The reasons for believing James to be the Lord's brother are well summarized elsewhere; his introduction is therefore an essay in humility and not playing on human relationships as a means to assert authority, seeing he does not mention this fleshly relationship: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ". James the Lord's brother being the clear leader of the early church, it would be fitting that at least one of his letters (and Hebrews too?) be preserved. His high position of respect is indicated by Mk.15:40 describing a "James the less" - i.e. than the great James the Lord's brother. It was not until after James' death that the Gospel mushroomed among the Gentiles, which again points to a basically Jewish readership being catered for. The Lord's brothers having been sceptical of him during his ministry (Jn.7:3-5), James' depth of appreciation must have developed at lightning speed for him to write this epistle at a relatively early date. Two outstanding characteristics of James are the constant allusions to previous Scripture, especially the Gospels and Proverbs, and the intensely practical understanding of the moment by moment spiritual battle which we all face. It is worth noting that the most senior brother of the early church scored highly on these points. His humility in calling himself a servant of the Lord Jesus is remarkable- Paul could legitimately lay weight to his reasoning by saying he had seen Christ in the flesh (1 Cor.9:1; 2 Cor.5:16); how much more so could James have gently pointed out his "(knowing) Christ after the flesh"?

"Greeting" (v.1) means literally 'I wish you joy'. James then goes on to define what that joy is: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations". And so we are introduced to the basic theme of James- the machinery of human nature and our evil desires, and how to overcome them. Contrary to how it is often read, the temptations here are spiritual temptations- so the context of the chapter and letter require. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (NIV "evil desire"), and enticed" (1:14). The real temptations in life are to give way to our evil desires; the trials of life like illness or disaster may not necessarily tempt us so strongly in this way. It is easy to think that 'temptation' refers to these 'physical' trials, and to see those problems as things in themselves to be bravely endured. But whether we lose a leg or miss a bus, the same spiritual temptation of frustration- or whatever- may be presented to each sufferer. The flesh tends to make a big difference between physical and spiritual temptations; but to God- and James- the spiritual temptations are of paramount importance; whatever physical temptations we have are not for their own sake but to create the situation which our evil desires will use to tempt us spiritually.

1:2 We must pray not to be led into temptation (Mt. 6:13); but when we fall into such temptation (s.w.), count it all joy, James says (1:2). The exercise of praying not to experience those temptations was for our spiritual benefit, and God is willing that it should be so. James exhorts us to count falling into spiritual temptation as a joy; instead of the 'here we go again...', 'sin after sin' kind of attitude descending on us as we sense such temptations approaching. We must instead rejoice that here is another opportunity to please God on the highest level possible; to have an evil desire in

your heart and to overcome it. The idea of falling ("When ye fall..") may create the idea of giving way to the temptations. But there may be some degree to which we fall a little way before we are tempted: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away (from his normal safe spiritual self, abiding in Christ) of his own lust" (1:14). There is surely no real temptation if the evil desire appears so unattractive as to not even lead us part way towards realizing it. Thus the devil in the sense of Christ's natural desires (Heb.4:15 cp. James 1:14,15) led Jesus away from His own supreme spirituality to tempt him.

1:3 "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (v.3). Our joy at the onset of temptation should be because we know that we have an opportunity to develop permanent spiritual fruit, if only we can respond correctly in those split seconds when the process of being drawn away and enticed is going on. The trying of our faith due to spiritual temptation is in the sense of our faith that God "is able to keep (us) from falling" (Jude 24). In the moment of temptation, whether it be from an unkind word from someone or irritation at someone's natural characteristics, our joy will be helped by our faith that God will keep us from falling, and will not lead us any further into temptation unless we go on ourselves. However, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom.10:17).

It is worth drawing attention to the remarkable parallels between James 1 and 1 Peter 1. The infallible principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture will therefore allow more light to be shed on much of James 1. Peter's parallel to "the trying of your faith worketh patience" is "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith... tried with fire" (1 Pet.1:6,7). A heavy spirit is more likely the result of prolonged spiritual temptation than physical trials, although these were no doubt the cause of the spiritual tests. The fire therefore represents the fire of the flesh, a figure which James also uses regarding the tongue as the epitome of our evil desires (3:5,6). Thus Prov.16:27: "An unGodly man diggeth up evil (out of the evil treasure of his heart- or is this the basis of the wasted talent parable?): and (therefore) in his lips there is as a burning fire"; cp. too 1 Cor.7:9. It is the constant reaction to spiritual trial that forges an acceptable character, not just the receipt of physical trial, as would be the case if the fire only represented persecution in itself. This trial of faith "worketh patience"- which must therefore be defined in this context as the ability to grit one's teeth in the moment of temptation, and cling on to one's faith in God's spiritual protection in the power of the word.

The interpretation of "faith" as faith in God's keeping us from falling (Jude 24) is confirmed by a closer look at Rom.5; "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations *also*"- as if he is saying that the "tribulations" had the same effect as "being justified by faith (in forgiveness), we have peace (through forgiveness) with God...we have access by faith (in forgiveness) into this grace..." (Rom.5:1,2). So we see the equation: "Tribulations" (Rom.5:3)= same effect as having total faith in forgiveness (Rom.5:1,2)= "the trial of your faith" that God will help you overcome your sin (James 1:3), i.e. keep you from spiritually falling (Jude 24). In the language of Rom.5, the "experience" of patiently resisting sin gives birth to hope- confidence and a positive approach, hoping for grace in the last day. The more we overcome the hour by hour niggings of the flesh, the more humbly confident we will be of our eternal future.

1:4 Such patience results in a "perfect work..perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (1:4; note the triple emphasis of the same idea) in terms of spiritual development. The word of God has the power to make perfect (2 Tim.3:16; 1 Cor.13:10), and we have seen its place in developing the faith and patience which James says lead us to perfection. The trial of faith leads to the development of these fruits of the Spirit; yet the word also leads to the same fruits (Jn.15:7 cp. v.4,5). The goals of spiritual development James sets are high- contrast Paul, who frequently laments the realities of the flesh (why the different approach?). Maybe James was alluding to Christ's ultimatum "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect", Mt.5:48. The idea of perfection occurs again in 3:2, where it applies to the man who does not offend in word, and

therefore has his whole life in tight control- again, the result of a mind fully controlled by the word. In the context of sin and forgiveness, Paul's words in Rom.5 take on new meaning: "We glory in (spiritual) tribulations (cp."Count it all joy...") also: knowing that (spiritual) tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom.5:3-5). "Tribulation" is therefore to be equated with "the (spiritual) trial of your faith" in James 1.

"That ye may be perfect" may seem an unreasonably high target. In Eph.4:13 Paul says that through the ministry of the Spirit (now in the word) we are on the way to the "perfect man" state; he implies that he too is on that journey ("till we all come"). Yet in Phil.3:12-17 Paul speaks as if whilst he has not yet reached that state, striving for literal perfection is the same thing as being perfect. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after... reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize... let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded... be followers together of me" in this example of all out striving for a perfect character. Does this indicate that a state of perfection is theoretically possible for us in this life, through developing a full faith in God's total justification of us on account of our being in Christ? Thus both the word and the blood of Christ sanctify us, seeing that the word reveals and develops faith in Christ's sacrifice (Jn.17:17; Heb.10:10-14). Both blood and water (the word- Eph.5:26) came from Christ's side on the cross.

1:5 "If any of you lack wisdom" (1:5)- "wisdom" is associated with the faith and perfection which James well anticipates his readers would complain they lacked. We have seen that the word is the source of such faith, perfection and endurance; it seems fair to equate wisdom with the word. We will see by and by that James makes frequent reference to Proverbs- and in that book wisdom is almost a synonym for the word, in the local instance the Law of Moses, upon which Proverbs is often a commentary. "Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (1:5). Again, James anticipates the natural human fear that a totally spiritual God will upbraid us for our lack of spiritual strength; but God's giving of such strength is "liberal", to whoever asks. James evidently interpreted "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Mt.7:7) as primarily referring to asking for spiritual strength and knowledge. Similarly "...how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things ("the Holy Spirit", Lk.11:13) to them that ask Him?" (Mt.7:11). These passages appear to be alluded to by James here- thus wisdom, the word, the Holy Spirit, good things, "every good gift and perfect gift" (1:17), God's spiritual help to overcome sin, are all equated. These things are further defined in 3:17 as resulting in peace and harmony. "Upbraideth not" can imply to taunt, to cast in the teeth. James implies *God* doesn't do that, implying some others did. No doubt he was referring to the spiritually elitist Judaizers, who would have rejoiced to mock the spiritually immature who humbly sought for spiritual strength to overcome their temptations. "Upbraideth *not*"! God expects us to crawl to Him seeking for such strength to do better. But half the time our love of true spirituality just isn't strong enough to motivate us, and we let our fear of God's holiness and righteousness make us fear His 'upbraiding'.

1:6 "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering". A half hearted 'Dear God please keep me from this sin I think I may well commit soon' is no good. It is easy to conceive of faith as a sense of hope and trust in God in time of physical trial. But far more is it a totality of belief that God will hold us back from sinning as the temptation starts to develop- surely the supreme way of showing faith.

"He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind". There must be a connection with the later description of a controlled tongue being the force that overcomes fierce winds (3:2-4). Words being a reflection of the mind (Mt.12:34), controlled words show a controlled mind, which is through the influence of the word. Such a man is a "perfect man" (3:2)- i.e. matured by the word (2 Tim.3:16,17; 1 Cor.13:10). Thus the only way to ask for spiritual strength is if the mind is firmly controlled by the word, which thus generates an upwards spiritual spiral- "unto every one that hath (of spiritual strength) shall (more) be given... but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Mt.25:29). This parable of the talents must refer to spiritual knowledge and

strength, and the need we have to develop (trade) the spiritual gifts we have been given. Notice how we are given the talents/ gifts of spirituality, totally at the discretion of the Master. In a similar way, the gift of wisdom in James 1:5 equates with the "good and perfect gift... from the Father... the word of truth" of 1:17,18 and the wisdom that descends from above that is pureness, peace, gentleness, mercy etc. in 3:17.

"Wavereth" comes from a root meaning 'division', giving the idea of inner debate. We will see that time and again James is warning us against having a semi-spirituality, whereby only part of our mind is totally influenced by the word, whilst other parts still retain the thinking of the flesh. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed". James being so shot through with allusions to the Gospels, it is tempting to think that James is as it were taking a snapshot of Peter, wavering both in his physical movement and in faith as he stood on the water. Jesus did not upbraid Peter (cp.1:5) for his request for strength and support, but was eager to satisfy it. There is also a possible connection with Eph.4:13,14, which says that the miraculous Spirit gifts were to be possessed *until* the church reached the "perfect man" state, i.e. when the canon was completed (1 Cor.13:8-10 cp. 2 Tim.3:16,17), and that through being in that state they would "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine... and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive". The primary reference is doubtless to the doctrine of the Judaizers. This would liken the brother in James 1 whose faith in the Lord's protection from temptation is weak, to the brother in Ephesians 4 who will not make full use of the word to remain in the "perfect man" state, and is therefore liable to be influenced by false teaching. Both brethren are weak for the same reason- not making full use of the Spirit's gift in the word. Eph.4:13,14 implies that firmly grasping the basic doctrines of the one faith results in us not being blown about by winds. This connection with James teaches that true doctrine will have a very practical effect upon our lives; in this case, by developing a firm faith.

It's significant and instructive that the other leaders of the early church not only accept Peter's authority, but do so exactly because of how he had dealt with his weaknesses and failures. It's as if they see in his humanity a reason to elevate him in their own estimations. Thus Peter's wavering when walking on the water is picked up by James, in one of the earliest of the New Testament letters [note the allusions to Stephen, John the Baptist, the references to Christians as still meeting in the synagogue, etc.- it has been argued by John Robinson that James was in fact the first of the epistles. It seems that the "scattered abroad" audience of James 1:1 refers to the scattering abroad of the Jewish believers in Acts 8:1]. James warns that we shouldn't waver in faith, like a wave on the water, blown and tossed around by the wind (James 1:6). James of course had seen Peter wavering on the water; and he holds up Peter, who at that time was the senior elder of the very early church, as an example of how *not* to be. My point is that the greatness of Peter was in his example of failure and how he overcame it.

1:7 James constantly sets before us the need to strive for a "perfect" (complete, mature) man state, through having a mind wholly committed to the word. His black and white, "hot or cold" approach is now powerfully shown: "Let not that man (the waverer) think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (1:7). This squashes the natural human reasoning that a bit of faith in prayer will lead to a bit of response from God. Faith is an absolute state. We either pray in faith- or with what are effectively empty words. But of course by contrast, if we do not waver, we certainly shall receive of the Lord. Again, there is another warning against semi-spirituality: having faith within certain limits, being content with expecting a small answer to our requests in accordance with our shaky faith. The way James understands human nature shines through, and it is fitting that someone of his experience and insight into the moment by moment ways of the flesh should have been the great leader of the early church. He too must have analysed his sins and temptations like we also can do. The correlation between his being such a senior brother and his evident appreciation of the wiles of the flesh must be significant; something to think about at the next ecclesial election?

1:8- see on Mt. 14:31.

The theme of semi-spirituality continues: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (v.8)- i.e. all his spiritual ways. "Ways" is often used in a spiritual context in Proverbs, to which James alludes so much. The more evident allusion here is to Mt.6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for he will hate the one, and love the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". James inspired interpretation of Matthew would make this apply to our minds. One can quite easily serve two masters physically, externally; as every self-examining Christian should be all too aware. It is only in our heart that we can only serve one master. "Mammon" in the James context is thus not just material goods, but more importantly the lack of a totally spiritual mind which is behind these things. Note again the 'all or nothing' approach. While surely every reader of these words finds this somewhat worrying, tempting to conclude that this exposition is so idealistic as to be out of touch with reality, it does us no harm to reflect that ultimately in God's sight things are in black and white. As we read these words we are either in black or white with God. The ideal standard is set by Christ speaking of taking up the cross daily and following him. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" Paul could say. If our conscience is tuned according to the word, we should be able to sense whether we are "double minded... wavering" or with that totality of commitment to the word in our heart, even if sometimes we falter. Considering these things should make us all recognize that spiritually we are but candles in the wind, desperately needing to make every effort to resist the winds of the flesh, and seek the shelter of Christ and His word of grace which keeps us from falling. "Double minded" means literally 'two souled', showing that the soul can refer also to the spiritual side of man, as well as the carnal. Notice how in the context James is talking about the mind being split into carnal and semi-spiritual divisions. The 'souls' referred to in the phrase 'double minded' would therefore be referring to attitudes of mind.

1:9 "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted" (v.9). The riches which exalt the poor brother are the spiritual riches contained in the word (Ps.119:14; Prov.3:16 etc.). A poor brother being exalted recalls the parable about taking the lowest seat in the ecclesia so we may rise up higher at the judgement. Yet James uses the present tense- "he *is* exalted". This is one of many examples of believers being spoken of as if in prospect they are already in the Kingdom, in the same way as Israel were constituted the Kingdom of God at Sinai after their Red Sea baptism, but were not fully manifested as such politically until their entry into Canaan. Thus "The rich... *is* (present tense) made low (i.e. told to take the lower seat, as he will at judgement)... he *shall* (future) pass away" (v.10). However, this may have had a primary reference to the rich Jews of the first century being stripped of their wealth in some parts of the empire. Note that Heb.10:34 was also written to the scattered, persecuted Christian Jews whom James was addressing: "Ye... took joyfully the spoiling of your goods". If James is alluding to the parable of the wedding feast, then the reference to the poor brethren being given an honoured seating place in God's sight in this life, would have telling reference to the practice of the rich Christian Jews having their own honoured seats in the ecclesias to whom James was writing (2:3). This command to "rejoice" is in the context of v.2 speaking about rejoicing in spiritual trial. For the low brother who was to be exalted, the very thought of such greatness in the Kingdom could be a temptation to pride- and he should rejoice in the chance to fight this. '*Let* him rejoice' shows that the kind of joy James is thinking of would not come naturally, as it would if the brother was just thinking of his exaltation in this life.

1:10 "Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away". 1 Pet.1:24,25 has a similar passage: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever". The fading grass is contrasted by Peter to the enduring Word of God, and this is repeated by James. The humble brother taking the lowest seat in the ecclesia (cp. the more spiritual members being told in 2:3 "sit here under my footstool...stand thou there" because all the chairs were taken by the rich) is connected with the one who asks the wisdom from God (v.5), who is not wavering or double minded, and who

through the word is attaining to the perfect man state (v.4). Thus the poor in this world are rich in the faith that comes by hearing the word of God.

The figure of fading grass suggests reference back to Is.40:5-8: "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together... The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth... surely the people is grass... but the word of our God shall stand for ever". The "glory of the Lord" being revealed primarily refers to Christ's manifestation to Israel at his first coming. The preceding verses 3 and 4 describe John's preparatory work: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness...". "All; flesh" were to see the revelation of God's glory in Christ. This "all flesh" can refer to the Jews, "all" of whom went out into the wilderness to hear John's testimony regarding the coming Christ. This is confirmed by v.7 "The (Jewish) people is grass". The "goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field" would then be a reference to the Jewish law, which was "holy, just and good" but offered a fading glory, which Paul in 2 Cor.3:7-18 said epitomized the Law. The word of the Lord (v.5) and "the spirit of the Lord" (v.7) were to make the grass wither and pass away, although the word would remain. This pointed forward to the ending of the Jewish system and Law through the work of Christ, "the word made flesh", "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor.3:18 R.V.), and the ministry of the word remaining. James seems to have this background in mind when he makes the allusion in 1:9-11 to Is.40. The rich Christian Jews of the first century who were not that humble to the power of the word may well also have been swayed by Judaist arguments. They are being likened to the "grass" of Is.40, which represented the Jewish system which was to be replaced by a permanent, unfading system based on the word. The Messianic Ps.102:4,11 describes our Lord as being "withered like grass", showing how in his life and death on the cross he took upon himself the punishment of apostate Israel. James is neatly exhorting them to commit themselves wholly to the word, lest the demise of the Jewish system should result in their fading away too. Yet there is also the very primary application to the materialism of this group, being obsessed by their earthly riches. "So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways". "Ways" is elsewhere translated "journeyings", and would connect with the reference to the itinerant Jewish traders in 4:13: "Ye (amongst the believers) that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain".

1:11 "For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat ("a hot wind", Gk.), but it withereth the grass... blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (v.11,12) is an obvious allusion to the person who received the word and quickly "sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth", referring to the person who falls away due to temptation (Mt.13:5,20,21). The rich members of the ecclesia had therefore only let the word enter them skin-deep; it had not penetrated far through the "earth" of the flesh. The rising of the sun can refer both to Christ's coming (Mal.4:2) and also to trials. In a sense both these meanings were fulfilled in AD70, when the rich Jews converted just prior to AD70 fell away, having endured only "for a while". The call to let God's word fully penetrate our flesh goes out to us with great urgency, living as we do on the brink of the final period of trial, and the full coming of Christ.

1:12 "Blessed is the man that endureth (spiritual) temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (1:12). Now James is giving us supreme encouragement in those moments when the decision between flesh and spirit looms large. When we endure spiritual temptation, hanging on to the spiritual side of our minds, we will at that moment receive a crown for overcoming in Heaven. Because of this, we will be given the crown of victory at the judgement (2 Tim.4:8), which has been developed as a result of our moment by moment spiritual victories in this life. Therefore each temptation we face is like a mini-judgment seat. This idea of there being some recognition in heaven the moment we achieve a spiritual victory is perhaps based on Mt.5:11,12. So much of James is rooted especially in the Sermon on the mount. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you...rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* (present tense) your reward in Heaven". Our eternal life "is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear

with him in glory" (Col.3:3,4) Similarly Rev.3:11 implies we do now have the crown in a sense: "Hold fast that thou hast (your reward you have in prospect?) that no man take thy crown". Through our trials, God "scourgeth every son whom he receiveth", and therefore we can be spoken of in the continuous tense as "receiving a Kingdom" through our continued correct response to trials (Heb.12:6,28).

1:13 In those moments of spiritual temptation it is easy to recognize that the situation creating the temptation has clearly been arranged by God, and therefore to get bitter against Him. But "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God" (v.13). Now the earlier definition of 'temptation' as the spiritual temptation to sin which arises within us becomes vital. God may put the physical temptation in our way- e.g. the serpent in Eden, God tempting Abraham in Gen.22:1- but our evil desires or "lusts" in our minds (v.14) are alone responsible for our sinning, due to wrongly responding to these physical temptations. Thus God could therefore examine the inner thought process of David's mind to reveal whether he was giving way to the spiritual temptations that would be developed by the physical trials: "Examine me, O Lord, and prove (same word as "tempt" in Gen.22:1) me; try my reins and my heart" (Ps.26:2). Thus "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away" (v.14).

1:14 See on James 1:13.

1:15 "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin". The lusts inside our mind are being likened to an attractive woman enticing us. Thus the instinct to illicit sexual attraction within us is seen as a type of all wrong attraction to sins of any kind. It is a repeated New Testament theme that the punishment for sin is some kind of burning by fire. To the Old Testament mind, this image of being burnt at judgment day would have connected with the command to burn a whore (Lev.21:9); thus all types of sin are to be seen as prostitution against God. The same process in sexual attraction of a wrong thought taking root, constantly preying on the spiritual mind, resulting in our allowing it to grow under the excuse that we are still in control, eventually bringing forth gross sin, is repeated time and again as we are faced with the spiritual temptations of life every hour. The same figure occurs in Num.15:39 speaking of 'going a whoring' "after your own heart and your own eyes", as if our natural mind is a whore. Our carnal mind being likened to a whore or glamorous woman is a strong theme of Proverbs. The important thing to note is that Proverbs emphasizes that it is obedience to the word which will keep us from the lusts which the woman represents. "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil... hear me now therefore (says the wisdom/word), O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her" (by listening to wisdom's words); Prov.5:3,7,8. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light... to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman" (Prov.6:23,24). Prov.7:1-5 is an even stronger emphasis: "Keep my words, and lay up my commandments... keep my commandments... My Law... that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words". The woman was "subtle of heart" (v.10), recalling the serpent, and had a guise of spirituality: "I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows" (v.14). She reasons that "the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed" (v.19,20). This is almost certainly the basis of Christ's parable of the talents, revealing that the reasoning of the one talent man was that Christ was not physically around, therefore he need not develop. Thus that man does not represent just the lethargic Christian; but the man who consciously indulges in sin because he cannot feel the Lord's presence. "The goodman" is further equated with Christ in Mt.20:11. Notice the emphasis in the three Proverbs passages mentioned on the words of the woman being her means of attraction. Prov.7:21 is explicit: "With her much fair speech (cp. the serpent again, and 2 Cor.11:3; Rom.16:18, which connect the fair speaking, the whore, the serpent and the Judaizers) she caused him to yield". Words are a reflection of the mind (Mt.12:34), again indicating that the woman represented an epitome of fleshly thinking. The parable of the prodigal

son is clearly meant to show the path which we all take whenever we sin. The women upon whom he wasted his (spiritual) substance represent our giving way to sin in its various forms (Lk.15:13).

1:17 Again, James warns us not to err in thinking that God is leading us into sin by stressing that "every good gift and every perfect gift (gift of perfection) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (v.17). The gift that leads to perfection must be that of the written word, replacing as it did the temporary ministry of the miraculous gifts (1 Cor.13:8-10). This coming down of the "good gift" (cp. "the good word of God", Heb.6:5) is parallel with the gift of wisdom in v.5, which gift is further expanded in 3:15-17: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure (cp. "the words of the Lord are pure"; "Thy word is very pure", Ps.12:6; 119:140), then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits". Thus the effect of asking for wisdom (1:5) is to be liberally given the gift of responding to the word so that it cultivates a fullness of spiritual fruits in us (1:17; 3:17). The gift of wisdom produces a fullness ("full of...") of characteristics which recall the moral characteristics of God's Name as declared to Moses: "Merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant (cp. "full of good fruits") in goodness and truth, keeping mercy..." (Ex.34:6,7). The R.V. describes Yahweh as a God "full of" these things. Thus the word through developing those characteristics in us leads to God's Name being upon us and God being manifested to us.

The gift of the word "cometh down from the Father". 'Coming down' is the language of God manifestation- e.g. God "came down" upon Mount Sinai in a mighty theophany; Jesus "came down from Heaven"; God "came down" to destroy Sodom and Babel. It is through the word 'coming down' into our hearts that we are able to manifest God. Thus Jn.3:5 speaks of being born again (lit. 'from above')- which 1 Pet.1:23 interprets as being born of the word. There are many references to the word resulting in men carrying the Name of God and thus manifesting Him: consider Jer.15:16 AVmg.; Dt.18:18,19; Jn.17:6; 10:34-36, and how much the prophets manifested God because they spoke the word of God, so that their words were the word of God.

"The Father of lights" (v.17) is another indication that the good and perfect gift which comes from Him is connected with the word, which is "a light unto my path" (Ps.119:105,130; Prov.6:23). Another connection in this context starts in 1 Jn.1:5: "This then is the message (word) which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all". The prologue of John's Gospel is closely linked to that of his epistles. The parallel to 1 Jn.1:5 is Jn.1:4 "In him (the word) was life, and the life was the light of men". Thus the Father of lights is the source of the logos-word, which is the gift that can be given to us.

"With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning". James again puts his finger on the feelings we have in those moments of weakness- there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" in the amount of spiritual strength He gives us from the word. It is tempting to think that the power of the word does vary, to despair that Bible reading can ever affect the likelihood of us overcoming sin. If there is no variableness in the power of the word, then it follows that any weakness to temptation is solely our fault. Again, the ideal standard is hinted at in a wonderfully gentle way- if the power of the word is constant and able to overcome every spiritual temptation, then there is the possibility- theoretically, sadly?- that we should have the power now to overcome every temptation. Failure or success is in our own hands. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (change of mind, Rom.11:29). The gift of God is now in the word, and the calling of God is also done largely through it. Several of the Old Testament references concerning the unchanging nature of God are in the context of speaking of the unchanging word of God:

- In Num.23:19 Balaam assures Balak that God will not suddenly give him a different prophetic word after the one he had just given, and that the prophecy he had just given would be surely fulfilled: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the Son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?".

- Later Saul thought that the word of God was variable, in that he doubted whether the command to totally destroy the Amalekites still stood. Samuel rebuked him for not "obeying the voice of the Lord... the Strength of Israel will *not* lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent" (1 Sam.15:22,29).

- Mal.3:6 "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"- because of the eternal covenant (cp. the word) which God made with Israel.

- Titus 1:2,3: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised... in... His word through preaching". It may well be that in His defining of the gift as the word, James is preparing the way for his readers to accept the changeover in the manifestation of the gifts from the miraculous to the ministry of the word.

1:18 will- see on Job 22:27,28.

According to John 17, our unity will convert the world. The Gospel is a message of reconciliation with God which overflows into reconciliation between each other, according to Ephesians. The church is a foretaste, an advertisement, of what the future Kingdom will be like (James 1:18).

In contrast to the process of conceiving sin explained in v.14,15, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of Truth" (v.18). The child of God is born "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn.1:13)- i.e. of the will of God. The act of intercourse which leads to human conception is the ultimate and strongest expression of the fleshly will of man. The same immense drive and will is possessed by God, who channels it through His word to result in the conception of spiritual people. What *tremendous* power there is therefore in that word! Note the comparison: "Of his own lust... of His own will... the word" (v.14,18).

"Being born again, not of corruptible (human) seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Pet.1:23). Jn.3:3 says that the new birth comes from above- James 1:17 describes the good and perfect gift of the word as being "from above". Notice that the word of God is connected with the will of God. Perhaps our faith in our prayers is militated against by our resigned 'If it be Thy will' being so liberally sprinkled in them. Generally the Biblical examples of prayer- which presumably guide our approach- are conspicuous by their omitting of 'If it be Thy will...'. They seem to request things in total faith- and normally receive them. Even Paul in recounting his experience of having three prayers go unanswered (2 Cor.12:8) does not make any specific comment about the will of God. If we have the word of God in our minds and guiding our prayers, then we will be praying according to the will of God, "in the Holy Spirit". John 15:7 is explicit: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what *ye* will, and it shall be done unto you". Jesus doesn't say that our prayers will be answered according to *God's* will, but according to our own will. This is because the word guiding our thoughts results in our will becoming identical with that of God, in so far as it is guided by the word. Again, an ideal is being suggested to us- a wholly spiritual mind filled with the word will result in a far more powerful prayer life. It is by birth of the word, therefore, that we become a son of God, part of the Divine family; and Jesus said "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt.12:50)- thus equating the will of God and the word. Similarly Jn.7:17 "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (in the word). Even more fundamentally, the covenant name of God is 'I will be who I will be' (Ex.3:14 R.V.mg)- and God executes the will that is intrinsic in His very Name through His word. Thus as we saw earlier in considering v.17, a proper response to the word leads us to bear the name of God.

"That we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (v.18)- as a result of the word's action on our mind, in the context of James 1, these firstfruits must be a state of mind. "His creatures" would therefore be the spirit-bodies that are the ultimate end of God's creation. However, we can have the firstfruits of that state now in our minds, which if they are spiritual are the only part of our bodies which are experiencing the Kingdom life now, albeit in a limited form. An alternative approach to this verse is to view the "creatures" as the whole multitude of the redeemed, of which the present

believers are only "the firstfruits". In this case, all the faithful who have been influenced acceptably by "the word of truth" are only a small foretaste of the many who will be so converted in the Millennium. This raises fascinating questions about the population and nature of the Millennium, and indicates the relatively small number of the faithful in the world's previous history.

1:19 We are born again by the word of truth. Having said this, James comments: "Ye know this... but let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19 RV). If we are truly born by the word then we will be swift to hear it, as Jesus was of quick understanding in the word (Is. 11:3). We will share His aptitude for it, and we will be slow to speak anything else. The great danger is to be hearers and not doers of the word (James 1:22), but James implies that the antidote to this is to reflect upon the very nature of the word which gave us spiritual birth.

Because of the glorious power of the word as outlined in the previous verses, "Wherefore (therefore), my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear" that powerful word. The idea of running swiftly in eager response to the word is quite a common Biblical idiom (2 Thess.3:1; Ps.119:32,60; Hab.2:2; Amos 8:11,12; Dan.12:4). Inevitably some practical examination of our eagerness of response to the word has to be made. How frequently do we rise up from our readings with an eager resolve to do something practical, to make some subtle change in our character? How often do our minds burn and race within us as we chase connections and themes through Scripture (cp. Lk.24:32) and God's word falls open to us? Or are we content to dash through our Bible readings on the way to work, or leave them to the dog end of the day? God and the Angels no doubt look eagerly to those parts of the day when we read the word as their opportunity to guide and teach us, to strengthen us against the flesh. What a despoil to them if our minds are somewhere else as we read- if we bother doing the readings at all that day. The practical effects of swiftly hearing this powerful word are to make us "slow to speak, slow to wrath" (v.19). Along with many other examples in James, this definitely alludes to the Proverbs- in this case 10:19 and 17:27 for "slow to speak", and 14:29 for "slow to wrath". The context in these passages is that "instruction... reproof(10:17)... knowledge... understanding (17:27) ...understanding" (14:29) lead to the control of speech and wrath. All these things are true concerning the word- the ultimate source of reproof (2 Tim.3:16,17) and understanding. This is exactly the context of James 1- by being "swift to hear" the spiritual strength which is in the word, we find the strength in practical terms to be "slow to speak, slow to wrath". It may be that James is alluding to Moses being "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue"- i.e. rather quiet, unsure of his words. Hence God reassured him: "I will teach thee what thou shalt say" (Ex.4:10-12). This would be specially relevant to James' persecuted Jewish readership; telling them to 'be like Moses' in his quiet speaking.

1:20 "The wrath of man (i.e. wrath as the expression of his feelings uncontrolled by the word) worketh not the righteousness of God" (v.20). The implication is that the word making us "slow to wrath" *does* work the righteousness of God- i.e. the word works or develops the righteous attributes of God within us, e.g. being "slow to wrath". This is a specific characteristic of God's Name (Ps.103:8;145:8); thus the word gives us God's Name. In a similar way, the spiritual trial of our faith "*worketh* patience" (1:3)- another aspect of "the righteousness of God". In this case, we see that the word has the same effect upon us as trials. Our present tribulation "*worketh* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor.4:17). 1 Jn.2:29 is also relevant- "every one that doeth righteousness is born of God", which James says is by the word. Thus the word of God acting on a man "*worketh*... the righteousness of God". There are so many allusions in James to the Sermon on the mount that the mention of the righteousness of God probably links with the only time Jesus mentioned this, in Mt.6:31-33: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat... but seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness". Thus seeking God's righteousness is contrasted with over-concern about food. In the wilderness Jesus made the contrast between not living by bread alone, but by every word of God. Thus living by the word of God is associated with seeking the righteousness of God. It is also stressed that we only receive ('work') the righteousness of God by

faith (Rom.3:22; 10:3-6; Phil.3:9)- which comes from the word (Rom.10:17- which is in the context of a whole chapter showing that righteousness comes by faith).

1:21- see on Lk. 8:11.

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word"(v.21). Receiving the word so that it makes us "slow to speak, slow to wrath" is helped by laying apart "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness". The Greek phrase translated "lay apart" is elsewhere used always concerning forsaking the practical, specific characteristics of the flesh (Heb.12:1; 1 Pet.2:1; Eph.4:25; Rom.13:12). We have seen so far that James is emphasizing that it is through the new birth from the word that this can be achieved. 1 Pet.2:1 also tells us to lay aside fleshly characteristics by being "newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (v.2). Similarly Eph.4:23-25: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind... put on the new man (created by the word)... putting away lying" (etc). Rom.13:12,13 gives us the greatest motivation to make this effort to so apply the word: "The night is far spent, the day (of the Kingdom) is at hand; let us therefore cast off (same word "lay apart") the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as (if we are) in the day" of the Kingdom. Thus we can therefore live now to some degree as we will in the Kingdom- by using the word to cast off the flesh and put on spiritual attributes, resulting in us walking (living in our day to day lives) as if we are in "the day" of the Kingdom.

The word acting on our minds should help us lay apart all "superfluity of naughtiness". "Superfluity" is from the same word translated "abundance" in Mt.12:34 "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh". It must have occurred to us all at some time that the command to bring "into captivity *every* thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor.10:5) seems impossible to achieve. There are so many thoughts which are necessary in our secular lives, they cannot all be brought around to Christ. However, the word "abundance" means 'that which is over and above the necessary'. The point of bringing our thoughts to Christ is so that our words will be Christlike, and as our thoughts lead to our words, we must control them. The context of 2 Cor.10:5 is Paul justifying the apparently hard words he was having to use to the Corinthians- he assured them that in practice he was bringing all his thoughts captive to Christ, therefore his words were not the outpouring of unspiritual bitterness. Thus only those thoughts which are "of the *abundance*" of the heart (the mind) control our words; those thoughts which are over and above our necessary ones. James is saying that this "abundance" or "superfluity" of wrong thinking ("naughtiness") can be displaced by the word.

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word" to enable this, James advises. "Engrafted" means 'implanted', or more literally 'something placed inside you which springs up'. This must have some reference to the sower parable- "The seed is the word", and if we are to receive the word meekly, James must be likening us to the ground of the parable- in this case, 'meek' ground. Are we meek to the word- 'quiet, mild', as 'meek' implies? It is so true that a settled, quiet mind is vital if we are to let the word really act on us. There may also be a reference back to Romans 11, where Paul reasons that the Gentiles had been grafted into the Israelitish olive tree. Having a Jewish readership, James is maybe gently hinting that *all* men, including Jews, need the word grafted into them.

We have spoken in general terms about "the word" being the power of righteousness, which comes down from above and germinates spiritual life within us. This verse 21 gives us some hints as to a more precise definition. We have noted the clear allusion to the parable of the sower- the "engrafted"/ implanted word-seed. "The word of truth" of v.18 "begat" us, which the almost parallel passage in 1 Pet.1:23 says is the seed-word of God. The word in the parable of the sower is defined as "the word of the Kingdom" (Mt.13:19)- i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom. The sower parable shows the response of various people to the Gospel which they *initially hear*. James 1:21 continues by saying that this word is "able to save your souls". This recalls a number of passages which say that it is the message of the basic Gospel which saves our souls:

"To you is the word of this salvation sent" (Acts 13:26).

"The Gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom.1:16)

"I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received (cp. "receive with meekness the engrafted word")... by which also ye are saved; if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you" (1 Cor.15:1,2); this Gospel which would save them was centred around the basic truths of the resurrection and second coming of Christ which Paul goes on to reiterate in 1 Cor.15. One of the conclusions arising from this is that an ecclesia should regularly hold meetings of some sort which re-iterate the basics of the Gospel. There really *is* power in them, to save our souls.

1:22 James 1:22 plainly states how easy it is to hear the word, and *deceive* ourselves into thinking that this very process justifies us. But if we are not doers of the word, we only "seem to be religious... (*deceiving* our) own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26). We are invited to see a parallel between the process of hearing God's word, and seeming to be religious.

The subsequent warning "Be ye doers of the word" in the sense of bridling the tongue and visiting the sick (v.22,26,27) implies that "the word" of the Gospel included practical matters- something hinted at in many other passages. The believers to whom James was writing had already received the implanted word-seed of the Gospel at their conversion- but James implies that they needed to keep on receiving it. 1 Pet.1:22,23 connects loving "one another with a pure heart fervently" with "being born again... by the word of God". Thus again the new birth is not just a question of accepting doctrine in the sense of 'first principles', but also the doctrine of practical Christian living. Thus it needs continued intercourse with the word to create a stream of new life. On a practical note, let us remember that we should get this power of new life entering us from re-hearing the basic Gospel as much as from the deeper parts of our Bible study. Thus Sunday evenings at 6:30 should not be a session of sleepily having our ears tickled with the fact we have the truth about man's mortality, the nature of Christ, the Kingdom etc.- but one more chance to eagerly receive that word of power and dynamic new life. Notice that the word can "save your souls", showing that the soul does not always just refer to the life or body/creature, but can also refer to our spiritual selves, which the word is able to save or preserve.

Having talked in theory so much about the power of the word, James now warns: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (v.22). One of the easiest forms of self deceit is to hear the correct exposition of the word and feel that therefore we are on the right track towards the Kingdom. Yet a comparison with v.27 indicates that it is quite possible to be "spotted by the world" as well as being a hearer of the word. This must be something we are especially liable to, hearing as many of us do up to three times a week the correct exposition of the word at church meetings. There must be a reference back to Rom.2:13: "for not the hearers of the Law are just (ified) before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified". Thus again James is thinking of the Jewish nature of his readership, and leading them to redirect their zeal for keeping the Law to zeal for receiving and doing "the engrafted word" of Christ's Gospel. "Deceiving" implies 'reasoning'- and again, James has his finger on the pulse of human nature. If we ask ourselves, 'Do I reason with myself that I am doing the word when actually I'm only hearing it' the instinctive answer is, 'No, I'm not aware I do anyway'. The reasoning or "deceiving" goes on in our deep subconscious. "Doer" is also translated "poet", in the sense of a performer of a written script. Thus Paul speaks of "how to perform that which is good (i.e. the law/word of God, v.16) I find not" (Rom.7:18). This theme of self-deception is continued in v.26- if a man "seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue (he) deceiveth his own heart". Words are a product of the mind (Lk.6:45), and thus to bridle the tongue is to bridle the mind, which can only be done through the application of the word. If this is not done, then we deceive ourselves- which v.21 says we do by hearing and not doing the word. Thus to be a doer of the word in this case is to apply the word to our minds, to consciously make the mental effort to let the word control our thinking and words when in a

provocative situation. Therefore being a doer of the word does not necessarily involve any physical work. There are other examples of 'works' not being physical actions but mental effort to apply the word to our minds:

- "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (Jn.6:29- cp. Rom.10:17 "Faith cometh by hearing...the word of God"). Prov.12:22 (Septuagint) speaks of the man that "worketh faith".
- "The work of the Law written in their hearts" (Rom.2:15)
- Sin "did work in our members" (Rom.7:5)
- God "hath begun a good work in you" (Phil.1:6)- i.e. in your spiritual development
- "Fruitful in every good work...patience...longsuffering... joyfulness" (Col.1:10,11)
- A man carefully examining himself by the word, "the perfect law of liberty", is "a doer of the work" (James 1:25).
- We will be judged according to our works (Rev.22:12)- and our spiritual development rather than physical achievements will be of paramount interest to our Judge.
- Those who believe false doctrine about Christ's nature should be shunned because "He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds", i.e. his beliefs (2 Jn.11,7). A like example is in Rev.2:6,15: "The *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate... the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate".
- Similarly Jesus worked "the works of Him that sent me" (Jn.9:4; 17:4) not just in miracles and good deeds, but in developing that perfect character until He "finished the work (of saving man) which Thou gavest me to do".
- "The works of Abraham" (Jn.8:39) in the context were to believe in Christ.

All this is part of the great Bible theme that our thoughts really are reckoned as works by God. In the light of this housebound housewives and hard working bread winners can take courage that their lack of 'works' physically achieved is totally appreciated by the Father. With this definition of works it is no longer necessary to feel we can only work for God at weekends or in the evenings- or after the children are asleep. Our whole life can be one of active, working service. But to inspire those works, constant contact with the word must be made. The odd glances at the pocket Bible during the day, or the Commandments of Christ on the wall, will be worth their weight in golden faith in the great day.

1:23 The man who hears the word but does not do it "Is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass (mirror): for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (v.23,24). Hearing the word but not doing it is a sermon on the mount allusion- those who *heard* those sayings but did not *do* them were likened to the man building his house on the sand (Mt.7:26). In the same way as he *thought* that he was building and was doubtless quite pleased at his progress, so the man who glanced in the mirror thought all was well with his spiritual development. The acquiring of knowledge ('hearing') can give the impression that we are progressing; but practice ('doing') is the real foundation. It is sad that the ever deepening level of the church's Bible scholarship is not always matched by such 'doing'. Hearing the word is likened to glancing in a mirror and then going on with life, immediately forgetting that vision. Like the quick glance at the mirror, straighten the tie, brush the hair, off to the office. Maybe this equates with the sleepy, half awake doing of the readings in the morning and then off into the day with not a further thought about our real spiritual figure.

"Beholding" means 'observing fully'- the man's mistake was in his immediate forgetting of the image he saw. Thus he was a very careful hearer- because it is not always that we apply ourselves so much to the word that it is as if we are staring into our own face, observing fully our real spiritual self. In the previous analogy, here is someone who got up, washed, dressed and did his readings at the table with a concordance, and was really helped in those minutes to examine himself. But Bible study was only part of his life- he "Straightway forgot". Surely none of us can feel complacent at this challenge of James?

Notice how the word is likened to a mirror- our study of it should always lead to some form of self-examination and assessment as we compare ourselves against the deep things of the Spirit. Thus our studies should revolve around the application of the word to our moment by moment spiritual lives, rather than the mental gymnastics with Scripture at one extreme and empty platitudes at the other, which seem to characterize so much of our communal Bible study. The idea of the word being represented by a mirror occurs again in 1 Cor.13:8-12. Verse 8 describes the withdrawal of the miraculous spirit gifts, and their replacement by the completed word- "that which is perfect", v.10 (cp. 2 Tim.3:16,17). Paul then contrasts the dispensation of the Spirit gifts and the word: "Now we see through (look into) a glass, darkly; but then face to face". Thus the dispensation of the word would enable him to see a clear reflection of himself- "Then shall I know (myself) even as also I am known" (1 Cor.13:12). The implication of these few words are tremendous- through using the completed word to examine ourselves, it is possible for us to see ourselves as God sees us- to know ourselves even as God knows us. Paul expresses his lack of full knowledge in 1 Cor.4:4: "I know nothing by myself (therefore) am I not hereby justified". The context is Paul's countering of the Corinthians who claimed to have examined and judged him. Paul is saying that he is not qualified to fully examine and judge himself, so therefore cannot comment. But now, with the completed revelation compared with the partial understanding of only some facets of God's revelation to man given by the ministry of the miraculous gifts (1 Cor.13:9), we are able to achieve a fuller self-examination. James' description of the word as the "perfect law" (1:25) strengthens the impression that he is consciously alluding to 1 Cor.13 (cp. "that which is perfect" concerning the completed word); as if he is preparing his readers for how they should use the completed word which he, like Paul, knew in advance would soon be available.

The word enables us to 'behold' ('Observe fully') our "natural face". "Natural" is from the Greek 'gennas'- to regenerate, conceive, gender, beget. This must connect with the concept of v.17,18 and the parallel 1 Peter 1:23- we are conceived by the word entering us. The man James is speaking of looked at his "natural face". This could imply at least two things- he examines the state of spiritual regeneration he has reached from the word; or he looks back to his initial spiritual birth, how he was at his first 'genesis' by the word of the Kingdom when it developed within him for the first time. The same idea is picked up in 3:6; the tongue "defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell". Our thoughts lead to the words of the tongue. Thus ultimately an undisciplined mind "setteth on fire the course of nature"- unless our thoughts are restrained by the word, our 'genesis' ("nature") so far developed by the word, and our initial spiritual strength developed by the word of the Gospel, will be destroyed, "set on fire". Strong interprets "course" as meaning 'A circuit of effects'- the circuit of effects due to our 'genesis' ("nature") will be destroyed or broken unless we make a conscious effort to control the mind. We have seen that the 'genesis' is a result of the action of the word on a man's heart. This creates a 'circuit of effects'- hence 3:6 AVmg. speaks of the "wheel of nature" (the 'genesis') in the sense of something continuous. Surely the implication is that once the word starts to take effect, it initiates a circular, upwards spiral of spirituality- spiritual strength leading to spiritual strength, a certain level of appreciation of the word steadily leading to a higher level. However, this "course of nature" can be broken by not making a conscious effort to control the mind and the words which follow from it (in the context of James 3:6), and of not making the effort to *continue* beholding our "natural face" in the mirror of the word, and letting the word act on the results of our self-examination.

That the word should lead to an ever-increasing level of self-examination and recognition of the urgency of our need to spiritually improve is also hinted at in 1 Jn.1:10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"- implying that the more the word is in us, the more we recognize the degree to which we have sinned. But notice it is not just a reading of the word that results in this- seeing that the Jews to whom Paul partly wrote Romans, for all their Bible knowledge and ability to assimilate the detailed Old Testament allusions Paul makes in Romans, were of the opinion they could "continue in sin that grace may abound" (Rom.6:1)- i.e. they

reasoned that whatever they did was automatically blotted out by reason of being in Christ (and Jewish?). "We make Him (God) a liar" must refer back to the serpent in Eden, who also lacked the word of God in him, thus effectively leading him to the conclusion that Adam and Eve could not sin, even if they consciously disobeyed the commandments. Saying we have not sinned is equivalent to saying that we do not need Christ- both statements make God a liar (1 Jn.1:10 cp. 5:10); which again was the implication of the serpent reasoning. Paul picks this point up in 2 Cor.11:3, where he connects the reasoning of the serpent with that of the Judaizers, who also argued that Christ was not vital for salvation. Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge made Adam and Eve aware of their sin- as does eating of the word of knowledge in our day. Jn.15:22; Lk.12:47,48 and many other passages clearly teach that the more knowledge of the word a man has, the more aware he is of his sins, and therefore the more answerable to judgement.

1:24 James 1:24,25 parallel looking at ourselves, and looking into the perfect law of liberty. To read Scripture as God really intended, not as mere words on paper, is to find ourselves engaged in an inevitable self-examination. Reflect a while on two consecutive verses in Ez. 8:18; 9:1: "Though they [Israel] *cry in mine ears with a loud voice* [when they are under judgment for their actions, which I now ask them to repent of], yet will I not hear them. He [God] *cried also in mine* [Ezekiel's] *ears with a loud voice*, saying...". Do you see the connection? As we read and hear God's word today, He is passionately crying in our ears with a loud voice. Just imagine someone literally doing this to you! If we refuse to hear it, then we will cry in *His* ears with a loud voice in the last and final day of condemnation. The intensity of *His* appeal to us now will be the intensity with which the rejected plead for Him to change His verdict upon them; and God, like them in this life, will refuse to hear. What arises from this is a simple fact: as we read and hear the pages of Scripture, as we turn the leaves in our Bibles, God is crying in our ears with a loud voice. Our response to Him is a foretaste of our acceptance or rejection at the day of judgment.

1:25 The very nature of life in this present world appears to make it impossible to permanently "continue therein" ("continue"= 'to stand beside'). But things were even more difficult for the first century believers: "Whoso... continueth (*looking*) therein (into the word)... being not a forgetful *hearer*" (v.25). Thus looking at the word and hearing the word are paralleled. The only access to the word by the average believers was probably by hearing it read publicly. The ability to read would not have been widespread, and copies of the scrolls not widely available (hence the ministry of the miraculous spirit gifts to provide the word of prophecy and its interpretation). Other passages refer to this hearing of the word through public reading of it in the ecclesia: Acts 13:27; 15:21 (cp. James 2:2 AVmg.); 2 Cor.3:15; Col.4:16; 1 Thess.5:27; Rev.1:3; 2:7,11. The believers should hear the word spoken or read and look into it continually- i.e. keep it in mind, meditate upon it. Thus 1:19 encourages them to be "swift to hear" the word of God- not to mentally doze through those all-important meetings of the ecclesia when the word was read. Thus James never intended these words to be read as meaning 'You must walk around with your head in a Bible all day'- he was too practical to advocate that. But he was offering an even greater challenge- to live each day continually looking into the things of the word in one's mind, with "the eyes of your understanding being (open)", Eph.1:18. We who can read and have convenient access to the written word have so much more opportunity- but we seem to lack the degree of mental spiritual alertness to the word that James is speaking of. Surely every Christian who can afford one should have a pocket Bible close at hand during the day and frequently refer to it- even for a few brief seconds in the hour. But above all, we must strive to achieve that continual mental looking into the things of the word. But he who continues looking into "the perfect law", "this man shall be blessed in his deed"- and that in itself means that James is not setting an impossible standard. It is realistic for a man to achieve it. Note how the continual looking into and application of the word is "his deed". We have earlier commented how 'deeds' and 'works' can refer to the mental effort made in daily life, rather than specific physical actions.

Notice the reference to "the law of liberty"- another gentle dig at his Jewish readers, reminding them of "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free...be not entangled again with the yoke of (Mosaic) bondage" (Gal.5:1). Other references to "liberty" are clearly in the context of liberty from the Mosaic Law, and they also have indirect hints at our liberty being because of a word ("law") of liberty:

- "We are not children of the bondwoman (the Law) but of the free" (Gal.4:31). We are children by being born of the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet.1:23). Thus "the free" is the free word of liberty.

- "Ye have been called unto liberty... (to) walk in the spirit" (Gal.5:13,16)- i.e. in a way of life guided by the Spirit word (Jn.6:63 etc.)

- "As free...(doing) the will of God" (1 Pet.2:16,15)- which is in the word (James 1:18; Jn.1:13)

- "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor.3:17)- the Lord's Spirit is in the hearts of His people who are influenced by the Spirit-word.

- "The truth (the word- Jn.17:17) shall make you free... the servant abideth not in the house for ever (alluding to Hagar being cast out, representing the casting out of the law, Gal.4:30). If the Son therefore (i.e. because the law was being cast out) shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn.8:32,35,36). That freedom comes from the Truth (Jn.8:32), which is in the word.

Now it may be argued that if "the law of liberty" is the words of Jesus and the New Testament, then that part of Scripture is far more spiritually powerful than the Old Testament, particularly the Law.

Why not just concentrate our Bible reading on the New Testament? Two answers present themselves:

- "The spirit of Christ was in (the prophets)" (1 Pet.1:11). The Spirit of Christ was in them, but it was only there for our benefit who came after Christ (1 Pet.1:12). Thus the prophets "searched diligently" for the meaning of their prophecies (1 Pet.1:10)- the implication being that they were unsuccessful because the purpose of the prophecies was for our benefit not for theirs- "not unto themselves... they did minister the things, which are *now* reported (explained) unto *you*" (1 Pet.1:12). We have shown that the Spirit-word is the law of liberty, which is contrasted to the Mosaic law or word of bondage. The contrast is not specifically made between the word and the Mosaic law, but between the Spirit word and the Mosaic Law. Thus it may be that the Spirit in the sense of a power of righteousness that can change a man's mind was only released fully from the Old Testament word when it was read by believers after Christ. Notice how the parallel with us looking into the law of liberty in 1 Peter is in 1:12 concerning the Angels desiring to look into the word. This is a parallel with 1:10, describing how the prophets desired to look into the word. Thus seeing that prophets and Angels have unsuccessfully tried to look into the word, we should grasp the opportunity we have. This parallel show that the "law of liberty" was also the prophetic word of the Old Testament which the prophets tried to "look into".

- There is considerable evidence that the power of the Old Testament word was opened by the death and resurrection of Christ, when He became "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor.3:17,18 RV), thus enabling us to be changed from the Mosaic glory to the Christian glory- "From glory to glory... by the Spirit of the (risen) Lord" (cp. Jn.1:16,17). In passing, it is worth considering whether Paul's other reference to contrasting types of glory also has reference to the Mosaic/ Christian system comparison- "the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another... so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption" (1 Cor.15:40,42). Thus Paul would be likening the present mortal state of our bodies to the earthy (terrestrial) Jewish system, compared to the glory of the spiritual heavenlies in Christ.

The man who keeps mental hold of the Spirit of the word in his daily life "Shall be blessed in his deed". This must be alluding to Lk.11:28 "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it". Again, the hearing of the word was a literal hearing, as Jesus had been speaking orally to the people. Thus James' interpretation of keeping the word was to continually look into it in one's mind and let it have the effect of self-examination upon us. The preceding verse records the comment "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked" (Lk.11:27). Jesus is saying that the

more important spiritual equivalent of this is to "hear the word of God". Thus being breast fed is likened by Jesus to hearing and keeping the word. In Peter's language: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (1 Pet.2:2). It is only the spiritually young who should feed on the milk of the word (1 Cor.3:2; Heb.5:12,13). Those to whom Jesus spoke about the sucking of breasts being like hearing and keeping the word were also spiritually young, having only just heard the word. James 1:24,25 is saying that the man who continually looks at his natural face in the mirror of hearing and keeping the word will be blessed for his effort. Lk.11:27,28 is saying that the spiritually young who as newborn babes keep hearing and keeping the word will be blessed. Remember that it was suggested that the "natural" (Genesis-ed) face of the man could refer to his recently spiritually born self. This would fit the connections with Lk.11:27 nicely. Thus James implies that there is an especial temptation for those newly converted or spiritually conceived by the word to soon give up their zeal for the word and to stop carefully examining their own position in the light of the word. The parable of the sower puts this in black and white.

"If (we) know these things, happy (blessed) are (we) if (we) do them" (Jn.13:17). Also worth mentioning Lk.8:21 too: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it". By being born again by hearing, doing, keeping and continually looking at the word, we take on the family likeness- Jesus can feel to us as to a mother or brother. These things help us appreciate the real spirit of the frequent commands to "Keep my commandments, and do them" (Lev.22:31). This implies that keeping and doing the word are different. God is not so much looking for individual cases of us 'doing' the word in the sense of occasionally obeying a highly specific command- but for us to "keep" the word in the sense of continually keeping it in mind in our lives, so that as a consequence we 'do' the specific commands when necessary. The copious parallels between James 1 and 1 Peter 1 further illuminate the looking into the word of this v.25; the parallel is Peter's description of the Cherubim Angels earnestly looking down into the mercy seat in 1 Pet.1:12, as if paralleling that supreme place of God manifestation with the Word.

1:26- see on 1 Pet. 1:18.

The gentle reminders of the need to leave Judaism are continued in v.26 "If any man among you seem to be religious". The Greek word translated "religious" is elsewhere always used in the context of the Mosaic law; James is implying that they were not properly keeping the spirit of the Mosaic law if they "bridled not (their) tongue". This idea of bridling the tongue is picked up again in 3:2-4, where James says that we put bits in the horses' mouths to control them, "but the tongue can no man tame", i.e. bridle (3:8). "No man" here must mean 'no ordinary man of the flesh', since James 1:26 says that the believer must bridle his tongue. In the preceding verses in James 1, James has been talking about 'doing' the word in practice rather than just theoretically receiving it. The prime example of this, he continues, is whether you can bridle your tongue. This is because our thoughts lead to our words, and therefore to bridle the tongue is to control the mind- and this can only be done through the conscious application of the word. This is the main 'doing' of the word. Again there is the warning against semi-spirituality; seeming to be religious.

Ps.32:8,9 provides the basis for James 1:26: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide (mg. 'Counsel') thee... be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee". Thus having the instruction, teaching and understanding of God should replace having a bridle or bit. God does not want to force our tongues and bodies to obey Him- but for us to effect this by our application of His word to our minds. Thus the word is the means of bridling our tongues and therefore our minds- our whole lives. Note too that a bridle is a two-way thing. It stops the horse approaching the rider in an ungainly and painful way. The action of the word on our minds should lead to us similarly being helped in our approach to God. The man who thinks he has his mind bridled but whose words belie this "Deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (v.26- cp.

Jer.17:9). To be "Double minded" (1:8; 4:8) is thus to have what we think is our 'spiritual' heart or mind deceiving our real heart- that of the flesh, "his own heart".

1:27- see on Acts 6:3.

Visiting (in the Hebrew sense of coming near to) the fatherless and widow in the ecclesia is associated with being unspotted from the world; our closeness to the world of the ecclesia in itself will keep us separate from the pull of the kingdoms of this world (James 1:27). Visiting the fatherless and widows will result in the believer keeping himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27 Gk.).

"Pure ('clean') religion" may refer to the system of religion that comes as a result of "the washing of water by the word" (Eph.5:26). This religion is also "undefiled" - possibly implying that to not let the word totally affect our lives is to allow ourselves to be defiled by our fleshly mind and desires. The sexual connotations of the word for "Undefiled" would suggest that passive laziness to apply the word is equivalent to active unfaithfulness against Christ. This pure and undefiled religion "Before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (v.27). The reference to God as the Father is in the context of v.17- "the Father of (the) light" of the word which came down to us. We may well ask 'Why is God so especially concerned for "the fatherless and widows"'? Maybe because He had witnessed the emotional agony of His humanly fatherless Son, Jesus, and the broken heart of Mary on the Lord's death? There is a possible connection between this verse and John 14:18 where Jesus promises that he "Will not leave you orphans (fatherless- A.V. 'comfortless'): I will come to you" through the Holy Spirit Comforter, which was manifested firstly in the miraculous Spirit gifts and then in the written word. The ideas of God 'coming down' and 'visiting' people are common Old Testament idioms for God manifestation. Thus it may be that James is implying that in the same way as Jesus has visited us through the Spirit-word, so we should share the spiritual Comfort of the word with the fatherless and widows. We have noted the association between 'coming down' and the gift of the Spirit-word already in v.17, which provides the background for this v.27. This pure religion is also to keep ourselves "Unspotted from the world". The words "pure", "undefiled... unspotted" are all the language of marriage. Because the notion of us being the bride of Christ, engaged to Him, seems so far above our feeble spirituality, it is tempting to think that the relationship between a man and his bride is just being used as a vague likeness of our relationship with Christ. But the glorious fact is that we are in absolute reality the typical bride of Christ! Intercourse with the world and fleshly mind is as bad as being unfaithful to our bridegroom- and almost on the night of our marriage, too. The comment is sometimes made that Christians are too dreary and weighed down by our sins. But bearing in mind the nature of our relationship to Jesus and His faithfulness unto death for us, it is not surprising that we are seriously worried about the continual failures which we have to admit to; these are equivalent to being unfaithful to Him. To balance this, there is the joy of receiving "every good and perfect gift" from our loving, truly merciful Father, the knowledge that He "upbraideth not" and is delighted by our strivings to truly develop spiritually; and the happiness ("blessedness") of the man who does try to keep the word in his heart. Whilst we need to be careful that we are not giving way to spiritual pride, there can be a sense of deep joy and peace at the little victories we slowly win against the flesh.

2:1 James 2:1 (Gk.) gives the Lord Jesus the title of "the glory" (as also in Lk. 2:32; Eph. 1:17). And James makes the point that we cannot believe in the Lord Jesus as the Lord of glory and have respect of persons. This may seem a strange connection at first sight. But perhaps the sense is that if we see the *height* and surpassing extent of *His* glory, all others will pale into insignificance, and therefore we will be biased for or against nobody and nothing because of the way they are all as nothing before the brightness of the glory of the Lord we follow.

James continues to move into the specific nitty gritty of the life developed by the word: "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons" (2:1). "The Lord" is

not in the original- "Our Lord Jesus Christ of glory". This idea of Jesus being the glory is picked up in 1 Peter 4:14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory (parallel with "the name of Christ") and of God resteth upon you"- as the cloud of glory did over the tabernacle. Also on the same track is 2 Cor.3:8,9: "How shall not the ministration of the Spirit (in Christ) be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation (the Mosaic law) be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory". Thus James describing Jesus as the Lord of glory may be yet another hint against keeping to the Mosaic glory. Notice the gentle yet firm way in which James makes the point- appealing to his Jewish readers through Biblical allusions which he knew they would appreciate.

"With respect of persons" is another link back to the Proverbs- here to 24:23: "These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgement". Thus through having wisdom- which is from the word- respect of persons is avoided. This is the point made in 2:8,9: "If ye fulfil the Scripture... ye do well: but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin"- through fulfilling the Scriptures, we avoid respecting persons. There is also a link with the fact that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) in a Jew/ Gentile context. It seems from this allusion that the Jewish brethren were prejudiced against poor Gentile believers.

2:2 "If there come unto your assembly (mg. 'synagogue') a man with a gold ring (Gk. 'Gold fingered'- not just one of them!), in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing..." (v.2,3). The use of the word 'synagogue' here shows that some of the early Jewish ecclesias were the result of whole synagogues being converted to Christ. The ecclesias are also called synagogues in Acts 6:9; thus Heb.10:25 reads literally "Not forsaking the synagoguing of yourselves together". The fact James uses the word 'synagogue' rather than 'ecclesia' indicates the degree to which early Jewish Christians still kept a fair amount of the Jewish approach to religion. Thus the letter of Acts 15 concerning this implies that it was felt quite in order for Jewish believers to continue being circumcised, whilst the Gentile believers still had to abstain from blood (Acts 15:29). Elsewhere Paul vigorously argues that obedience to both these Mosaic commands was quite irrelevant to salvation or spiritual growth. Similarly Paul seems to have placed great importance on keeping a Jewish feast (Acts 18:21), whilst telling the Colossians (2:14-17) that this was not necessary due to Christ's death. The rich stranger who unexpectedly turned up at their ecclesia perhaps refers to the same class of Jewish itinerant preachers as are mentioned in 2 Jn.7-11. James is writing to Jewish believers. The "poor man" walking into the ecclesia was a brother- "the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom" (v.5). If this poor brother was also a Jew, why does James talk about "Your assembly..ye have respect to (the rich)... and say to the poor...."? We have two possibilities at least:

- 1) The letter was written just to a group of rich Jews; or
- 2) The letter was written generally to all Jewish believer and the "poor man" represented the poor Gentile brethren whom the Jewish believers despised.

There is fair support for both:

- 1) Poor believers are equally in need of exhortation as are the rich. They are even more prone to the temptations of materialism; but there is nothing aimed at this group in James. Chapter 2 rebukes rich brethren for belittling these poor brethren. Chapter 3 is about brethren seeking to be "many masters" (3:1) and proudly talking to that end. These are the temptations especially faced by rich, capable brethren. Chapter 4 describes the itinerant Jewish traders always hungry to make more money (4:13). Chapter 5 is specifically about "ye rich men... your riches are corrupted" (5:1,2).
- 2) "The poor of this world" could be Gentiles- "He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor" (2 Cor.8:9) is quoted by Paul to show that the poor Gentiles had received spiritual riches, and should therefore contribute their earthly riches to the poor Jewish believers at Jerusalem (Rom.15:26). "Rich in faith" would then refer to the Gentiles being given the spiritual riches of Christ (2 Cor.9:9).

"Heirs of the kingdom" recalls Eph.3:6 "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs" through also having the promises of inheriting the Kingdom made to them (Gal.3:27-29).

There are no doubt elements of truth in both views. Thus the letter does seem to be aimed at the rich Jewish Christians who had fled Israel from the persecution of Saul; but there may also be a secondary implication that the poor brethren they were despising were Gentiles. This would be in keeping with the fact that every reference in James to the Jew/Gentile, Moses/ Christ question within the ecclesia is indirect and subtle.

One of the reasons for James writing was to encourage the Jews to spiritually improve so that the second coming would be hastened and the Kingdom established for real, rather than the 'coming' being just a 'coming down' manifestation of the Lord, as it actually was. It was the affluent sector of Jewry who had a partial faith in Christ whom James singles out as being the important ones whose repentance would hasten the second coming. Applying these things to the last days, it cannot be without significance that the 'Jews for Jesus' movement is gaining phenomenal ground- amongst whom? The affluent, loud mouthed (cp. James 3), money-loving, trade-crazy Jews of North America (cp. James 4:13; 5:2). Bearing in mind the orthodox false doctrines these people are full of, they fit well their prototypes in James- Jews who were not truly humble to the power of the word, committed to a 'hail fellow well met' Christianity (cp. 2:2,3). Notice that generally it has not been the poor Jews of London's East End or downtown Tel Aviv who are professing Christ. We know that the Jews are still to face their greatest holocaust. How relevant then is James 5:1-3: "ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you... ye have heaped treasures together for the last days". Every persecution of the Jews has been partly inspired by Gentile jealousy at their wealth- not least in these last days. Turning the spotlight to spiritual Israel- maybe the implication of James is that if only we can summon the courage to repent of our gross materialism into which the ecclesia of the last days has slumped, then there will be a hastening of the second coming. It is Biblically argued elsewhere that a specific rejection of materialism by the ecclesia of the last days may save us from part of the tribulation to come, and thus hasten the coming of Christ for us. If we do not curb it, we may need to go through the tribulation to achieve the same spiritual effect upon us as would a specific repentance from it here and now.

"A gold ring, in goodly apparel" probably connects with 1 Peter 3:1,3: "ye wives... whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of... wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel". The links between James and Peter are so numerous that it seems fair to assume that there is a conscious connection here. In this case it is worth noting that the passage in 1 Peter 3:3 about adorning has subtle reference to Judaism- e.g. "adorning" is the Greek 'kosmos'-ing, often used about the Jewish age. 'Cosmetic' is derived from this word too.

"A poor man in vile raiment". That this passage may also be talking about spiritual pride and partiality is further suggested by the word "vile" carrying the idea of morally filthy- it is translated "filthiness" a few verses earlier in 1:21 in a moral sense; and "the filthiness of the flesh" in 1 Peter 3:21 (note Rev.22:11 too). The idea of raiment or clothing representing a spiritual state is common in the New Testament. Thus James may be warning them against judging a brother who, due to his poverty, appears outwardly to have an appearance of evil when this is not the case.

2:3 "Ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or Sit here under my footstool" (2:3). The Greek for "gay" implies dazzling bright- it is used of the "white (same word) linen" in which the saints will be clothed (Rev.15:6; 19:8), the "bright clothing" of the Angel in Acts 10:30 and "the bright and morning star" (Rev.22:16). This further supports the suggestion that James 2 is referring to spiritual pride- apart from wearing gaudy clothes, these brethren were imagining themselves to be supremely righteous, and therefore lording it over those they considered to be spiritually poor. This is almost confirmed beyond question by the rest of the verse being an allusion to the parable of the guests at the marriage supper- some come into the ecclesia wanting to immediately have the places of

honour, whilst others -the truly spiritual- gratefully accept whatever place they are given. There is also possible reference to Mt.23:5,6 which also speaks of outward dressing by the Jews to give a spiritual impression, and a loving of chief seats in the synagogue: "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at (Jewish) feasts (cp. the communion service), and the chief seats in the synagogues". The fact that within the Jewish ecclesias there were seating arrangements in order of seniority further shows how they were based around the Jewish synagogue system, even suggesting that the ecclesia had the actual building as their ecclesial hall. Similarly there is ample evidence that the communion service was originally run on the lines of the Jewish passover, with the eating of a meal in fellowship as a vital part of the 'love-feast'. Notice that James does not criticize the existence of such seating arrangements in themselves, but the wrong brethren being put in the wrong place. "A good place" does not just imply a nice seat- "good" is normally used in the sense of being morally good, and is also translated "honest"; it comes from a root meaning 'virtuous, morally worthy'. "Sit here under my footstool" also has a mainly spiritual implication- unless some brethren were so pompous that they had virtual thrones to sit on in the ecclesia. Jesus being seated at God's footstool shows his subjection to Him spiritually, and does not necessarily refer to the physical place where Jesus sits. Marshall's Interlinear renders "sit here" as "sit here well", implying that James' readers were thinking well of brethren in spiritual terms due to their outwardly impressive appearance.

2:4 This spiritual judging of others was because they were "partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts" (v.4). Being partial within their minds, resulting in them respecting ('judging') the thoughts generated by their evil minds continues the theme of being only semi-spiritual due to being "double minded", a result of not letting the word totally dominate the mind. Verses 8 and 9 also go on to show that only through lack of application to the word was this partial thinking coming about. In similar vein Jeremiah accused the Jews of 'dissembling in their hearts' (42:20), using a Hebrew word which can mean both 'to go astray' and also 'to vacillate'; as if partiality and spiritual vacillation between good and evil are the same as rank disobedience.

It makes an interesting exercise to read through the letter of James and note how frequently we are warned about our internal thought processes; to control them and have them influenced by the Lord is the essence of following Him. James 2:4 would be an obvious example – when we see a well dressed believer, we are not to judge him “within yourself” as a judge who has evil thoughts, an unjust judge (see R.V.). We shouldn't deceive ourselves within ourselves (James 1:22), our mind is not to immediately forget the truths we encounter in God's word (James 1:25).

2:5 James really pleads with us to see the importance of all this, as if he is physically with us: "Hearken, my beloved brethren" (v.5)- also suggesting that he was well known to his audience. This would again imply that the initial readership which James was focussing on was quite a small group of brethren. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith...?". This should not be read merely as meaning 'God has called the poor people to the Gospel'- seeing that the rich to whom James was writing had also been called (cp. Is.66:2). Rather the emphasis is on "*God* (has) chosen the *poor* of this world" for positions of authority within the ecclesia- implying, in the context of v.3, that *they* had made a wrong choice, saying to the man in gay clothing "sit thou here in a good place" in the ecclesia. Thus James implies that God's choice should be our choice. The fact has to be faced that looking around the ecclesias of today, it is not "the poor of this world" who are in places of authority. Yet James here implies that they should be- as does Paul (1 Cor.6:4). Now it can reasonably be argued that this category of brethren do not want such positions, and are happy to see those humanly more competent doing the job. Because of this, it is not the done thing to even nominate such brethren for office. Perhaps the fault lies with both sections of our community- surely those brethren should both be nominated and be prepared to accept responsibility, in the light of what James and Paul are saying? Remember that Peter, James and John were simple working men- but through the power of the Spirit James could talk to his brethren as "my beloved brethren" and rebuke them. That same Spirit can be in us through the word. 1 Cor.6:4 shows beyond cavil that

in a case of disagreement or difficulty in judgement- and such cases are now increasingly common- the opinion of the most humble and least esteemed brother should be sought and accepted. Such a brother will, by his very qualification for the task, naturally demur- as doubtless the brother chosen in the Corinth ecclesia did initially (if they obeyed Paul's advice). But surely this is what is required by these passages?

"Heirs of the Kingdom which he hath promised to them that love Him" (v.5). This mirrors 1:12 "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which he hath promised to them that love Him". The implication is that it is "the poor of this world" who successfully endured spiritual temptation by the power of the word, and who therefore will have the reward "which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him". The repetition of this phrase in 1:12 and 2:5 encourages us to make this interpretation. Yet in the first century, "the poor of this world" would have been those with the least free time, probably unable to read and anyway unlikely to be able to afford their own Scriptures, and probably more heavily burdened with domestic cares than the "rich men" of the ecclesia. Thus the point is again made that our spirituality is not related to the amount of spare time which we have free to devote to Bible reading. It is from the constant daily meditation on whatever spiritual food we have had time to feed on that we can overcome temptation and thus have the heart-warming knowledge of being thought of by God as "them that love Him". "If ye love me, keep (in memory) my commandments" Jesus had also said. Note that "the Kingdom" and "the crown of life" are equated by comparing 1:12 and 2:5; as in 2 Tim.4:1,8. Thus "the Kingdom" does not only refer to the 'political' situation on the earth when Christ's rule has been established, but is also a synonym for eternal life, "the crown of life". Thus at the judgement seat the sheep are told "Inherit the Kingdom" (Mt.25:34)- when the Kingdom in the sense of Christ's political rulership of the earth has not yet been established. Similarly, Christ's preaching "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God" to Israel (Mt.4:23) was not just composed of details about the state of the world after His second coming- but also about the opportunity of receiving "the crown of life" at His return. A study of the Greek word 'basileia' translated 'Kingdom' indicates that it can refer to all aspects of the King's rulership, not just the political Kingdom.

2:6 "But ye have despised the poor" (v.6). "The poor" here are brethren- and therefore the poor labourers who were oppressed by the "rich men" of the ecclesia in 5:4 must also refer to brethren in the ecclesia. "Despise" here in 2:6 in the Greek can also carry the idea of active abuse- it is also translated "dishonour" in Jn.8:49, "suffer shame" in Acts 5:41 and "entreated shamefully" in Lk.20:11. These are all concerning the Jews persecuting Christ and the early church. The only other occurrence of the word (Rom.1:24) is also concerning the apostate Jews. Thus it may be that James is implying that this despising of the poor Jewish believers and Gentiles in the ecclesia was the same as the Judaizers and Jewish authorities behind them were doing. It would be surprising if the letter of James, being addressed to Jewish Christians, did not make some reference to the Judaist infiltration of the ecclesias, which Paul's letters show was a major threat to the early church (e.g. Gal.2:4). The use of this word "despise" may thus imply that this group of rich Jews had been infiltrated by the Judaizers. Their lack of total commitment to the word would mean that their resistance to the Judaist infiltration was low indeed. It is therefore to be expected that they succumbed.

"Do not rich men (i.e. richer than you) oppress you, and draw you before the judgement seats?". This recalls the descriptions of Jewish persecution of the saints: "Saul..entering into every house (church?), and haling ("Dragging"- same word in Jn.21:8) men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3); "they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city" (Acts 17:6). The believers to whom James was writing had therefore suffered violent physical persecution, and yet still they lacked any deep spirituality. The rebuke later in this chapter of their attitude that works alone could substitute for their weak faith may well have reference to this (cp. 1 Cor.13:3; Rev.2:13,14). No doubt it is extremely tempting when being physically persecuted to feel that this excuses us from making the effort to control our minds by the application of the word. In the

holocaust to come which we may well have to endure we will do well to remember this. The implication behind James' use of these words is that as the Jews were doing to them, so they were doing to their brethren, thus equating them with the Jews- maybe implying that the Judaist infiltration was so subtle that they were being influenced doctrinally by these people, and yet also submitting to persecution from their 'provisional' wing. Israel's relationship with Egypt, Assyria and Babylon had been similar.

2:7 "Do not they blaspheme that holy name by the which ye are called?", or 'that is called upon you'- in baptism. 1 Tim.6:1,2 associates the blaspheming of God's Name with servants despising their masters who were believers. The context in James is of believers despising their poor brethren (v.6), perhaps through despising the brethren who were in their employ (5:4). Thus the suggestion is that the same spiritual blasphemy which occurred when believers were persecuted was repeated when a rich brother abused or despised a fellow brother. Notice that it is the name of God which is blasphemed in 1 Tim.6:1, whilst at baptism the believers called upon themselves the name of Christ- they were baptized into Christ and thus became Christ's. This interchangeability of the name of Christ and God occurs frequently in the New Testament- because God's Name was given to Christ on his ascension (Phil.2:9; Rev.3:12). The reason for the rich brethren despising the poor was through not appreciating that God's Name was called upon those brethren- in the same way as the Jews' blasphemy of the Name was through their lack of appreciation that the believers carried the Name. Thus the key to successfully, humbly relating to our brethren is to remind ourselves of the mighty Name which they bear, and that to despise them is to despise God.

2:8 "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the Law as transgressors" (v.8,9). "Royal" means the Kingly law- James' comment on the emphasis which Jesus gave to the command to "love thy neighbour" in Mt.22:39, and especially to the giving of the "new commandment...that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn.13:34). Mt.22:37,38 clearly states that the command to "love thy neighbour" was secondary to that to love God. Yet the "new commandment" of Jn.13:34 to love thy neighbour ("one another"), and James' calling of this "the royal law" implies that now the law had been ended on the cross, including the ten commandments written in stone (Col.2:14-17), these two commands were one- because to love God is equivalent to loving your spiritual neighbour, because by calling on the name of Christ the neighbour therefore carried the Name of God, and thus to love the neighbour is the same as loving God. This is the teaching of the preceding v.7, as we have seen. Alternatively, "the royal law" may refer to the entire Mosaic law- seeing that the law was fulfilled in the keeping of that one commandment, to "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Rom.13:9). Gal.5:14 says the same, and as in James 2 the context is of not biting and devouring one another within the ecclesia, as a result of Judaist infiltration to stir up strife (Gal.5:11,12,15). If the command to "love thy neighbour" was fulfilled with no subsequent despising of poor brethren, "ye do well". The Greek for "well" is the same word translated "good" in v.3- the rich were invited to sit in a "good place" in the ecclesia, i.e. in a place of spiritual honour and respect. Thus James is saying that the ultimate qualification for sitting in the "good place" in the ecclesia was to love the members of the ecclesia as oneself, especially those whom it was tempting to despise. If the "royal law" refers to the whole law of Moses, it should be noted that *we* must fulfil it in spirit. It is easy to think that the Law was fulfilled solely by Christ's death on the cross.

2:9 "If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the Law as transgressors" (of the Law). This conviction by the Law may refer to the command to Israel's judges: "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small (poor) as well as the great" (Dt.1:17). These judges were therefore matched by Spirit-gifted ecclesial elders in the New Israel. These judges were 'given' as heads over Israel (Dt.1:15 A.V.mg), as the ecclesia were 'given' Spirit-gifted elders (Eph.4:11). Because of their power, "all the people shall hear and fear" (Dt.17:13), exactly as they did after Peter's Spirit-guided judgment of Ananias (Acts 5:11). The judges were "wise men" (Dt.1:13)- hence James' rebuke of the elders because they were *unwise*: "Who *is* a wise man...

among you?" (3:13 cp. 1 Cor.6:5). The book of Malachi is a rebuke of Israel's priests and judges- James' many allusions to it tabulated in our comments on 4:8 are understandable once the connection between Israel's judges and ecclesial elders is appreciated. Psalm 82 condemns the judges for doing many things which James accuses the elders of doing: possessing the Spirit, but respecting persons, overlooking the poor, fatherless and needy; neglecting the true knowledge of God, although they had been called to be God's children. Col.2:14-17 clearly shows that the law in the form of the ten commandments, including that to "love thy neighbour", had been replaced by Christ. Yet James reasons with his readers as if they still respected the old law of commandments- again indicating the slow transition to an acceptance that the Law had been ended in Christ. The command to love one's neighbour as oneself is an absolute statement; it cannot be fulfilled if one neighbour is loved more than another. The love a man has for himself is complete- in fundamental terms the degree of this love does not change with time or with the characteristics he exhibits. This nature of love should be shown to the brethren. To respect persons was to break this ideal. Thus Jesus could ask us to love each other "As I have loved you" (Jn.13:34). He loved us as the church as a whole ("you" is plural), and therefore each of us receives the same all consuming love of Christ, shown in summation by his death on the cross. Our love to each other should be equally constant and without the favouritism which seems almost inevitable with our natural mind.

2:10 As with so much in James, this seems almost too idealistic. But James drives the importance of it home: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (v.10). This is identical reasoning to Gal.3:10-13, where Paul is arguing that the Galatians should resist the inroads of the Judaizers and not return to the Law- therefore suggesting that there was an identical situation amongst James' readers, as there probably was in nearly every first century ecclesia, especially the Jewish-dominated ones.

2:11 "For that law which said (AVmg.), Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law" (v.11). The statement that "that law" included two separate commandments (concerning murder and adultery) shows that "the royal law" of v.8 may well refer to the whole law of Moses, which was fulfilled by loving the neighbour (Rom.13:9). These two commands concerning adultery and murder occur together elsewhere; it may be that James chose them because in spirit they are easily broken due to an uncontrolled mind; and the control of the mind is the great theme of James. Spiritual adultery is further defined in 4:4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?", thus interpreting adultery as having worldly friends. Those to whom James was writing were aware, so v.11 implies, that literal and spiritual adultery were wrong, but were not so conscious of the command not to kill each other by hating them in their heart (Mt.5:21,22). The fighting and killing which James describes as happening amongst his readers (4:1,2) must refer also to this spiritual murder due to lack of love (to what else can it apply?). It is noteworthy that James is one of the few New Testament letters that does not contain explicit warning against sexual misbehaviour. We can thus start to build up a fuller picture of James' audience- keeping dutifully away from worldly friendships, holding themselves back from sexual sin, yet trading zealously with the world to make much profit (4:13), and unaware of the supreme importance of the command to love each other, resulting in them transgressing the law in spirit. Perhaps they are not without their counterparts today.

2:12 The Saviour came more to save than condemn (Jn. 12:47); it is men who condemn themselves as inappropriate to receive eternal life. It is *their* words, not His, which will be the basis of their rejection. We must so speak as those who will be judged, knowing that he who shewed no mercy in his words will receive none (James 2:12,13); our words of mercy or condemnation, and perhaps *the way we say them*, will be the basis upon which we will be accepted or rejected.

This lack of love was especially shown in their words: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (v.12). Notice the equation of words and actions ("speak... do"),

continuing the theme of thoughts and words being the same as physical actions. "The law of liberty" is normally used elsewhere in contrast to the Law of Moses- another subtle swipe at the Judaist tendencies in the early Jewish ecclesias. We must speak our words in accordance with the fact that we will be judged by the word; if we have the word/law of liberty (cp.1:25) in our hearts and therefore influencing our words, we need not fear our judgement by that word. Thus we judge ourselves now by our response to the word in practice, by how far we let it influence our words and doings, especially in the area of showing love to our brother.

2:13 "For he shall have judgement without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgement" (v.13). This appears to be alluding to Job 22:6-11, where Eliphaz says just the same about Job, saying that the harsh judgements coming upon Job were a result of him being harsh in his dealings with his fellow men previously- e.g. "Thou hast sent widows away empty...therefore snares are round about thee", as they were around a widow. Several of the things Eliphaz mentions in his accusations of Job are also themes in James:

Job 22:6-11	James
"Thou hast...stripped the naked of their clothing	"If a brother or sister be naked" (and you don't clothe them), (2:15)
Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry...	"Destitute of daily food"
But as for the mighty man, he had the earth (i.e. you gave much to <i>him</i>)	"Ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing" and neglect the poor (2:3)
...thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the (1:27) fatherless have been broken".	"Visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction"

If these connections are valid- and there are several other places where James is writing with Job in mind- then it appears that James did not see Job as beyond reproof; but that like those to whom James wrote he was a rich businessman, trusting in his own strength. This fits in to the many other indications that Job represented those Jews who trusted in the Law. If the allegations of Eliphaz in Job 22 are therefore partly true, Job's clearing of himself from these things in Job 31 is to be read as sophistry- and therefore this clearing of himself is vigorously rebuked by Elihu, speaking on God's behalf, in Job 32. It is not unreasonable to think that it is not just the recording of the friends' words that was inspired but that to some degree their rebuke of Job was also directly inspired by God, although not all they said can be treated like this. We are quick enough to accept their reasoning regarding the mortality of man as inspired statements of Divine truth- why not some of their other statements about Job?

"*He* shall have judgment without mercy" suggests the picture of two people at the judgment seat being judged for the same sin; one is forgiven because he had showed mercy, while the other is rejected for not doing so. The rejoicing of the merciful brother is then set against the misery of the unmerciful brother. Mercy will then rejoice *against* judgment in the same way as the men of Nineveh will rise up *against* the unworthy at judgment day.

Note the implication that the believer should *shew* mercy. The Greek word translated "shewed" in v.13 is not the normal word translated thus. The word used here means literally 'to do a work', again continuing James' theme that spiritual actions are still 'works'. This lack of love and harsh judgement amongst James' audience was also connected with an academic emphasis on faith to the neglect of works- seeing that v.14 continues "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?". It seems true in practice that those who are busy actively expressing their faith in works tend to have less time for unnecessarily harsh judgement of others in the ecclesia. It did not "profit"- literally 'heap up'. Those to whom James wrote were hard working traders (4:13); thus such language was especially relevant to them. Again, James is working out a very telling play on words: 'Your heaping up of material profit while being academically familiar with your faith is not heaping up spiritual profit'. These brethren *said* they had faith. Later in chapter 3 James points out that because the word was not really controlling their thoughts, their words were uncontrolled. An example of this would be this public talking about their faith, heaping up a reward in the eyes of men.

2:14 James speaks of the man who says to his poor brother 'Be ye warmed and filled' but does nothing about it practically. This, James says, is dead faith; faith without works is not faith. But the man said those words, so James' logic goes, *in faith* that somehow the poor man would be helped. Yet he did nothing, and therefore his faith wasn't really faith; "can *that* faith save him?" (James 2:14 RV). There is true faith, and 'that' kind of faith which only appears to be faith in the eyes of the person holding it.

A notable example of faith without works is then given in v.15,16. It ends with the challenge "What doth it profit"- cp. v.14 "What doth it profit...though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?".

2:15 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (v.15,16). It is probable that this was not a hypothetical situation; 5:4,5 describe some rich brethren as oppressing their brethren who were their agricultural employees. "Destitute" means literally 'coming short', perhaps connecting with the fact that the employers kept back these brethren's wages (5:4). 1 Cor.13:2 makes the point that it is quite possible to have great faith without having any true love for one's brother. Similarly, these people were saying in absolute faith, really believing it would be done by God, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled". "Depart" either implies they were told this by their employers to whom they came with their request, or perhaps that they were told to depart from the ecclesial meeting where such requests were considered. It would seem that their rich employers were these brethren who refused their requests. The mention of lack of food and clothing ("naked") recalls Mt.6:25, where the Lord assures His people that these needs will always be provided for. Yet the believers James writes of had to be concerned about these things. It may be that God provides for our needs by giving the means to the rich in the Ecclesia, but it still depends on their freewill decision to share what they have.

2:17 Therefore "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (v.17). This is in the context of the previous eight verses which have been reprimanding the readers for the lack of a loving mind. These are the "works" which were lacking, as well as the physical "works" of giving material support. There must be a connection here with Christ's words: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Jn.12:24). If this connection is valid, then James is equating faith with the seed of wheat. The seed represents the word (Lk.8:11; 1 Pet.1:23), supremely manifested in the Lord Jesus. The equation is because "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". Thus James is saying that the word seed in us should bring forth fruit in our caring for others, in the same way as Jesus died in order to bring forth much spiritual fruit in us. The rich brethren needed to make the same kind of short term sacrifice due to the effect of the word in their lives, in order to care for their brethren's welfare, as Jesus did for

them. It is significant that in v.26 faith is likened to a dead body, which is the same figure being used here in v.17.

2:18 Verses 18-20 are in conversation language: "Yea, a man may say (to me, James), Thou hast faith, and I have works". James says that he would respond "(can you) shew me thy faith without thy works? and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (v.18). The man is implying that if James has faith and he has works, then between them they should be accepted. Thus the man was effectively advocating salvation by works, whilst agreeing that faith was also important- although not essential for him personally to develop. This sounds like the reasoning of the wavering Jewish believers. James replies that faith and works are indivisible, that true spiritual works cannot exist without faith. Thus it is irrelevant for a believer to think that he must concentrate on developing 'faith' or 'works' as independent things- what God looks for is 'faith-works', i.e. a faith whose very nature leads to works; a faith that *works* by love (Gal.5:6). Thus the works follow as an inevitable corollary from the faith, and therefore are not consciously performed. Therefore James reasons that a wise man will "shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (3:13). "Thou believest that there is one God"- the fundamental truth of Judaism which the Christian Jews prided themselves on- "the devils (demoniacs) also believe, and tremble" (v.19), alluding to the sick often trembling before their cure. This may refer to the many incidents of curing of demoniacs in the Gospels, all of whom were parabolic of the hopeless state of the Jewish system. More significantly, James is referring to the fact that many people during Christ's ministry had had the faith to be cured, but only a handful had responded with the works which a word based faith should have produced- as opposed to the intense hope and belief in personal betterment which the people had. The other person in the conversation is described as a "vain man" (v.20); "vain" meaning empty headed or minded, referring to the demoniac state of v.19. We saw in 1:26 how the man who did not have the word in his heart to control his tongue was also "vain". The man referred to here in 2:20 was without faith, and thus without the word, seeing this is the basis of faith. Faith without works is barren (v.20, Gk.). This is in the context of v.21 speaking of once barren Abraham (Rom.4:19 implies he was impotent when Isaac was conceived) being "*our* father", as well as that of Isaac. Faith *with* works is therefore spiritually fruitful. Faith *without* works being barren or dead may hint at the deadness of Abraham's body and Sarah's womb (Rom.4:19). Despite having produced Isaac, their faith and works were only completed by the offering up of Isaac. Until that point, they were still effectively 'dead' in God's sight, not being totally proven.

2:19 James 2:14-18 speaks of the connection between *faith* (believing) and *works* (doing). It is no co-incidence that 2:19 then says in this context: "Thou *believest* that God is one; thou *doest* well" (RV). To have *faith* in the unity of God will lead to *works*, 'doing well'.

"Demons" is put here by metonymy for the [supposedly] demon possessed people, and their observed 'trembling' at the time of their cure. But I don't think that this verse is James as it were telling us doctrinal truth about demons. The context of James 2 shows it to be part of an imagined dialogue between the "works man" [who thinks works can save], and a "faith man" [who thinks merely saying we believe is enough and our lives are irrelevant]. Both these imaginary men come out with 'wrong' statements, so it's not surprising that the 'works man' disparages 'faith' by saying that even demon possessed people can believe and be cured. Of itself, this passage can hardly be taken as proof that demons really do believe – the usual position taken is that demons are fallen angels who cannot believe and cannot repent nor be healed. This passage even taken on face value would contradict that system of belief.

2:20 Faith without works is "barren" (James 2:20 RV)- the implication being that if we do the works which our beliefs elicit from us, yet more creative fruit is brought forth. And James goes straight on to speak of Abraham offering Isaac (James 2:21)- as if to say that Abraham and Sarah's

‘barrenness’ was overcome by their faith, and this led them to the ‘opportunity’ to show yet more faith in being prepared to offer Isaac.

2:21 James goes on to show how Abraham's faith brought works as a natural by-product: "Was not Abraham our father (another hint at a Jewish readership) justified by works?". The phrase "Abraham our father" looks back to Mt.3:8,9 and Jn.8:33,39, where the Jews who said this were told to "bring forth fruits (works) meet for repentance" and to "do the works of Abraham" respectively. Thus James was telling his readers to do the works of Abraham. The fact they were doing works already shows that the real 'work' of Abraham they needed to develop was his faith. "This is the work of God, that ye believe" (Jn.6:29), Jesus had said. The Biblically minded would have spotted the apparently flat contradiction between "Abraham our father (was) justified by works" and Rom.4:2, which stresses that Abraham was not justified by his works but by his faith. Thus again the "works" which James says Abraham was justified by were his faith *and* the practical outworking of it in being prepared to offer Isaac. Abraham's "works" were that "he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar" (v.21). Notice the past tense of "he had offered" and that it does not say 'he bound Isaac...'. Because of Abraham's faith that God would resurrect Isaac on behalf of the perfect lamb sacrifice that he believed was to come (Gen.22:5,8,14), it was reckoned to Abraham as if he had performed the 'work' of offering Isaac even though he had not physically performed it. Thus the Biblically minded would be able to see from these allusions to other Scriptures that the spiritual attribute of faith and the concept of works are almost indivisible. This is confirmed by noting that the one act of offering up Isaac is described as "works" in the plural- because it involved many separate decisions of faith. And in our lives too, God may count something to us as a completed work when we have only summoned enough true faith to do it, and have not actually performed it in reality.

2:22 Faith is perfected / matured by the process of works (James 2:22,23). The works, the upward spiral of a life lived on the basis of faith, develop the initial belief in practice. Thus Abraham believed God in Gen. 15, but the works of Gen. 22 [offering Isaac] made that faith “perfect”. It is that faith, therefore, which does the works. Verse 22 puts this in so many words: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?". Note too the upward spiral initiated by having a basic faith- faith led to works, and those works perfected the faith. The Greek word for "wrought" is the same translated 'worker together' in 2 Cor.6:1: "We then, as workers together with (God)". Faith 'works' alongside the physical works. The preceding verse (2 Cor.5:21) speaks of how God is working through His gift of Christ for our salvation through our not relying on our own works. Paul says he is working together with God to get the believers not to "receive the grace of God in vain" by relying on their physical works for salvation. By having this attitude to works and faith, Abraham's faith was "made perfect" or finished, implying that it is possible for a man to develop a fulness of faith in something, a totality of belief which needs no further improvement. If Abraham could reach this dizzy height, it must certainly be within reach of all his seed.

2:23 James 2:23 speaks as if the comment "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" was a one-off statement made at that time when Abraham believed; and it was subsequently justified when Abraham demonstrated his faith by offering Isaac. So the comment that "Abraham believed" surely must refer to Abraham's response as he stood there looking up at the stars.

"And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" (v.23). This is quoting Gen.15:5,6, where in the moment that Abraham looked up at the stars and believed (so Rom.4:23 implies) "So shall thy seed be", God "counted it to him for righteousness". God knew that Abraham's faith in those words would really be shown when he was asked to offer Isaac, the only human means of their fulfilment. Thus the Scripture recorded that Abraham was righteous when this was as yet unproved by his works. However, that Scripture was

fulfilled when Abraham was prepared to offer Isaac. The point is being made that just that kind of intense faith is as if the works have already been done- which is exactly in line with James' preceding reasoning. The use of the phrase "The Scripture" implies that either there was a literal written account made of the words of Gen.15:6 which was then validated by Abraham's offering of Isaac (note "*was* fulfilled", past tense), or "The Scripture" refers to some kind of (Angelic?) record in Heaven of events in our probations, similar to the concept of the deeds of believers being written in a book of life. The evidence for either seems about equal, and there is no reason why both cannot be correct. "The scripture of truth" in Dan.10:21 appears to have been some written record available to the Angels which they revealed to man. "The Scripture" elsewhere in James seems to refer to the general spirit of God's principles in dealing with man: "The Scripture saith...The spirit that dwelleth in us..." (4:5) does not seem to refer to any specific written scripture, and "the royal law" (i.e. what was specifically placed on record) seems to be separate from "the scripture" in 2:8. Similarly "the scripture" foresaw that God would justify the heathen (Gal.3:8), and "concluded all under sin" (Gal.3:22), hinting that "the scripture" is more than just the written words. Writing was certainly developed by Abraham's time, and a literal written statement of Abraham's acceptance with God being verified by his offering of Isaac is an attractive idea. That "the scripture" which was fulfilled at the time of the offering of Isaac (James 2:20) was something written is suggested in Rom.4:22,23, where the fact "it was imputed to him" in Gen.15:6 "*was* not written for his sake alone". The fact Abraham was justified for his faith was written for Abraham to see at some time in his life. The point has been made that the descriptions of Sodom in Gen.10:19 (cp. Gen.14:3) imply that Genesis 10 was written before Sodom's destruction as recorded in Gen.19. Thus it is reasonable to suggest that Gen.15 may also have been in written existence.

2:24 "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (v.24). Romans 4 stresses that works do *not* justify a man, but rather a true faith that is expressed in actions. "Faith only" must therefore refer to a holding of true doctrine and a hope that God provides physical help, as characterized by the healed demoniacs (2:19) and exemplified by those who asked in prayer for things to "consume upon your lusts" (4:2,3). There is a definite connection between "faith" as a spiritual quality and "the faith" as the set of doctrines which the believer accepts. It is these which produce the attribute of faith. The "works" James is referring to are 'faith works'- i.e. works that come as a natural corollary to faith and which include spiritual attributes like belief in God's word.

2:25- see on Heb. 11:31.

"Likewise also (notice the favourable juxtaposition of Rahab and Abraham) was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (v.25). The use of the word "messengers" instead of "spies" implies that the spies came with a message which Rahab believed. The Joshua record stresses how she knew the covenant Name, knew and quoted the words of Moses (Josh.2:9), and had her roof covered with flax- i.e. linen, perhaps hinting at the righteousness already imputed to her for her faith. The message which the spies brought was probably a call to repentance, or perhaps a statement of the coming destruction of Jericho. Rahab's acceptance of this message based on her knowledge of God's basic principles corresponds to the holding of 'the faith' by the Jewish Christians. Her sending out of the spies another way was the 'works' that came as a natural response to her true faith. Her hiding of the spies, courageous lying to the Jericho Gestapo or putting the cord out of the window as a public testimony to her separation were her physical 'works'- but these are not chosen as an example of her 'faith-works'. Her scheming to enable the spies to safely return to Joshua by them going out "another way" and thereby enabling the campaign against Jericho to begin, showed her real "works". She believed their message about the destruction of Jericho, therefore in faith she enabled the spies to return to bring this about. Rahab was "justified... *when*...", again showing that justification or faith being made perfect (v.22) is something that can occur at a specific moment after reaching a certain degree of faith which has been expressed in actions (cp. Abraham looking up at the stars and believing).

The implication here in v.25 is that the moment the spies were sneaking through the outskirts of Jericho following her directions, Rahab was justified.

2:26 "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (v.26). 'Faith' is being likened to a person, i.e. the believer in the conversation of v.18-20 who thinks that his own faith alone will save him. "The Spirit" is often a reference to a spiritual mind, notably in Romans. Thus the body is equated with faith as the Spirit or spiritual attributes are with "works".

3:1 We will be condemned by the very presence of the excellence of the Lord's glory; but we will have judgment / condemnation with mercy (James 2:13); we will receive damnation, and yet be saved (James 3:1).

James continues to be increasingly specific as to how the word should act upon us to produce a spiritual character. The whole of Chapter 3 is devoted to showing how *our* words are the clearest indicator of how *the* word is affecting our heart, and the emphasis we should therefore give to the control of the tongue and the thoughts behind it. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (v.1,2). This being addressed to those leading the ecclesia further suggests that this letter was written primarily to the rich Jewish believers who were the Spirit gifted eldership in the mainly Jewish ecclesias of the first century. These two verses must have Mt.23:8 in mind: "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren". Hence James addresses them as "my brethren", gently reminding them that they were not masters but brethren. The context of Mt.23 is denouncing the Pharisees for loving the prominent seats in synagogues and to be publicly recognized for their righteousness, which again indicates that these brethren were influenced by Judaistic attitudes. We have seen how in 2:2,3 they were placing great importance on having good seats in the synagogue/ecclesia. "Masters" means 'teachers'; and maybe this is echoing Paul's condemnation of the Jews in Rom.2:17-24: "Thou art called a Jew... and makest thy boast (cp. James 4:16) of God... and art confident that thou thyself art... an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes". There are several other links:

Rom.2:17-24	James
"Makest thy boast of God"	The tongue of the teachers in the ecclesia boasted (3:5; 4:16)
"Knowest His will"- so they thought.	They should have said "If the Lord will" (4:15)- implying they thought they already knew God's will.
"An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes"	"Many masters" (teachers); 3:1
"Dost thou commit adultery?"	"Ye adulterers" (4:4; 2:11)
"Through breaking the Law"	"Ye commit sin, and are convinced of the Law as transgressors" (2:9)
"The name of God is blasphemed among the	"Rich men... the judgement seats (Gentiles)

Gentiles because of you (Jews).

...blaspheme that worthy name by which ye (Jewish believers) are called" (2:6,7)

3:2 We all offend others (James 3:2), and he who offends his brother will be condemned. Those who are sleeping at the Lord's coming will be found unworthy, so says the spirit in Thessalonians. But in the Lord's parable, *all* the virgins are sleeping at His coming, wise and foolish alike. They were all living on far too low a level, and yet the Lord will save them [us] by grace alone. God accepts we aren't going to make it as we should. There ought to be no schism in the body (1 Cor. 12:25), but He realizes that inevitably there will be (1 Cor. 11:19).

Their desire to be teachers therefore indicated that they were bringing the attitude of their former religion and the surrounding world into the ecclesia. The rest of Chapter 3 is about the tongue; James' argument therefore seems to run 'As a teacher you will have to speak many words, and the chances are (v.2) your words will offend someone in the ecclesia. Remember that as a teacher of the ecclesia you are responsible for the flock, and therefore "we shall receive the greater condemnation"(v.1). Only a "perfect man" who has his words totally in control will not offend anyone, and only he is "able also to bridle the whole body" (v.2)- the ecclesia, the body of Christ'. It is worth noting that our judgement in the last day will take into account the quality of our converts and the effort we have made to build up others. Our receiving condemnation as a result of being masters may be alluding to Mt.12:37: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned". In this case, the words Christ is speaking about are specifically our words to our brethren and sisters. The context in v.34 is Christ telling the teachers of the law that it was impossible for them to "speak (i.e. teach) good things" because their heart was evil. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things" (v.35), which connects with the description of the Scribes (teacher of the Law) instructed in the Truth bringing forth "out of his treasure things new and old" (Mt.13:52). The ideal ecclesial 'master' will not offend any in the ecclesia because his words are controlled on account of his being a "perfect man". 2 Tim.3:16,17 says that the word of God has the power to create a perfect man (cp. 1 Cor.13:8-10; Eph.4:8-13). James 1:4,5 has shown that by the wisdom of the word, a man can be made "perfect and entire". Only such a brother will be able to "bridle the whole body" (ecclesia). Earlier, in 1:26, the bridling of the tongue is spoken of as a result of the word acting on the heart. Thus only someone able to bridle his own tongue can bridle the ecclesia. That this interpretation is on the right lines is also suggested by v.6 talking about the "members... the whole body" being influenced by the tongue. This is the language of 1 Cor.12 concerning the ecclesial body.

3:3 "We put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body" (v.3).

This can probably be read on two levels- the need to control our lives by concentrating on the control of the mouths (the tongue), and also the implication that the whole body of the ecclesia can be turned about by their leader controlling the ecclesial tongue- i.e. encouraging the members to control their thoughts and words. And this is exactly what James, the real leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia and the Jewish believers of the Diaspora (1:1), was trying to do. The way he asserts his own leadership like this is so subtle that only the thoughtful and spiritually aware would appreciate it. The Greek 'peltho' translated 'obey' carries the idea of yielding and friendly confidence- as one would deal with a horse; and this is precisely how James was trying to influence this ecclesial "body". This was to the end that the body would be turned about, a phrase implying a total about turn, thus showing the degree to which the ecclesia needed to change. The reference to bits in the horses' mouths is an allusion to Ps.32:8,9. This teaches that the understanding of God, having experienced His mercy, should lead us to control our tongues, rather than our having to be forced to

do so by a bridle. This fits in with the teaching of v.8, that the tongue cannot be tamed by man's human efforts (cp. bit and bridle), seeing that the natural mind which produces our words is 'beyond cure' (Jer.17:9 Heb.).

3:4 The figure of the ecclesia's leaders as the rider and the church as the horse is now transferred to that of a captain steering the ship. "Behold also the ships, which though they be...driven of fierce winds (cp. the Jewish ecclesias scattered abroad by fierce persecution), yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the Governor listeth" (v.4). Again, emphasis is given to how relatively easy it is to control the direction of our spiritual lives and the whole ecclesia- by a dedicated concentration on the control of the tongue and the thinking behind it. The ships seem "so great" (translated "mighty" in Rev.16:18); the flesh seems so vast and strong, the task of turning round a wayward ecclesia appears so impossible. They "are driven of fierce winds" representing the winds of false Judaist doctrine (Eph.4:14), and the winds of the flesh and trials of life which beat upon the spiritual house of our lives and the ecclesia, as described in the parable of the house on the rock (Mt.7:25-27). Both these references to winds stress how the temporal ministry of the miraculous Spirit gifts would be replaced by the 'perfect man' state brought about by the possession of the completed word (cp. 1 Cor.13:8-10; 2 Tim.3:16,17), and that then the winds of false doctrine would not blow the church around. Note how the immature ecclesia is again being likened to a ship blown about by the wind. The winds of the parable of Mt.7 were overcome by hacking away at the rock of our hard human heart in order to hear the sayings of Christ and put them into practice. It is significant that the winds of James 1:6 could be overcome by faith, which comes from the word. The wavering believer is likened there to a ship in trouble on a windy sea. The ship can be turned about "Whithersoever the governor listeth". The word for "listeth" means 'intense desire or will', showing the great concentration of mental effort required by the captain of the spiritual ship. Again, the way to have a powerful will is to have our own personal will merged with that of God. The will of God is in the word (1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18 cp. John 1:13), and a saturation of the mind with the word will result in our mind becoming like that of God. Thus John 15:7 states the tremendous encouragement: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done". Jesus does not say we must ask according to God's will- but according to our *own* will, because if the word abides in us then our will becomes that of God- and any prayer according to His will is heard (1 Jn.5:14).

3:5 "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things" (v.5). The believer is identified with his tongue. "A little (Greek: micro) member" stresses the small physical size of the tongue in proportion to the vast spiritual effect it has. If the body and its members also have reference to the ecclesia as a whole, it may be that James is implying that one very subtle member- i.e. an individual in the ecclesia- was using his words to mislead the ecclesia. The ship can be easily influenced- by either a good or bad governor. The individual referred to was probably an agent of the Judaizers, whom the New Testament often describes as doing their evil work through "Great swelling words of vanity" (Jude 16; see too 3 Jn.10; 2 Pet.2:3; 2 Tim.2:14; 1 Tim.6:4; Col.2:4; Eph.5:6; 1 Cor.1:17; Rom.16:18). The tongue boasting "great things" is looking back to Ps.12:2,3: "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a *double heart* do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh great things" (AVmg.) The context of bad words coming as a result of a double mind is exactly the same as in James (1:8; 4:8). the vain man of Ps.12:2 is mentioned again in James 2:20. Ps.12:4,5 also have connections with James. Psalm 12 concludes with praise of God's words: "The words of the Lord are pure words" (v.6), as if to suggest that the word of God is the antidote to proud speaking. This all fits the context of James nicely. Thus "the tongue" here in James 3:5 is being used to represent a group of proud, vain talkers within the ecclesial body, who were probably all influenced by the Judaizers, possibly with one specific ringleader. Being "a little member" of the ecclesia, this group may not have been numerically large. "Behold, how great a matter ('wood') a little fire kindleth!" (v.5). The Greek word for "little" here is different from that in the phrase "a little member". This

implies rather a short period of time- i.e. 'consider what havoc can be caused by fire so quickly'. The implication is that James' readers needed to act quickly both to bring their own tongue under control and also to restrain "the tongue" element that were leading the ecclesia astray, and soon would burn down the ecclesia- represented by the 'wood', composed of "the planting of the Lord". The New Testament epistles often give reason to think that the ecclesia will be in a state of great spiritual weakness just prior to the second coming. Those who find this hard to believe should bear in mind how *quickly* a small group of brethren can influence the ecclesia for bad.

3:6- see on James 1:23.

Our words are as fire, and are to be connected with the fire of condemnation (James 3:5,6), which our words have already kindled (Lk. 12:49). Speaking of the last day Isaiah 33:11 had foretold: "your breath [i.e. words], as fire, shall devour you". See on James 5:3.

If we may speak in human terms, the speed and power of God's intellect is such that He does not need words as we do in order to reason and reach conclusions. This begins to be reflected by the way in which the Bible is full (fuller than many realize) of the device of metonymy, whereby the cause is put for the effect. The piercing analysis of God is reflected by the way in which He uses this linguistic device so frequently. Much misunderstanding of the atonement has arisen through failing to appreciate God's use of metonymy. Other examples include James 3:6, where "the tongue" means the words the tongue speaks; and 1 John 5:15, where God hearing our prayers means (see context) that He answers them. Unless we appreciate metonymy, we will come to the conclusion that God's word is making incorrect statements; for example, that mere possession of a tongue means that our whole body is defiled (James 3:6).

"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body" (v.6). The root of all sin is in our hearts (Jer.17:9), and as the tongue so accurately reflects the heart, it is "a world of iniquity". God "hath set the world in (man's) heart" (Ecc.3:11), which means that "there is no good in" man (Ecc.3:12), i.e. in man's heart. The tongue will defile the whole body- the ecclesia, and also our individual lives. Remember how in 2:26 a man's spiritual life is also likened to a body. The tongue defiles the body. This is alluding to the Lord's words in Mt.15:11,18 that "those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man". Jesus says our evil desires defile us; James describes our tongue as doing the same, again showing the effective identification of our thoughts and words. We have suggested that "the body" refers to both the ecclesia and the spiritual life of the believers. There are many references to "the body" which cannot be applied to our physical body; most obviously James 3:2 speaks of the body being bridled by control of the tongue. Similarly, every part of the body we have in the Kingdom will be spiritually aware and significant. It is for this reason that abuse of the body we now have is such a serious offence. The word for 'defile' is the same translated 'spot' regarding the need for a believer to keep himself and his spiritual garments unspotted by the world (1:27)- thus equating "the body" and the garments, and "the world" with our evil thinking which leads to our bad works. Remember that God has set the world in our heart, so that there is no good in man (Ecc.3:11,12). The tongue and the evil heart behind it "setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (v.6). We have commented earlier on this. The tongue will be set on fire of Gehenna- i.e. the destruction of the physical body of the rejected at the judgement will be the destruction of his "tongue", seeing that there is a certain association between our spiritual character and our physical body. The language here implies physical fire may be used to destroy the unworthy saints- an idea supported elsewhere.

3:7 "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind" (v.7). "Mankind" in Greek is from two words- 'Man' and 'kind'. The latter is the same as occurs earlier in the verse, and as well as meaning a genus it fundamentally means 'nature' (see A.V.mg). In the same way as a horse and ship can be "tamed" because we can relatively easily analyse their nature and make them respond in an expected way to a certain

stimulus, it seems that some in the ecclesia were thinking that the use of human wisdom could tame our animal human nature. Marshall's Interlinear offers the rendering "every nature of beasts... has been tamed by human nature". The fact animals have increasingly been tamed by man ("is tamed and hath been tamed") perhaps encouraged these believers to think that there could be a gradual progression in the taming of human nature also by human strength. The connection between the animals and our bestial sinful instincts would have been appreciated by these brethren; "every kind" of animals had been increasingly tamed, and thus they thought human strength could also tame human nature.

3:8 "But the tongue can no man tame" (v.8)- our pets are more obedient to us than our tongues. The Greek for "mankind" well describes the reasoning ability of our human nature that can apparently tame animal instincts. "Man" alone can imply human, semi-spiritual reasoning- e.g. "I speak (reason) after the manner of men", or "I am speaking in human terms" (N.I.V.) in Rom.6:19. "Kind" carries the idea of growth by germination.

But rather than being progressively tamed, human nature is in a progressive downward spiral to death if it goes unchecked (1:14,15). The deception of our natural thinking is that to a limited extent it can be spiritually sound: "The Gentiles... do by nature the things contained in the law" (Rom.2:14), "nature itself" teaches the spiritual principles governing hair length (1 Cor.11:14). Like James' ecclesia, it is possible to live in the Truth adhering to correct doctrine- "the faith"- and make a half hearted attempt to develop a spiritual mind to control our actions in our own strength. James argues for a totality of success in our spiritual lives; he is saying that any striving for spiritual development based on our natural reasoning will fail, ultimately, to develop the high standard of being totally spiritual that James is setting. He holds up Abraham and Rahab as examples of those who did reach a certain point of fulness of faith and subsequent justification with God, showing that such a state is not impossible for us. Jude 10,12 describes the Judaizers speaking "great swelling words...which they know naturally" at the communion service ("feast of charity"). This again suggests that James' warning about using natural wisdom- i.e. from within our own nature- to control the ecclesial body and our own lives is aimed at a group of false teachers within the ecclesia who were controlling the ecclesia and encouraging its members to control themselves by relying on the mental abilities of human nature, rather than on the wisdom from the word filling the mind. "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (v.8).

The likening of "the tongue" to a deadly snake invites comparison with the serpent in Eden, and therefore with the Judaizers, who "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" were enticing Christians away "from the simplicity which is in Christ" by preaching "another Gospel" based on "another Spirit"- i.e. of the human spirit or mind, as opposed to the Holy Spirit which was in the word of the true Gospel (2 Cor.11:3,4). The serpent in Eden is elsewhere a symbol of the Jewish system. The serpent was to be *destroyed*, not just tamed, by the seed of the woman. The serpent/devil being in our natural mind, our tongue must be regarded by us as a rampant snake, seeing that it reflects our thoughts. The following verse 9 contains another allusion to early Genesis. By the tongue, the man made in God's similitude is cursed, due to the serpent's tongue. Through the unbridled tongue and also the influence of the Judaist serpent, the new creation of believers could be cursed, as they can be today too. The tongue cannot be tamed by man; the emphasis being on the word "man". Yet in 1:26 we saw that the mark of a true believer influenced by the word is that he *can* bridle his tongue. Thus here James is saying that "no man" in the sense of the natural man, a reliance on human strength, can control the tongue. There must be a connection with the demoniac Legion whom no man could tame (Mk.5:4)- perhaps in that he also represented the Jewish system. There is also an echo here of Paul's description of how human nature is so impossible for the natural man to control: "The carnal mind... is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be... in my flesh dwelleth no good thing... how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom.8:7; 7:18). Thus it is not a question of changing the carnal mind by the strength of the carnal mind; Paul says that is impossible; but of creating a "new man" by a spirit or power of reasoning outside the natural man. If

the spirit of man is no use, the only other source of power is God's Holy Spirit, available to us from the word. The parallels between the untamable nature of the tongue and that of our evil thinking as described in Romans shows how exactly our words are to be equated with the thinking of our heart. The tongue is "an unruly evil"; Strong defines "unruly" as 'unrestrainable', which fits in with the exposition offered above.

3:9 James warns his converts of the need to restrain our tongue; and yet he admits that "we", himself included, use the tongue to bless God and curse men; whereas in other parts of his letter he addresses his readers as "you" when he criticizes their behaviour. But in this matter of the tongue, he holds himself, their teacher, to be afflicted with the same failures as them (James 3:9 cp. 4:15,16).

James himself appeals in his letter for us to bridle the tongue. But here he seems to say that the tongue is uncontrollable, and "we" - he includes himself - use it to both bless God and curse men. And he goes on to say that this shouldn't be so, because a good tree brings forth good fruit, i.e. words. Inappropriate words from our mouths indicate that there is something fundamentally wrong with our spirituality. What is the reconciliation of this? I suggest that James, despite being a leading brother, is showing a chink in his own armour, and thereby empowering his message all the more. He is saying that he himself has to admit that "we", including himself, do sometimes say inappropriate things. The tongue can be bridled, it can be as Peter puts it 'refrained'. But in practice, no man seems able to totally tame the tongue. And this is why James also says in this very context that we shouldn't be eager to be teachers, because it is almost inevitable that we will use words wrongly and thereby offend our brother, with all the Biblical implications this carries: "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (3:2). James, a teacher in the ecclesia, a Master in Israel, says that "we", himself included, at times offend others; because "the tongue can no man tame". And yet it *can* be bridled, refrained, tamed, just as a horse can be tamed by use of a bridle. Surely what James is saying is this: 'This matter of the tongue worries me no end. I know I, and all of us, could tame our tongues. It's vital we do. But inappropriate words do still come out of me, and you. And it worries me, because a good tree doesn't bear such bad fruit. It seems no man among us can tame his tongue as he ought. Oh wretched men that we are. Me especially, because I'm your teacher, James the brother of Jesus Himself. Yes, let us strive the more earnestly in this matter of bridling the tongue. But who in the end shall deliver us from this bondage of corruption, this seeming inability to live and speak and do and be as we ought to? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord and His saving grace'.

God as creator created man in His own image; and therefore we shouldn't curse men (James 3:9). By reason of the image they bear, we are to act to all men as we would to God Himself; we are not to treat some men as we would animals, who are not in the image of God. Because we are made in God's image, we should therefore not kill other humans (Gen. 9:6). James says the same, in essence, in teaching that because we are in God's image, we shouldn't curse others. To curse a man is to kill him. That's the point of James' allusion to Genesis and to God as creator. Quite simply, respect for the person of others is inculcated by sustained reflection on the way that they too are created in God's image.

"Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God" (v.9).

The fact that they did use their tongues to praise God tempted James' readers to think that this meant that they had their tongues and therefore their thinking too in control. Again, the warning against semi-spirituality and a 'feel good religion' comes over. We have seen that the rich, proud speaking members of the ecclesia are the target of much of what James is saying. Our previous notes on 2:6,16 have shown that this group were quite aggressive to the lower ranks of believers. The men "made after the similitude of God" may well refer to the creative power of the word making them in God's image. As with Daniel, Nehemiah and other faithful spiritual leaders of the Jews, James

totally associates himself with his brethren- *we* curse men, he says. It is noteworthy that as a faithful shepherd James does not disassociate himself from this wayward flock. However, elsewhere in the letter he repeatedly addresses them as "ye"- e.g. v.14 is in the same passage concerning control of the tongue: "*Ye* have bitter envying and strife in your hearts". The only other places where James associates himself with the readers are in 3:1,2 and 6, again in this same passage about the tongue- it is "among *our* members". There seem two possibilities to explain this. It may be that James personally felt guilty of misusing his tongue- "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man" (3:2). No doubt James had spoken wrongly at some time and was conscious of this, and therefore felt he could not phrase this criticism of them as he does all the others- he could not write 'You both bless God and curse men with your tongue' when he too was guilty. However, James' 'cursing' and thereby offending ("we offend all", 3:2), was no doubt a temporary slip-up, compared to his readers whose generally unbridled tongue was because "*Ye* (not James) have bitter envying and strife in your hearts" (v.14). This envying and strife within the ecclesia caused the "fightings among you" (4:1), and this again suggests that the cursing of men which they were guilty of related to their words to their brethren. The other possible explanation of why James personally associates himself with the 'cursing' done by the tongue is that "the tongue" may indirectly refer to a certain group within the ecclesial body. They were part of the body of Christ, as was James, therefore the tongue was "among our members" (3:6), and its cursing of men therefore implicated the rest of the ecclesia.

We have seen that James often bases his reasoning on the sermon on the mount. The ideas of blessing, cursing and men in God's similitude are found in Mt.5:44-48: "Bless them that curse you...that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven (i.e. showing His spiritual characteristics)...be ye therefore perfect" (cp. James 3:2 "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man"). This again suggests that the men in the similitude of God who were being cursed were those of the ecclesia who blessed these rich brethren who cursed them, and thus became the children of God due to their being born of the word, which makes a man "perfect". "Similitude" is from a word meaning 'to assimilate', implying a likeness that has been taken on. The "men" like this are those who have developed the likeness of God, "men having become according to likeness of God" (Marshall's Interlinear). The frequent references to Peter's letters also makes an interesting point. The parallel there is in 1 Pet.3:8-11: "Be ye all of one mind... not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing...refrain (your) tongue from evil...the Lord is against them that do evil". The "evil" spoken of here is therefore that of bitter speaking within the ecclesia which must not be responded to. This type of evil is far harder to resist than being taken to law unfairly, which is how we tend to read this passage. However, the context in Peter is also of physical persecution by the Romans, influenced by Jewish criticism of the Christians. There seems a hint that this group of evil speakers within the ecclesia were associated with the Roman and Jewish authorities.

3:10 "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (v.10). There is possibly a passing allusion here to Moses, the only other person in Scripture to be recorded as having blessing and cursing coming from him. He could justifiably do so, because he had the word of God in him. But these who did not have the word in them were not justified in doing so- i.e. the association of themselves with Moses which was being made by these Judaist-influenced brethren was not valid. For another example of this, see notes on v.15 and also 4:12. Verse 11 implies that this sending out of blessing and cursing was simultaneous- the figure is of a spring gushing out both salt and fresh water from the same place (Greek 'hole'- cp. the mouth) at the same time. If the cursing of the other brethren was being done in the name of God, then this figure is apt- i.e. along with praise of God there was apparently righteous condemnation of these other brethren, in the same way as Moses simultaneously blessed and cursed the people on God's behalf.

No doubt the withholding of wages from these brethren (5:4) and refusing to materially alleviate their poverty (2:16) was justified by accusing the poor brethren of spiritual weakness that warranted this cursing by God. The close association of material wealth and spiritual pride throughout Israel's history and also here in James must be taken to heart by us in these last days. Just before the Lord returns there will be some who "eat and drink with the drunken" due to their wealth, and this leads them to beat their fellow servants (Mt.24:45-50). This group will be those who are called to be the rulers of the ecclesia ("his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them their- spiritual-meat in due season"). Those James speaks of were the "masters", "governors" and horse-riders in the ecclesia (3:1-5). The fact that some of our ecclesial leaders are in a position to be rich in this world must mean that all this is a serious warning to them- some will, according to the parable, allow the authority and power they have in their secular life to corrupt them, so that they act like that in the ecclesia. Let us all humbly resolve that our Lord's parable will not be fulfilled in us. Note how that parable formed a footnote to the Olivet prophecy- as if to say that this temptation to have a lack of true love for one's brethren in these last days will really be something to be reckoned with. The blessing and cursing "proceedeth" from the mouth. This is the same word used in Mt.15:18,19: "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart...out of the heart proceed evil thoughts". Again, the mouth is effectively identical with the heart, showing the great emphasis by James on a man's words as being the main form of manifestation of his evil heart, and the need to control them if all other sin is to be avoided. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be". The Greek for "ought" occurs nowhere else and is extremely strong (cp. "my brethren" with the gentle opening gambit of the Lord in His letters to the ecclesias). It is worth noting at this point how well and personally James seems to have known his readership, although they were all "scattered abroad" (1:1) throughout the Roman world. Surely he would not have been so dogmatic in his denunciation of the type of words they spoke unless he knew exactly their situation. The nature of inspiration is such that James could have just sat and wrote as a result of a specific revelation to him of the weaknesses of these people, seeing in vision how they selected comfortable chairs in the meeting room for the rich (2:3), refused welfare to the poor, and spoke such wrong words as described in chapter 3. However, it seems more likely that inspiration worked through a band of dedicated (young?) servants of the ecclesias moving around the scattered pockets of Jewish Christians as they went from city to city (4:13) and reporting back to James. Or maybe James himself moved around visiting them, as a good shepherd; or perhaps he knew them all personally due to them all being in the Jerusalem ecclesia together in happier days.

3:11 "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place (Greek: 'hole') sweet water and bitter?" (v.11). We have already made some comment on this in our notes on v.10. The spring gushing out (the idea of "send forth") sweet and bitter water corresponds to the mouth having blessing and cursing proceeding from it. The idea of their words gushing from them corresponds to the rebuke that their tongue was unbridled in v.3. Note that both blessing of God and cursing of brethren gushed from them. For our words in regard to God to be unbridled is a sin, as much as to curse a brother without restraint. It is so tempting to feel that our relationship with God is fine, and therefore to assume that our attitude to our brethren is therefore beyond rebuke. These who blessed God and cursed their brethren fell into this trap. Our praise of God needs to be bridled or restrained by the word. Any ecstatic release of praise to God can therefore only be acceptable if it is within the bridle, or control, of the word- i.e. if its root motivation is in the word rather than human emotion. The word for "bitter" is from a root meaning 'to pierce'; the words of this group in the ecclesia who are being reprimanded must have really pierced the heart of the poor, humble brethren. A spring can either emit sweet or bitter water, depending on the surrounding soil type- cp. the parable of the sower/types of ground. So our words really are an indication of our spiritual status; they will not really alternate between sweet and bitter, although they may appear to in our human self examination. In God's eyes they are either sweet or bitter. There is a significant link with Jer.6:6-8: "Cast a mount against Jerusalem (ecclesia?): this is the city to be visited (AD70 language); she is

wholly oppression in the midst of her (cp. James 2:6;5:4 concerning the Jewish believers oppressing their brethren). As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her (i.e. the waters cast out are paralleled with her words of violence- that is how violence is *heard*)... be thou instructed (the same idea as "endued with knowledge" in the Greek of James 3:13), O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited"- as happened after AD70. The Jewish believers are thus being likened to apostate Jerusalem-fitting, seeing they were all once members of the Jerusalem ecclesia that had since been "scattered abroad" (James 1:1 cp. Acts 8:1,4; 11:19).

The sending out of sweet and bitter waters must also look back to Marah, where the bitter waters were changed to sweet by the tree cast into the waters (Ex.15:25), pointing forward to the cross. James' way of changing the bitter water of human nature into sweet waters was by true obedience to the word in our heart. Ex.15 suggests that this change is due to the cross being applied to the waters. By doing so, "there He proved them" (Ex.15:25) whether they would believe in the efficacy of the tree or not. Therefore our belief in the cross of Christ and the power he has subsequently made available for the development of 'sweet water' is only shown by our zeal to obey the word. The need to obey the word in order to drink the sweet waters is also stressed in Ex.15. The people feared they would catch disease from drinking the bitter water, and so immediately after the tree had been thrown into the waters "there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them, and said, If thou wilt hearken to the voice of the Lord... I will put none of these diseases upon thee...and they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of (sweet) water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters" (v.25-27). Obedience to the word would lead to the bitter waters being changed to wells of good water, as witnessed by their coming to the prosperous oasis of Elim. Compare the wells of Elim with James' fountain (spring) of sweet waters.

3:12 "Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh" (v.12). We have seen that the fountain yielding water represents our heart or tongue yielding our words. The trees bearing fruit therefore must be interpreted as being our hearts bearing the spiritual fruit of our words. Both fig and olive trees are well hacked Old Testament symbols of Israel- as if to imply to these Jews that only by having the real spirit of Israel in their hearts rather than just in their flesh could they bear spiritual fruit. The bearing of fruit by the fig tree is a consistent symbol of the repentance of Israel in the "last days" of AD70 and (hopefully and prayerfully) in the twentieth century. In his usual neat style James is implying that the national repentance of Israel would be imputed to them if the "remnant" of Jewish Christians bore fruit; but with their present attitude of mind this was impossible. This is the same idea as in 5:7: "The husbandman (God? Christ?) waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth (the land- of Israel? i.e. from the Jewish believers especially?), and hath long patience for it"- a connection with 2 Pet.3:15, where Peter says that the delay in the second coming to await the development of "all holy conversation and Godliness" (v.11) among Peter's Jewish readers shows "the longsuffering of our Lord" (Christ). It is possible to argue that the exact timing of the second coming is related to the repentance of Israel, and was deferred from AD70 due to lack of Jewish repentance. Thus we can appreciate why James, knowing this as he wrote before AD70, so earnestly begs the Jewish believers to develop true spiritual fruit that would result in the second coming, as opposed to petty bickering and infighting. Peter's plea is just as intense. The same plea, with even greater urgency, has to be made to natural and spiritual Israel in these days. In practice, let us again notice how all spiritual fruit is epitomized by the type of words we speak; the fruit of the olive is parallel with the water from the fountain.

There is a clear link with Mt.7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing (looking like a lamb, appearing to have the gentle, spiritual characteristics of Christ)...ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles?... a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit (cp. "so can no fountain... yield")... every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (cp. James 3:6- the

tongue will be destroyed in Gehenna fire). Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them". This almost conclusively shows that this group of Jewish believers within the ecclesia whom James is writing about were the Jewish "false prophets"- or those influenced by them- whom the Lord had warned would try to infiltrate the ecclesia. For those who were attune to these connections with other Scripture, it would have been obvious that these brethren were false prophets because their words so clearly gave them away. Note how James has slightly changed Christ's analogy-from grapes and figs growing on thorns and thistles to grapes growing on figs, and figs growing on olives. Thorns and thistles is used to describe the fruit of the (same?) Jewish false prophets in the ecclesia in Heb.6:5-8, and they would also recall the curse in Eden to any Jewish mind. This would associate these Jewish false teachers with the serpent who brought thorns and thistles into Eden- a simile repeated in 2 Cor.11:3 and elsewhere. James is saying that the thorns and thistles had become figs and olives, i.e. they appeared far more acceptable than the false prophets of Christ's parable, but the fact their fruit was not consistent with what they appeared to be was still the litmus test which proved they were false. Again, there is a warning against thinking that semi-spirituality means acceptability with God. As the ecclesia seemed duped into thinking that because they used their tongue to bless God, all their words must be acceptable, so they thought that because these men didn't appear to be thorns and thistles but rather figs and olives, they must be acceptable even if there was some mismatch between the tree and the fruit.

There is a slight change of figure also with v.11: sweet and bitter water becomes "salt water and fresh". The many links with the sermon on the mount suggest a connection with the group of passages that show that the salt in a believer (Mt.5:13) represents his gracious, "seasoned with salt" way of speaking (Col.4:6) which leads to peace within the ecclesia (Mk.9:50). Both salt water and fresh represent positive spiritual ways of speaking; as their parallel figs and olive berries both equally represent spiritual fruit. The point is thus being made that a spring or tree cannot yield two types of products, and therefore encourages the connection with Mt.7:15-20. Figs, olives and bitter water recalls Jer.8:13,14: "There shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree...for the Lord our God hath...given us water of gall ('poison'- Dt.29:18) to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord". The lack of spiritual fruit on Israel is here associated with bitter or poisonous water. If James is referring to this passage, the tongue "full of deadly poison" (3:8) and the corrupt mind it reflected was the cause of the Jews' lack of fruit, and there is even the implication that God had given them the 'bitter water' of their tongues as a curse, as He did to Israel at Marah, in the sense that God confirms the spiritual or unspiritual attributes of a man- e.g. He hardened Pharaoh's already hard heart.

3:13 "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (v.13). A "wise man" is a synonym for a prophet: "I send unto you prophets, and wise men" (Mt.23:34), the implication being that these brethren thought that they were prophets (i.e. having the Spirit gift of prophecy) and endued with Heavenly knowledge. This follows on nicely from the albeit indirect accusation in the previous verse (through the Mt.7 allusion) that they were false prophets. Verse 14 lends support to this: "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth". "Thy word is Truth" (Jn.17:17), and therefore if they had bitterness in their hearts they were blaspheming against the word which they were inspired to speak. The elders of the early ecclesias (the "presbytery" of 1 Tim.4:14) probably had the Spirit gifts, especially that of prophecy- i.e. 'forth-telling' inspired words of God to the ecclesia. Our Lord said that many who had the gifts of the Spirit would be condemned at judgment day (Mt.7:22)- a prophecy hard to apply to anyone other than the Jewish believers and elders of the first century.

Thus it is possible that James is telling these brethren to validate their spiritual position by humbly showing the word at work in their hearts by their way of life ("a good conversation"), rather than thinking that just because they had the gifts this was proof that they were righteous before God. In this case the "blessing" of God (v.9) which they thought justified all their other words would have

been blessing or praying to God using the spirit gifts as described in 1 Cor.14:16 and Jude 20. The fact their mouths uttered the "sweet" water of the inspired word along with their own brash speaking was therefore especially serious. Because they possessed the gift of prophecy they thought it unnecessary to make the personal effort of applying the word in their hearts to control their thoughts and subsequent words. Examples abound in Hebrews, Corinthians and the Lord's letters in Revelation of those possessing the gifts being unacceptable to God, hence His withdrawal of them. There are similarities between this and our possession of the word of Truth. A true response to the word must always produce humility- any Bible study that does not result in this in some way is pointless.

A comparison of verses 13 and 14 shows that "a good conversation" is the same as not having "bitter envying and strife in your hearts". "Conversation" therefore does not simply mean 'way of life' but rather the thinking that is behind that life. "The former conversation" is "the old man...the deceitful lusts" and is replaced by being "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph.4:22,23), showing that "conversation" applies to the state of mind. It is because of this that Timothy's "Conversation" was to be comprised of mental attributes like "charity... faith... purity" (of mind), 1 Tim.4:12. As was argued in Chapter 2, "works" are 'shown out' of the state of the mind, and cannot be separated from it. The context being of the tongue, the "works" referred to are probably words, which epitomize all a man's spiritual "works". Words should therefore be humble ("with meekness of wisdom"), and based on a heart saturated by the word, and this will indicate whether a man is a true prophet. By contrast, proudly speaking inspired words to publicly show off the gift of prophecy, and also gushing out the words of an unregenerated heart, were equally unacceptable. Such a person was not a true prophet in God's sight.

The idea of "showing out" goes back to 2:18, where James asks this class of believers to show him how it was possible to have faith without works. There he is arguing that they are indivisible, and here in 3:13 he is effectively saying the same- that the works or words are an inevitable reflection of the heart, "the faith", or "conversation".

3:14 "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth" (v.14). The bitter envying in the heart connects with the bitter water of v.11, representing the bitter words of the brethren- again showing that words and heart are effectively identical. "Envying" is the Greek 'zelos' and is the word used to describe zeal for God; it is not the normal word translated "envy". This envying, as we can imagine from what we know already of these brethren, was justified by them with spiritual reasons; similarly Acts 13:45; 17:5 and 1 Cor.3:3 describe Jews and believers envying each other for supposedly spiritual reasons. Envying and strife within the ecclesia were a (conscious?) product of the work of the Judaizers and other false teachers amongst the brethren. It may well be that they were envious of others in the ecclesia spiritually, being jealous of the true spirituality possessed by the poorer brethren. However, the "wars and fightings" of James 4 seem to be associated with desiring material possessions (4:2), resulting in evil speaking between brethren (4:11). In this case the envying of chapter 3 could just be envying the possessions of other brethren. Yet the spiritual associations of "envying" ('zealousing') suggest that either this envying of possessions was couched in spiritual terms- e.g. 'You shouldn't have that car (which I envy) because you should show more generosity to the Truth'- or that the envying was of the more spiritual members. The envying and strife was clearly within the ecclesia, from what chapter 4 and other mentions of envying and strife imply (1 Cor.3:3; Phil.1:15 etc.). But the root cause of this was because this bitterness and envying was "in your hearts". Amazingly, these brethren were glorying (boasting, rejoicing) in this: "glory not". Similarly they rejoiced in their boastings about how they made plans to make business trips without taking account of the working of God's will (4:13-16)- presumably because they thought that as prophets they knew God's will. They were clearly rejoicing in what was wrong and evil, doubtless as a result of taking on board the Judaist-pedalled philosophy that "let us continue in sin, that grace may abound" (Rom.6:1). Romans was written largely to Jews- the first two chapters especially describe how the Jewish ecclesia of the first century were repeating

the same errors as that in the wilderness. The Jewish believers were reasoning that because they were Jews they were justified, and Christ being a Jew confirmed the impossibility of sin being held against them. Thus they smugly rejoiced in being able to commit sin and, as they thought, remain justified, thereby spurring their spiritual condemnation of their poorer Gentile brethren.

The basic message of the Gospel was "in the beginning", in John's language, right from Eden and Abraham, and was made flesh in the person of Jesus. God could have left it at just "the word", but to make it powerful and compelling of acceptance it had to be made flesh in a person. That word must become flesh in us too. This is why James 3:17 speaks of "wisdom" as if it has been made flesh in the believer: "The wisdom that is from above is pure peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy". Abstract wisdom can't be spoken of in those terms; but wisdom made flesh in a person can be. The "wisdom" of which James speaks is "the truth" (3:14). The true Gospel, the doctrine of Christ, must be lived out in flesh; this is the whole intention. It isn't merely an intellectual test to see who can figure it out, and on that basis a relationship with God is given as a reward. One of the Hebrew words for "wisdom" also means "practical working" - and as so often in the Hebrew language, the Divine perspective is reflected in the language. Wisdom is "manifold in effectual working" (Job 6:11 RV); and compare the AV and RV of Job 12:16: "With him is... wisdom [AV] / effectual working [RV]". The man Christ Jesus was made unto us "wisdom"; in Him wisdom was made flesh.

3:15 But "this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is (as there is in your heart-v.14), there is confusion and every evil work" (v.15,16). This is reminding them that such philosophy was not by God's inspiration- that because one is a vehicle for God's inspired word, it does not follow that all ones' thoughts and reasoning are correct. "Sensual" means 'natural', and looks back to v.7 implying that human nature cannot be tamed by the 'natural' reasoning of human nature, or the human mind- it is "devilish", or 'demoniacal'. James 2:19 has associated these Jewish believers and their semi-faith with the healed demoniacs; James is saying that such semi-faith which has enough hope to be healed but does not respond with works subsequently, is not a positive spiritual attribute at all- it is rooted in the natural, earthly mind.

James is pointing a contrast between wisdom- or the word (cp. notes on 1:5)- which comes from above, and that which is of the earth. There is a link here with Heb.2:2,3, a letter which we have suggested was sent to the same readership as James and may have been known by them already. "If the word spoken by Angels (the Law) was steadfast...how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...spoken by the Lord". "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth (Moses? The Angel who spake the Law?), much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven" (Heb.12:25). The wisdom that came from the earth is therefore associated with the Jewish system, and it is this which was resulting in all the human reasoning of these brethren; not the Law itself, but the influence of the Judaizers who advocated it. The wisdom from above mentioned in v.17 is therefore that which comes from the new covenant in Christ as opposed to that of the Law. "Descendeth" carries the idea of literal downwards movement, perhaps referring to the Angel physically descending in the cloud to give Moses the words of God by which he was constituted a prophet. If this is the reference, then as we saw in the notes on v.10, this is another rebuke of these brethren who were seeking to parallel themselves with Moses.

If there is envying and strife in the heart, "there is confusion and every evil work" in the same place. Yet again, the works are said to take place in the heart. The Corinthians are twice rebuked by Paul for having confusion in the ecclesia (1 Cor.14:33; 2 Cor.12:20 translated 'tumults'), due to their misuse of the Spirit gifts. This would seem to be relevant to the situation in James' ecclesia; but again, the confusion began in the heart due to the lack of impact the word had made upon it. Another repeated theme is that "every evil work" is paralleled with the uncontrolled tongue, showing that the tongue is the summation of every potential sin that lies within our heart. The Greek

for "evil work" only occurs four times; one of them is in Titus 2:8, which speaks of the Jewish and Roman adversaries of the ecclesia seeking to speak evil of the believers. Whilst on its own this would not be significant, in view of the constant parallels between the Jewish system and his readers which James is making, it appears that he is linking the evil thoughts in their hearts concerning their poor brethren, with the evil speaking about the ecclesia being done by the Jewish 'satan' outside the ecclesia.

3:17 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (v.17). The wisdom coming from above is the gift of the word coming down from God, making us "firstfruits of His (spiritual) creatures" (1:17,18). We have suggested that the wisdom from above is the word of Christ as opposed to that of Moses; in Jesus the word became flesh (Jn.1:14), the whole of God's revelation became associated with the person of Christ, not just the words of the New Testament inspired after His time. Thus this verse describes both the work of the word, and also the character of Christ, the wisdom/word of God from above. If the word was truly in them, they would have the characteristics of purity as opposed to their double mindedness; they did not have peace in their hearts (cp. v.16), their rejecting of their poor brethren's welfare requests (2:16) and harsh treatment of them (2:6; 5:4) contrasted with the gentleness and ease with which brethren should feel they can intreat us with. The word with its associated spirit of Christ will develop these attributes within us. Purity of mind (cp. Phil.4:8) is of "first" importance; if this is achieved, "then" the characteristics which the ecclesia were so sadly lacking in would then naturally follow. The Greek 'proton' occurs again in Mt.6:33: "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness". This is achieved, according to James, by striving to let the word develop now those righteous attributes which will be revealed so fully and widely in the Kingdom (cp. Rom.14:17).

"The wisdom that is from above" must also refer to Jn.3:3-5, which speaks of being born from above, i.e from Heaven. Nicodemus thought that he had already been born from above, seeing that he had a knowledge of the Law. But Christ told him "heavenly things" (Jn.3:12), which Nicodemus found hard to accept. The word which makes us born again (Jn.3:5 cp. 1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18) does so because it reveals Heavenly principles to us. This wisdom/word in James was "full of mercy and good fruits". The word develops these fruits (Jn.15:5-8), as does Christ (Phil.1:11)- again showing His equation with the word. The language of fruiting goes back to v.12, where the tree that bears fruit is the heart of the believer. Now what bears fruit is the word- because that must be equated with the heart if good fruit is to be produced. Thus we can make the equation: Christ=Word=In heart=fruit. These factors may be arranged in any order, showing how Christ dwells in our heart by faith (Eph.3:17 cp. Col.3:16; Rom.10:17). The fullness of spiritual attributes mentioned here may refer back to Ex.34:5-7 (R.V.), which describes the name of God as being *full* of His attributes of mercy, patience, justice etc. The word of true wisdom produces these characteristics in us, thereby giving us the Name of God. Again, James is setting an ultimate standard- aiming for the fullness of God to be developed in us through the almighty power of the word. It must be theoretically possible for a man to be perfect in God's sight; even though in the past he has failed and thus come short of Christ's standard, he can still be justified by the faith which is developed by the word acting upon him. Our Lord was of our nature, and yet still attained perfection. We are invited to follow him to perfection, being perfect even as God is. The means by which we achieve this may be slightly different to how he did; yet through the word "now are we the sons of God" (1 Jn.3:1,2; Jn.1:13; 1 Pet.1:23), Spirit-begotten as He was.

This degree of commitment to the word leads to a brother being "without partiality"; something which the ecclesia were guilty of due to their lack of having the word in their hearts (see notes on 2:4). Having their own minds full of strife, division and confusion (v.14-16) would inevitably lead them to be partial or divided in their dealings with other brethren. The word 'affectionately believed' will lead us to be "without hypocrisy"- again inviting a comparison between these brethren without the word truly in them and the Pharisees, who are those invariably described as "hypocrites" in the

New Testament. However, the phrase also occurs in the sermon on the mount, and the many allusions to this discourse in James suggest that he may have had Mt.7:5 in mind: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye". We have seen that the context of James 3 is of a group of brethren criticizing another group, with the inference that their criticism was masked with pseudo-spiritual reasoning. This is exactly the theme of Mt.7:5. To avoid being a hypocrite, James implies, we need to let the word sink into ourselves- which has the same effect as casting the plank out of our own eye. It is the word which has the power of self-examination; 1 Jn.1:10 implies that if the word is in us, then we appreciate what sinners we have been. The telling thing about the description of the Spirit gifted eldership as "hypocrites" ('play-actors') is that their make-up and costume was the Truth itself. The fact we are wearing this can lead us to think that we really are the part we are playing- but putting on the clothes and changing our heart to truly identify with what we profess are two different things.

3:18 "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (v.18). There are a number of connections here with the Septuagint of Is.32:16-20: "Righteousness remain in the fruitful field...the work of righteousness shall be peace... quietness and assurance... blessed are ye that sow". This is clearly a Kingdom passage, yet it is quoted about our present ecclesial experience. This is one of many examples of where spirituality in this life can give us a foretaste of the Kingdom. The wisdom coming from above in v.17 we have shown to have reference to our birth by the word, to become new creatures. Verse 18 has links with two passages which also contain this theme of spiritual re-birth by the word.

The mention of being "full of good fruits" in v.17 may be looking back to the list of spiritual fruits in the beatitudes in Mt.5- the poor in spirit, the weeping, the meek, the pure in heart, those hungering after righteousness, the peacemakers etc. comprise all the main spiritual fruits; and are also a fair description of the oppressed, spiritually minded underclass in the ecclesias to whom James is writing. Now v.18 makes a definite connection with Mt.5:9; "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God". This would indicate that James read the people mentioned in the beatitudes as being within the ecclesia, and "the peacemakers" being the quiet brother who humbly tries to calm the bitter vying for power between the rich, self opinionated leaders. In this case, James is reminding these leaders of the virtues of those they despised; they sowed the fruit of righteousness because the word developed those fruits in them. By doing so, Mt.5:9 says, they became the children of God. Thus the word led them to develop the spiritual fruits which made them peacemakers, which made them the children of God. Thus possession of the word does not automatically make us sons of God, but the effect it achieves upon us in giving us the family characteristics of our Father. The other clear connection of v.18 is with Heb.12:11. Having spoken of the persecution of the Jewish believers being a proof of their sonship to God, "the Father of spirits", Paul encourages them that this chastening "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby". The poor believers in James' ecclesias had also become the spiritual children of God by the word acting on them, making them react to the chastening they were receiving at the hands of the rich brethren by developing peace. Their peaceful sowing of the word, which was the seed sown (Lk.8:11), was going to lead them to "raise a harvest of righteousness" (N.I.V.) in their own characters. If this line of interpretation is correct, it would appear that the poor, mistreated brethren were humbly responding to the criticisms of them (the cursing of v.9) by quietly quoting the word, in order to try and make peace both between them and the rich brethren, and between the rival factions in the eldership. See notes on 5:7 for more on this. This problem of there being "wars and fightings" amongst this group is continued in 4:1, thus making the chapter division unfortunate.

4:1 "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your own lusts that war in your members?" (v.1). The way this is phrased implies that the unspiritual brethren were blaming the evident infighting within the ecclesia on others- perhaps the group of poor brethren who they spiritually cursed in 3:9,10. Note how the fightings came out of their lusts- "come

they not hence...?" is the language of physical movement, cp. "out of the same mouth *proceedeth* blessing and cursing" (3:10), "drawn away of his own lust" (1:14). Lusts warring in the members suggests an allusion to Rom.7:23 "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members". The allusions to Romans may be because this letter too was in circulation amongst the dispersed Jewish believers. The "members" of James 4:1 are therefore the parts of the evil human heart. The double mindedness in the hearts of the individual brethren was inevitably reflected in the members of the ecclesial body (cp. 1 Cor.12:12; Eph.4:25). Another link with 1 Peter clarifies that the warfare within the body was also within their own minds: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet.2:11). The Greek for "lusts" here in James 4 is not the normal word so translated. The only other times it occurs are in 2 Pet.2:13 translated "pleasure", where it is associated with the Judaist false teachers; Tit.3:3, where Paul says these lusts were part of his former Judaist life; and in Lk.8:14 regarding that which chokes the growth of the word.

Their lusts or pleasures may have warred against each other in the sense that they desired different things which conflicted within their heart, but the idea of war and fighting seems more usually used with reference to the spiritual warfare within the human heart (cp. 1 Pet.2:11), whereby the spiritual reservoir is under violent attack from the united desires for the various pleasures to be possessed. The Greek for "fightings" occurs in Titus 3:9 and 2 Tim.2:23,24 concerning arguments within the ecclesia over the interpretation of the Law. It would therefore seem that the justification for gratifying their materialistic desires was based on misapplication of the word. Again we are seeing the classic characteristic of apostasy- a mixture of truth with error until a position of self-justification has been reached. These reasonings over certain passages began as a debate within their own heart ("members"), and then spread to the whole ecclesia. We have pointed out that the break between chapters 3 and 4 is unfortunate. The mention of "wars" in 4:1 and "confusion" in 3:16 only 3 verses earlier suggests a connection with the "wars and commotions" heralding the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk.21:9), seeing that "confusion" and "commotions" are the same Greek word. Is James implying that the crazy political situation in the world that heralded Jerusalem's downfall was going to be reflected in ecclesial life in the last days, resulting in a similar downfall of the scattered Jerusalem ecclesia? The situation within the body in these last days may provide an unfortunate parallel.

4:2 "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (v.2). The Greek for "lust" here is the normal word, and a powerful parallel is made between this and asking (praying) in the wrong way. Such prayer is an expression of lust; the very same word is used concerning lusting after a woman in Mt.5:28. Prayer to God for personal pleasures that gushes out without the restraint of the word is truly a serious offence. The idea of killing in 2:11 was interpreted as meaning showing lack of love to your brother, after the pattern of Mt.5:21,22. The word for "kill" here in James is not the usual Greek word. This one is normally translated "kill" in the phrase "Thou shalt not kill" when quoting the ten commandments. Thus James is making an especial appeal to their Jewish minds by implying that their lack of love really is effective manslaughter. Thus in order to satisfy their carnal desires they were killing or hating their brethren. An obvious fulfilment of this would have been in their withholding of the meagre wages of the poor brethren- effectively killing them by their lack of love- in order to indulge their latest pleasures. What parallels with saving for the holiday home at the expense of struggling ecclesias in the third world? "Desire to have" is a very emotion-loaded word in Greek, implying to be moved to jealousy by something or someone. Such a motivation for prayer is unacceptable. The parallel is with "and cannot obtain", which means literally 'to chance upon'. Their semi-spiritual attitude to life is epitomized by their psychology of prayer- thinking they might chance to get the answer to a prayer, they expressed their emotional, natural desires for the pleasures of this life in prayer, justifying this by misapplying Scripture. They never realized that the love of these pleasures was actually swamping the growth of the real word seed, which was occasionally planted in them by

the poor brethren reminding them of the word; so the two references to the sower parable in 3:18 and 4:1 would imply.

4:3 Some ask and receive not, because in reality, they don't ask at all. They are playing around with the possible power of prayer for their own benefit. And Old Testament Israel fasted, but only to themselves, not to God (Zech. 7:5,6).

Despite all the commotion within their hearts and the ecclesia, and perhaps also in their strivings in their misdirected prayers, "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (v.3). Although they asked in prayer, in God's sight such words are not prayer: "Ye ask not... ye ask", because desiring is not praying. Alternatively, this may be looking back to 1:4,5 about asking for wisdom, as if to say 'You don't receive answers to your prayers for material things because you don't pray firstly for the wisdom from the word to be in your heart, which would have made your subsequent prayers powerful'. There is a link here with Mt.7:7,8: "Ask, and it shall be given you... for every one that asketh receiveth". But "Ye ask and receive *not*". The reason for such powerful prayer is given in the surrounding context in Mt.7- if they were not hypocrites in criticizing their brethren, which 3:17 implies they were guilty of, and if they did to men as they would like God to do to them (Mt.7:2,12). Not surprisingly therefore, the prayers of these brethren were not answered as Mt.7 promised. There is probably also a reference to Jn.15:7: "If...my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you". "Done unto you" possibly implies physical blessing. Because the word was not in them, which is the whole theme of James, this promise was not fulfilled in them.

"Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (v.3). "Amisss" is from a word meaning to be sick or diseased, or generally 'evil'. Although it is not the same word translated "sick" in 5:14-16, there may be a connection with the idea there of them being struck with physical sickness because of their sin and being advised to pray for forgiveness and therefore a cure. Here in 4:3 James is saying that their prayers were for human things and therefore they and their prayers were sick. "Consume" means 'to spend' in a financial sense, thus suggesting that they were asking God to specifically provide money, which they would then spend on their various pleasures ("lusts"). This would explain their 'killing' of their brethren by holding back wages from them (5:4), because they specifically wanted the cash in hand; see notes on 5:3 too.

4:4 "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (v.4). As the reference to killing in v.2 looks back to 2:11 in the sense of killing your brother by not loving him, so the command in the Old Covenant not to commit adultery mentioned in 2:11 is here interpreted as meaning not having friendship with the world. James' reasoning seems to be based (yet again) in the sermon on the mount- this time in the passage about not being able to serve two masters, which results in loving the one and hating the other (Mt.6:24). James is putting things in black and white terms again. By their prayers being based on the human desires of their heart they were loving the world and thereby hating God. "The world" is therefore primarily our evil desires- the world is in our heart (Ecc.3:11,12), and "The lust of the eyes" etc. is "All that is in the world". The language of adultery invites us to interpret being a "friend" of the world in a sexual context, or to see that mere friendship with the world is of the same intensity as intercourse with it, in God's sight. Serving mammon (the world) in the two masters parable is due to taking thought for human possessions (Mt.6:25)- i.e. the service of mammon is a mental condition in the heart rather than just physically spending time pursuing these things. This is exactly the context here in James. "Friendship" (Greek 'philia') is a gentle word, even implying 'fondness'. Being a friend of the world means that, in the light of the two masters parable, they were not being a friend of God. This maybe connects with 2:23, which calls Abraham a friend of God because of his faith and works based on the word of promise taking hold of his heart. Their friendship or sympathy to the world and its desires which were in their heart meant that they had no real faith because the word was not truly influencing their

thinking. This friendship with the world is "enmity with God". This takes us immediately to Rom.8:7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God", thus again connecting the love of the world with the unregenerated mind. James is pounding away about the importance of the mind, and therefore of our attitude to the word which influences it. This enmity is further defined in Eph.2:15,16: "Having abolished in His (Christ's) flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments... for to make in himself one new man...that He might reconcile both unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby". The phrase "*the* enmity" implies that this is the same enmity as referred to elsewhere, namely in Rom.8:7. The carnal mind allowed itself to be stimulated by the Law- not that the Law encouraged sin, but man's response to it encouraged carnal thinking, e.g. in the form of self righteousness. This again hints that their "friendship of the world" was justified by their misquoting of the Law. "The world" which they were so sympathetic towards (so "friendship" implies) may even refer to the Jewish world, both in its doctrine and its materialistic, pleasure-seeking attitude to life.

4:5 "Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (v.5). This does not appear to be a verbatim quote from any manuscript- for a comment on the word "scripture" see notes on 2:23. James is effectively rebuking them for their lack of sensitivity to the word- by not recognizing the fundamentally lustful nature of our natural mind, they were effectively saying that the Scriptures' warnings about our evil human nature were "vain". They thought that by reason of possessing the Spirit gifts the evils of the human heart were by-passed an error also made by evangelical theology today. There appears to be a reference back to the descriptions of man at Noah's time in Gen.6:5 and 8:21 as having a fundamentally wicked heart. 2 Pet.3, Jude and the Lord in His Olivet prophecy all interpret Noah's world as being a type of the Jewish system heading towards destruction in AD70. So again James is saying that the lustful attitude of mind within these Jewish believers equated them with the rest of the Jewish world, which was about to be destroyed as Noah's world was. The Greek for "vain" is often used about vain Jewish philosophy that affected the ecclesias (Eph.5:6; Col.2:8; 1 Tim.6:20; 2 Tim.2:16; and Acts 4:25); it also looks back to the description of the brethren James is writing to as "vain" in 2:20. This would imply that because of the influence of vain Jewish (Judaist?) reasoning, they had become vain in their minds, and therefore Scripture had also become vain to them. The Greek for "dwelleth" means 'to dwell as an integral part'; the same Greek word for 'dwell' occurs in Rom.7:17,18,20, describing "sin that dwelleth" within our members; we have seen 4:1 is alluding to this same passage in Rom.7 concerning the spiritual conflict in our members. The same word is also used in 1 Cor.3:16 about the Holy Spirit dwelling in the early believers through their possession of the gifts- maybe suggesting that James is reminding the Jewish ecclesial elders that the Spirit gifts dwelling in them did not mean that the evil human spirit of our own nature did not dwell in them. The very word "spirit" can refer both to this human spirit and also to the spirit of Christ in our minds. Thus they had to have the Spirit truly in their heart by their response to the word as well as tabernacling in them by reason of their possession of the gifts. The effort to apply the word to the human heart is therefore not just something which began after the miraculous gifts were withdrawn, but which also had to be practiced by their early possessors. If even those with the gift of prophecy (i.e. chosen by God to speak forth His word under direct inspiration) had to make this effort; how much more must we? God *yearns* that we might have a spirit like His, that we might be spiritually minded: "He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us" (James 4:5). And be sure that He will be ever working in our lives to try to get us to have this focus. The particular aspect of our inherent natural spirit that James draws attention to is its capacity to envy. We have suggested previously that their desire for wealth led these brethren to show a lack of love to the others in the ecclesia, although they justified this by misinterpreting parts of the Law. James is saying that they should not justify these envious feelings so quickly, but remember that Scripture generally warns that these feelings are part of our fallen nature, and they should not misapply odd passages to justify them as acceptable. The Greek for "envy" here is always used elsewhere concerning either the

envying of the Jews against the believers, or about the envyings generated within the ecclesia by Judaist-stimulated controversies.

4:6- see on Mt. 25:35.

"But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (v.6). This apparent personality of "the Scripture" was commented on under 2:23. Having quoted Scripture which states the pathetic spiritual condition of man, James quickly reminds us of another Scripture that gives more hope. The context of v.6 is in the earlier verses of the chapter concerning why their prayers were unanswered. "Grace" means 'gift', and can refer to the answer of prayer by God's Spirit. Thus James is saying 'God does actually answer prayer- Prov.3:34 says he gives grace to the humble, i.e. He answers their prayers, although He resists the requests of the proud'. Note that James is quoting the Septuagint version of Prov.3:34 here rather than the Hebrew Old Testament. Giving grace in the sense of a gift also recalls 1:17,18 and 3:17 concerning the gift of the word- as if to show that God would hear prayers for the wisdom of the word to be revealed to them (cp.1:5), but not answer a 'wants list' of worldly pleasures. The context of the quote from Proverbs is that the humble man is the one who has wisdom- i.e. who has taken note of the word in his heart. Being humble is paralleled with being submissive to God and resisting our evil nature (v.7) and drawing nigh to God acceptably (v.8); thus humility born of the word is revealed by both our attitude to God's holiness and to our own innate sinfulness. The brash prayers and self justification of these brethren was in sharp contrast to all this. The same verse from Proverbs is also quoted in 1 Pet.5:5 in the context of the elders showing loving care to the flock, because God "giveth grace to the humble". This context of commands to elders is the same as in James, whose intended readership appears to have been the same group of elders in the Jewish ecclesias. Peter's argument, if it follows that of James, would therefore be that their prayers would be hindered, i.e. grace would not be shown- if the elders proudly oppressed the flock. Note that these same elders are warned not to exact money from the flock as a reward for their shepherding in 1 Pet.5:2, which we have seen was a problem mentioned by James in the form of them holding back wages from their brethren-employees. This would mean that this was being done under the spiritual pretext of keeping the money back as the wages of the elders, no doubt backed up with some misinterpretations from the Mosaic Law.

The giving of grace is of course not just in material giving; speaking of how this world has an envious, materialistic spirit, James comments that by contrast, God "gives more grace" (James 4:6), i.e. His grace is more than the material 'giving'. Especially is grace given through forgiveness, especially forgiveness without demanding repentance, being inclusive rather than exclusive, patience, especially patience with others' immaturities, forbearing one another, basic kindness and thoughtfulness, imagining how others feel or may feel. God *delights* in showing forgiveness and mercy; He loves doing it (Mic. 7:18). It's "*son métier*" - 'what He's good at, His speciality'.

4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (v.7).

"Submit" means literally to put oneself under- i.e. to keep under these evil human desires, which is the same as resisting the Biblical devil. Bearing in mind the Jewish background of this letter and the other connections with Romans, this idea of submission to God may be referring back to Rom.10:3: "They (the Jews) being ignorant of *God's* righteousness, (through a lack of open-hearted Bible study), and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God". Thus one of the root causes of their pride and lack of recognition of their own sinfulness was that they were influenced by the Jewish concept of self-righteousness. Note the importance of doctrine in having very practical effects on a man's way of thinking and thereby his standing with God. There is a clear parallel between these verses in James 4 and 1 Pet.5:2-9. After making the quotation from Prov.3:34, Peter warns them to "be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". This primarily refers to the Jewish and Roman authorities seeking occasion to criticize and therefore persecute the Christians.

However, the parallel in James 4:7 is "resist the devil", which corresponds with 1 Peter 5:9 "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world". The devil of Peter refers to the Jewish/ Roman systems as well as to the flesh. The Greek "pathema" translated "afflictions" means both physical persecution and 'an emotion or influence' (Strong), thus showing that both types of 'devil' are referred to here, although the emphasis in Peter's case is on the devil as a civil power. 'Pathema' is used concerning physical persecution by the civil 'devil' in 2 Tim.3:11; Heb.10:32; 2 Cor.1:6; 1 Pet.5:1; and concerning our evil desires in Rom.7:5 (the "motions" of sin within us), and the "affections" of the flesh in Col.3:5; Rom.1:26; Gal.5:24. Thus the parallel passage in James 4:7 concerning resisting the devil is about both the Roman/ Jewish system and the evil desires of the flesh, although the latter is the context in James, whilst the former provides the backdrop to Peter's use of the word. Again, we see that the Jewish thinking influencing the ecclesia was encouraging the 'devil' of their evil hearts, whilst a conscious resisting of the Judaizers' inroads and of the fleshly heart would lead to those things fleeing.

4:8 "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (v.8). The Greek phrase for "draw nigh" is used in the Septuagint- the N.I.V. for first century Christians- to describe the priests drawing near to God in the offering of sacrifices and prayers. The elders were being reminded that they were equivalent of priests in the new Israel and therefore had a responsibility to acceptably and reverently draw near to God on behalf of the congregation, as well as to accurately expound the word publicly (Mal.2:7; Hos.4:6; see too comments on 2:9). This drawing near to God in prayer was only possible through a pure heart and therefore pure hands or actions. God would only hear their prayers if these things were in order; which is why the feeling we should have that our prayers are heard should give us confidence that spiritually we are going the right way (1 Jn.5:14). "Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you" (Zech.1:3) and "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (Mal.3:7) must be the basis for these words of James. Both these passages are in the context of Israel's restoration at the time of the second temple; there are a number of other connections between James and the restoration prophets:

James	Restoration prophets
1:13	Mal.3:15
1:17	Mal.3:6
1:27	Mal.3:5; Zech.7:10
2:1	Mal.1:9
2:4	Mal.2:9
4:3	Mal.2:13
4:4	Mal.2:11
5:3	Mal.4:1

5:4	Mal.3:5
5:17	Hag.1:10,11
5:20	Mal.2:6

As it was the duty of the priests to convert the people of Israel by the word (Mal.2:6), so it was too for the ecclesial elders of the New Israel (James 5:20). But as the temple was neglected due to bickering, materialism and fleshly living among the priests, so was the ecclesia of the first century. The problems of Malachi's time and also those of James were solved by a coming of the Lord (Mal.3:1,2). Living on the brink of Christ's return, there must be similarities with the present ecclesial position. All these types highlight the key position of elders in influencing the ecclesia, and therefore the standards required of them. A fair degree of our current ecclesial problems may be traceable in some measure to our inattention to the importance of elders' qualifications.

The idea of drawing near may have faint connections with the day of the Lord in AD70 drawing near; the same Greek phrase is used in Mt.24:32; Lk.21:20,28; and see notes on 5:8. The Greek root is 'to squeeze close', which we can do to God by prayer, and which He will therefore do to us. The parallel in 1 Pet.5:6 says that in response to humbly drawing near to God, He will "exalt you in due time" - i.e. answer your prayers eventually, and especially with a place in the Kingdom (cp. "friend come up higher" at the judgment seat). God's immediate drawing near to us as a result of our drawing near to Him is therefore not necessarily in the immediate answering of prayer, but in the sense of peace with God which we have after acceptably placing our requests before Him- "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds" (Phil.4:6,7), even before we receive the answers.

The language of physical movement in verses 7 and 8 paints a fascinating picture of a man walking towards God ("drawing near" is often used in the sense of literal walking), thereby resisting the devil, and therefore the devil turning tail and fleeing in the opposite direction. As we walk towards God, he walks towards us- perhaps alluding to the parable of the prodigal son, where the man's walking towards the Father is matched by His running towards him (Lk.15:20), so eager is our God to respond to any real spiritual effort on our part. The context here in James 4 is of prayer- the drawing near to God is in prayer.

The idea of cleansing the hands suggests a link with Is.1, which has other connections with James: "When ye spread forth your hands (in prayer), I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear (as was happening to these brethren): your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean (cp. "cleansing your hands"); put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes... seek judgment, relieve the oppressed (what the brethren had not done- James 2:14-16; 5:4), judge the fatherless, plead for the widow (cp. James 1:27- what they didn't do)...if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land (i.e. inherit the Kingdom): but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (AD70; Is.1:15-20). These scattered members of the Jerusalem ecclesia were therefore being equated with the "sinners in Zion" at the time of Sennacherib's Assyrian invasion; it was in their capacity to enable the Kingdom to be established in AD70, but if they continued in sin both they and Jerusalem along with natural Israel would be destroyed. Sadly they chose the latter, and their counterparts in Hezekiah's time made such a shallow reformation that they only succeeded in deferring judgment. The Greek word 'katharizo' is often used for the 'cleansing' of leprosy; the Lord likened the Pharisees to cups that needed cleansing, i.e. the cups were defiled by leprosy and needed purification; His description of Jerusalem's destruction stone by stone recalled the method of destroying a leprous house. The Jewish system was leprous because *inwardly* it was defiled; externally it looked fine (Mt.23:26). It

was their fleshly way of thinking that was the real leprosy, and this is also the context here in James 4:6; the cleansing of actions is parallel to purifying a double-minded heart, because in James the thoughts of the heart and actions, especially words, are treated as identical. Cleansing or purifying ('washing') the heart suggests Jer.4:14, which is also in the context of the impending destruction of Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem (ecclesia!), wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain (cp. 2:20 "vain man") thoughts lodge within thee?". The parallels between these believers and apostate Israel are unmistakable. "Purify" is often used about Mosaic purification (Jn.11:55; Acts 21:24 etc.)- cp. the idea of cleansing being associated with the Law's commandments about leprosy. This purification by washing comes from "the wisdom that is from above (that) is... pure" (3:17)- i.e. the word, "the washing of water by the word" (Eph.5:26), which is the new covenant's equivalent to the purification process performed in the laver. For this reason John Thomas translates Titus 3:5 as "the laver of regeneration", cp. "the washing of regeneration...of the Holy Spirit", in the word. "Purify your hearts, ye double minded" implies that having a mind which was only semi-spiritual was as bad as being totally defiled and needing cleansing. It looks back to the description of those who had only semi-faith in prayer as "double-minded" in 1:8. Here in chapter 4 the context is the same (see notes on 4:1-3). Thus James is saying in 1:6-8 'Ask for wisdom, the spiritual strength from the word, in full faith, not the double-minded prayers you have been making for your pleasures ("lusts", 4:3)'. See notes on 1:8 for more on "double minded".

4:9 "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (v.9). This exhortation to weeping and the general theme of making a repentance from the heart recalls Jesus' desperate, 11th hour call to repentance to avoid judgment on Jerusalem. "Turn ye even to me (cp. "draw nigh to God") with all your heart (cp. "ye double minded"), and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments (cp. their hypocrisy- James 3:17)... who knoweth if He will turn and repent (of the planned judgments on Israel, natural and spiritual)?...let the priests (cp. the ecclesial elders of James)... weep" (Joel 2:12-17). Joel 2 goes on to describe the judgments of AD70 in verses 30-32- according to Peter's quotation of them in Acts 2. The double emphasis on mourning in this verse suggests reference to Mt.5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted". This would mean that James interpreted this group of people as those mourning in repentance for their sins, receiving the comfort (Greek *parakleo*- drawing near) of closeness to God. The idea of God drawing near has been seen in the preceding verse- "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you". Again, the encouragement James' readers got from his words was proportionate to their ability to pick up these definite connections with other passages. To him that has spiritual talents of understanding the word, more will be given. James could have said 'Jesus basically said, "mourn and I will draw near to you", so mourn in repentance and this is how God through Christ will draw near to you, as I have just spoken about in v.8'. But instead we have to be sensitive to the two mentions of mourning here in v.9, recognize this is one of the many references back to the sermon on the mount, and appreciate the similarity of meaning between 'comforted' in Mt.5:4 and "draw nigh" in v.8. That the connection with Mt.5:4 is valid is confirmed by the Greek word for "joy" in James 4:9 only occurring elsewhere in Lk.6:25, which is effectively repeating Mt.5:4: "Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep". "Mourn and weep" is repeated in James 4:9.

There seems fair reason to believe that the riotous merry making mentioned here occurred at the Breaking of Bread. 1 Cor.11 rebukes some at the Corinth ecclesia (which included Jews, and was probably in receipt of James' letter, therefore) for getting drunk at the communion service. Similarly Peter and Jude warn of those brethren who 'feasted' at the love feast (Breaking of Bread). The Greek in Jude 12 means to revel or be sumptuous, and describes those guilty as "feeding themselves without fear". This word for "feeding" specifically means to shepherd- as if it were the ecclesial elders or shepherds who were particularly guilty of these abuses. Thus James is saying that they ought to be mourning and weeping in repentance at the Breaking of Bread rather than revelling. If this is what James is meaning, some important practical issues emerge. Firstly, sorrow and an

apparently long face are to be expected from many of us who inevitably feel the need for repentance burning keenly as we face the supreme dedication and holiness of Christ on the cross. There seems far too much criticism of those who do "weep and mourn" in their souls with a spirit of heaviness (cp. Is.61:3; James 4:9) at the memorial service. How can any of us tell another to be more happy or look more cheerful without knowing the nature of their relationship with God in the past few days? For such an intensity of self-knowledge and repentance to occur, there must be a fair period of time for reflection and self-examination- not just the odd minute as we wait for the emblems to reach us. The "feast of charity" referred to in Jude 12 would have been a replica of the last supper- a whole meal of fellowship followed by the specific taking of the bread and wine. "Afflicted" means 'to realize ones own misery' (Strong) and only occurs elsewhere in Rom.7:24 and Rev.3:17. Romans 7 and 8 have been alluded to previously in the letter, and Rom.7:24 is describing the wretchedness Paul felt due to appreciating how sinful his innate evil desires really were. This marvellously fits the context of James 4, where he is advising them to analyze their own evil hearts more and appreciate their inherent sinfulness. By doing so they would feel "wretched" or "afflicted". The Laodiceans were perhaps another ecclesia with a Jewish element to whom James was also writing; they certainly had the same problems of materialism and a lukewarm, semi-spirituality. The Lord criticized them for not knowing that they were wretched, i.e. not examining the wretchedness of their own evil desires enough. The idea of wretchedness is similar, although not linguistically connected, to the descriptions of the rejected at the day of judgment, writhing in the pain of self-hate, realizing for the first time the degree of their inherent sinfulness. If we judge ourselves now, i.e. examine ourselves and realize we are worthy of condemnation (judgment- Mt.7:1), then we will not be judged (1 Cor.11:31). They were to "turn" their revelling into sorrow; a word which means basically 'to pervert'- e.g. the Judaizers perverted (same word) the Gospel of Christ (Gal.1:7). This would imply that as they had perverted the Gospel, they were to 'pervert' it back again; they had spiritually justified their laughter and revelling by this perversion.

4:10 "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (v.10). The parallel in 1 Pet.5:6 indicates that this lifting up is at the judgment seat: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you (same Greek as "lift you up" in James) in due time", i.e. in the future, at the judgment (cp. "come up higher" in the wedding feast parable). Thus if we examine ourselves to the degree of wretchedly feeling that we in our own strength will be only worthy of condemnation, then as we will be lifted up from our grovelling before Christ at the judgment, so He will lift us up now. Luke 21:36 seems to refer to this lifting up at the judgment: "Pray always...to be stood before the Son of man"- by the Angel gently lifting us up from the ground at Christ's feet, as He did to Daniel in his acting out of our experience at the judgment (Dan.10:8-19). The humbling of self spoken of in verses 6 and 7 was in the context of being humble in prayer. The lifting up which comes as a result of this we have shown to be our exaltation in the Kingdom. Thus by reason of having our prayers heard, especially those for the gift of the understanding of the word (4:6 cp. 1:17,18; 3:17), it is as if we are exalted in prospect into places in the Kingdom. Thus 1 Jn.5:14 says that the confidence we have of acceptance at the judgment is based on our prayers being answered now. James 1:9 spoke of the humble brother rejoicing in that he is exalted ("lifted up" in 4:10). The context there was of having prayers for wisdom heard (1:5,6). The rich man's wavering prayers (1:6 cp. 4:14) were unheeded compared to those of the poor. Thus the poor brother being "lifted up" was through his prayers being answered. Now in 4:10 James is again telling the rich elders to humble themselves like the poor brethren so that they too could be lifted up. The emphasis in 1:9 and 4:10 is on God lifting us up (same word as "exalting"). This must look back to the repeated warnings in the Gospels about exalting oneself (Lk.14:11; 18:14; Mt.23:12), often referring to the Jews who did this. The man of sin, which must have reference to both Jewish and Roman systems of apostasy, also "exalteth himself" (2 Thess.2:4). The Jewish characteristic of spiritual self-exaltation was therefore seen in these Jewish brethren. There is a parallel between verses 6 and 10; God "giveth grace unto the humble" (v.6) and lifts them up (v.10).

The giving of grace we have interpreted as giving the answer to prayer, and especially in the gift of wisdom from the word; this equates with being lifted up with a place in the Kingdom. Thus to an extent we are in the Kingdom now in prospect through experiencing the gifts of the word and answered prayer.

4:11 "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (v.11). James now speaks specifically of one particular manifestation of their evil desires and the things which militated against their prayers being answered, namely evil speaking and condemning the poor brethren. This is the same thing as noted in 3:9,10, where we saw that they cursed these brethren with the excuse that they were doing it under the inspiration of God. Their evil speaking was due to not letting the word curb their evil desires; they were thus effectively judging the word, saying that their own natural spirit was superior to that holy Spirit provided by a humble response to the word. Similarly they effectively thought that the Scriptures' warning against the natural lust of our heart was "vain" (4:5). Note that speaking evil of the brother and speaking evil of the law are equated, implying that the brethren they were slandering had the word in them. The parallel passage in 1 Pet.2:1,2 says that the antidote to "evil speakings" was to "desire the sincere milk of the word" as newborn spiritual babes- strong medicine for ecclesial 'elders', who probably had the gift of prophecy. Possession of the miraculous gifts did not force them to desire the true spirit of the word. Speaking evil is equivalent to condemning or spiritually killing a brother, according to James- no doubt basing his reasoning on that of the Lord, that to hate your brother was to kill him (Mt.5:21,22).

James saw the Mosaic command not to kill your brother as meaning 'do not condemn' under the New Covenant. Therefore to do so was to speak evil of "the law" both of Moses and Christ. The Lord also said that to call your brother a "Fool" was as bad as condemning or killing him. The Greek for "fool" implies someone who has been shut out of a certain knowledge; the word is invariably used in the New Testament regarding someone lacking in the true knowledge of God. There does seem to be a definite reference to Mt.5:21,22, and therefore James would be implying that the Jewish elders were accusing the others of not having their true knowledge of God (due to their gift of prophecy, they may have argued?) and therefore being condemned by God. By doing so they were speaking evil of the word which the other brethren had received, which was enough to make them spiritually wise ("the wisdom that is from above", 1:17,18 cp. 3:17) and not fools, as the elders accused them of being. The elders were not denying that the others had received part of the word, but were saying that without having the knowledge which they claimed to have, these brethren were fools, i.e. 'judged' or condemned. This spiritual superiority due to supposed additional revelation is a common characteristic of the descriptions of the Judaizers and their followers: Rev. 2:24, "the (pseudo) depths of (the Jewish) satan"; Jude 10; 1 Cor.1:17-21; 2:1-7; 3:18,19; 2 Cor.11:19; Rom.1:22; 12:16. Jude 19 describes these brethren as separating themselves, falsely claiming to have the Spirit, although they still attended the communion service to spread their false ideas (v.12); thus their separating of themselves was not in a physical sense, but an elitism due to their claim to have superior Spirit-given knowledge. Even today it is possible for there to be spiritual elitism from thinking that we have a deep understanding of the Spirit word which others are not yet able to appreciate.

This verse 11 seems to consciously refer back to 2:5-16. Speaking evil of "the law" by evil speaking about the brethren is probably based on 2:8,9: "Respect to persons (breaks)... *the* royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". The chapter 2 passage mentions the oppression of the poor brethren before the "judgment seats" of the eldership (2:6), and the subsequent turning down of their welfare requests (2:16), as examples of breaking the royal law. That same law was being broken by the elders falsely accusing and condemning their brother, according to 4:11. Thus these elders were trying to act like Christ in His role as judge, and were bringing false accusation against the brethren and subsequently condemning them, as an excuse not

to provide them with their basic needs, and to withhold their legitimate wages (5:4). The judges of Israel under the Mosaic Law were those "to whom the word of God came", and yet they were condemned for judging unjustly, accepting the persons of the wicked (cp. saying to the well dressed man 'sit here', 2:3), not defending the poor and fatherless (the Jewish ecclesial elders also neglected these; 1:27) and not delivering the poor and needy (cp. 2:15,16; 4:5). Despite being inspired with the word of God "they know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness" (Jn.10:34-36; Ps.82:1-5). James is making a very apt comparison between these judges and the Jewish eldership, who had become so obsessed with being the equivalent of these judges in the new Israel that they had come to think that their personal doing of the law was not important. Similarly those today who publicly expound the word can become 'judges' rather than doers. That they judged the law may even imply that they set up their personal ideas as being greater and more inspired than the word of God itself, and maybe even 'judged' or condemned part of the word which conflicted with their personal 'wisdom'. Being a doer of the law must be another allusion to Romans: "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom.2:13). This is again in the context of Paul's rebuke of the Jewish thinking that by being Jews and having heard the Law they were justified; and this also connects with the argument in James 2:20 that holding "the faith" must be accompanied by works, and being "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (1:22,23).

James could tell others not to speak against their brother (James 4:11 RV) knowing full well he had done the same to Jesus, his brother. Preaching and pastoral work is so often powerfully achieved on the basis of having personally experienced grace.

4:12 "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (v.12). The stress on *one* lawgiver suggests, in harmony with our previous comments, that the elders were making new laws under the claim of inspiration, and were using these to condemn their brethren. Note how the evil speaking which began as a result of the word not controlling their thoughts led them to condemn others, contrary to the clear law of Christ (Mt.7:1), and having effectively disregarded the word their next step was to literally add to it. They had already done this in effect by trying to Biblically justify their wrong actions. The phrase "there is one lawgiver" would have rung bells in every Jewish mind concerning Moses the lawgiver. Again their likening of themselves to Moses is being condemned (see notes on 3:10). However, the ultimate lawgiver is God, who is "able to...destroy" soul and body (alluding to Mt.10:28). The fact that God's ability to save and destroy in Gehenna at the judgment (n.b. the Mt.10:28 allusion) is chosen out of all His powers, shows that the elders were specifically claiming that they had the power to make the decision of salvation or destruction, and that the judgment panel which they formed to judge the poor brethren was rated by them as an exact equivalent to Christ's judgment seat at the second coming. The extent of their blasphemy of the word of God which they claimed justified them in all this is hard to comprehend.

This verse has clear reference to Rom.14:4: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand". We have seen in 4:10 the idea of being lifted up at the day of judgment. Thus Paul in Romans is also using 'judging' in the sense of spiritually condemning, and is saying that the brethren doing such judgment were usurping Christ's position as the judge, saying *they* were the master of the servants. Therefore Paul says that such condemned brethren will be justified by being lifted up to acceptance at the true judgment seat. The similarity of the situation suggests strongly that Romans and James were written to the same readership, and that their writers expected the readers to make connections between the letters- due to the same spirit inspiring both writers. The context in Rom.14:3 is judging (i.e. condemning) your brother due to his attitude to the Mosaic food laws and the Sabbath. Those who were doing the judging were "him that eateth not"- i.e. the Judaizers who wanted a move back to the Jewish laws. The connections between Romans and James are such that we can safely say that the group who were doing the judging in James are identical to the group of

Judaizers in Romans. Thus the group of Jewish elders James writes to were almost definitely either Judaizers or Judaist influenced. The connections with James would explain why Rom.14:10-13 stresses so much that the judge at the judgment seat is God through Christ, rather than men. The importance of this can be appreciated far more once it is recognized that the Jewish eldership were claiming to have an inspired command from God to set up judgment seats and judge to condemnation on Christ's behalf. The situation is made the more fascinating when we appreciate that the power of the Spirit was available to the apostles and possibly some elders to inflict physical sickness as a punishment- e.g. Peter could strike Ananias and Sapphira dead, Christ would threaten to strike down false teachers (Rev.2:23; 22:18); Peter could threaten many (unrecorded) physical curses that he could bring upon Simon for his blasphemy (Acts 8:24); Paul could make Elymas blind (Acts 13:9-11). It is probable that the gift of healing was largely used to cure such people after their repentance, and this is the basis of James 5:15 (see note there). It would appear that the Jewish elders were claiming some kind of similar authority.

The omnipotence of God not only inspires faith; it demands even more than that. Because God alone has the power to save and destroy, He alone can ultimately judge; the fact there is only one law giver means there is only one judge (James 4:12 RV). To judge, therefore, is to 'play God' in a blasphemous way, arrogating to ourselves the role of lawgiver and judge. Yet apart from God we are powerless, totally and utterly. Our powerlessness needs to be reflected upon more deeply. We simply cannot judge. The omnipotence of God alone precludes it.

4:13 "Go to now (N.I.V. "Now listen" - i.e. to the *true* word of God), ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain" (v.13). The two references to "Go to" in James (here and 5:1) suggest immediately the one other place where this idiom is used- it occurs three times in five verses in Gen.11:3-7 concerning the building of Babel. There is good reason to believe that Babel represented the apostate Jewish system of worship. "A city and a tower" of Gen.11:4 points forward to Jerusalem and the Jewish system having a tower in the midst of its vineyard (Is.5:2; Mt.21:33). All Jewish temples were built with the help of Gentile labour, as Babel was built by all nations collected together in one purpose. Babel and Shinar are the basis of Babylon in Scripture, and the descriptions of Babylon in Revelation have many echoes of the Jewish system. The scattering abroad of Babel all over the earth corresponds to God's Angelic 'coming down' on Jerusalem in AD70 and the subsequent scattering of the Jews world-wide. We have seen previously that James very much has the events of AD70 in mind, and the use of the phrase "go to" would be another reminder that unless the Jewish believers repented of their materialism and other unspirituality, then both natural and spiritual Jerusalem would be severely punished- as indeed happened to both of them. We have shown earlier that this verse primarily refers to the itinerant Jewish traders within the ecclesia. 2 John 7-11 (also written to a Jewish audience?) also speaks of itinerant preachers who were likely to have serious doctrinal errors. The Jews with whom they mixed in such travelling would not have been wholesome spiritual company. Indeed, it was "Vagabond" (Greek 'strolling') Jews who stirred up trouble for the believers (Acts 19:13). These brethren blatantly, proudly talked of their business plans, glorying in not saying 'God willing' (so v.15,16 implies). This was probably because they believed that they no longer personally had to keep the law (v.11), and that they were justified by reason of knowing the truth and being Jews by birth (2:20 and cp. Romans 6:1).

The sudden switch of subject away from judging brethren to that of crazy materialism calls for an explanation. It seems that the letter of James criticizes the believers for increasingly serious things, with a corresponding increase in punishment from God. The sections can be categorized as follows:
 1:1-12 Semi-faith in prayer from lack of attention to the word due to materialism
 1:13-27 Falsely blaming God for temptation, hard speaking to brethren, and neglect of the fatherless and widows in the ecclesia due to brief, meaningless self-examination and not being sensitive to the word.

2:1-13 Preference to the rich in the ecclesia, condemning the poor brethren, saying some parts of the word were unimportant.

2:14-26 Saying external works and technical holding of the Truth justified a man, and that lack of real spiritual effort can be Biblically justified.

3:1-4:12 Total unrestraint of the evil heart and its words, saying this was unnecessary for them. Claiming to be inspired with new revelation from God which replaced parts of the Bible and justified them totally.

4:13-5:6 Sinking into total materialism, throwing off all sense of subjection to God, effectively crucifying Christ afresh (5:6).

5:7-20 Subsequently being struck with physical sickness to try to lead them to repentance; final destruction at the Lord's 'coming' in AD70 and the holocaust for natural and spiritual Israel which followed.

If this analysis is correct, then these separate parts of the letter would have been sent at different times- hence 4:13 "Go to *now*". How many of us are in the first category discussed in 1:1-12? If our attention to the word continues to slip, it is only a matter of time before the ecclesia of the last days drops into the categories lower down the list. It has been suggested that the letter of James is a series of exhortations given to or at the Jerusalem ecclesia and then circulated. This would fit in with the pattern deduced here.

4:14 "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (v.14). In view of the Jewish and Christian persecution which the parallel letter of Peter speaks of, they especially could not plan on predicting the future without God's help. Their travelling from city to city trading was probably enforced by the persecution. The Greek for "buy and sell" in v.13 means specifically to trade whilst travelling around, as a pedlar. Thus in their spiritual arrogance they were saying that their travelling around was done by their own spiritually correct decision, which obviated the need to say 'God willing'. They probably showed off their plans to the poor labouring brethren, as if they knew by direct inspiration what would be on the morrow. There must also be reference back to Christ's commands about not worrying about tomorrow because God would provide- "take therefore no (anxious) thought for the morrow" (Mt.6:34). If James had this in mind, then he was saying that he knew that in their evil heart they were worrying in a God-forsaking way about tomorrow, which they justified by saying that they had inspired knowledge of the future and the profit they would make, and therefore showed this off with a false air of confidence to the poorer brethren. Again, these brethren are reminded of the need to remember their true nature: "For what is your life?" (cp. 4:14). The description of life as a vapour appears to be an allusion to Job 7:7: "O remember that my life is wind". Thus James is asking them to learn the lesson of Job, as he does in 5:11; to come to a true understanding of the weakness of human nature through responding in humility to the trials of life, and to the knowledge of God directly provided by Him. Again, as in 2:3 (see notes there) these brethren are being compared to Job, as they are again in chapter 5; as with him, physical trial was brought upon them in order for them to learn humility and the lessons concerning human nature and its relation to a holy God, which previously they had been unwilling to learn.

4:15 "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (v.15). "To say" implies that there should have been a verbal statement, publicly heard, of their recognition of the Lord's will in their lives. Their need to say that they would live if it was the Lord's will shows the extremely temporary nature of their lives at that time of persecution. Despite such tribulation, their hearts were so hardened against the true influence of the word that they were not made more sensitive to God's hand in their lives, but rather were hardened into thinking that in their own strength and wisdom, which they imagined was God-given, they would weather the present crisis. The Lord's "will" here is the Lord's desires and wishes, not necessarily the pre-determinate "will" of God. The parallel letter of Peter emphasizes that the will of God was what controlled their present persecution (1 Pet.2:15; 3:17; 4:19), and that they should seek to do God's will by overcoming the

natural will of the flesh (1 Pet.4:2,3) by the word of God, which contains the will of God (1 Pet.1:23; 2 Pet.1:21 cp. Jn.1:13). Putting together these ideas, the message seems to be that it was the same will of God that they needed to get inside their hearts, to overcome the will of the flesh, which was also bringing their tribulations, implying that God was developing their response to the word through their persecutions. James is therefore saying that they should recognize the will, the desires, the purpose of God behind their persecution from city to city, which was to develop in them a more truly spiritual mind. But by effectively saying that God's will or desires were irrelevant to them, they were denying themselves the opportunity to be spiritually developed by their sufferings. Lack of attention to what God is willing or desiring in our own trials can similarly lead to them being in vain for us too. That they should say "we shall live" if the Lord will suggests that they thought that their lives were protected from harm, or that they had some inherently indestructible element to them; hence the reminder in the previous verse that their life was only a brief vapour, as opposed to the more permanent 'immortal soul' they perhaps almost believed in as a result of the Roman/ Judaist philosophical influence upon them. The amazing thing is that despite these brethren's progressively worse problems in their doctrine and way of life, James continues to patiently reason with them, leading on towards his final appeal for repentance in Chapter 5.

4:16 "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (v.16). We have previously commented on how their blatant rejoicing in their sin was due to their reasoning that it was impossible that they could sin- hence "all such.. *is* evil". Similarly the Judaist element at Corinth rejoiced in the fact that there was a division in the ecclesia between the Paul and Apollos factions (1 Cor.4:6,7), and that they retained in fellowship a brother who had brazenly committed incest for all to see (1 Cor. 5:6); this all shows the same mentality, of openly rejoicing in the freedom that they believed they had from all moral and spiritual constraints. "Rejoice" really means to glory or boast, which means that it had to be done to someone else. To boast that they did not need to say "If the Lord will" about their plans would not have made many eyes turn in the world generally; therefore it is more likely that they were boasting to the poor brethren whom they had spiritually condemned, saying that the superior revelation which they had received enabled them to have freedom from that kind of spiritual requirement which the poor brethren needed to obey.

"Boastings" occurs only three times elsewhere, and each time it is in the context of false Judaist reasoning. Rom.1:30 describes how Israel in the wilderness, and also the last day Jewish ecclesias, were "boasters". If this means spiritually boastful, then it implies that the rejected generation in the wilderness thought up ways to spiritually justify themselves; hence Rom.1:30 goes on to describe "inventors of evil things", i.e. the alternative tabernacle system of worship that they created and carried with them, based around their idols (Acts 7:43,44). 2 Tim.3:2 describes the boastful infiltrators of the ecclesias in the last days (2 Tim.3:6), who had once known the Truth (2 Tim.3:5 cp. Rom. 2:20; 2 Tim.1:13) but through their claims to superior knowledge and revelation (2 Tim.3:7) and giving way to their corrupted natural mind (2 Tim.3:8) were "reprobate concerning the faith". This very well describes the Judaist brethren to whom James was writing. "Boasting" also occurs in 1 Jn.2:16 translated "pride": "All that is in the world (the Jewish world- so the phrase normally means in John's writings), the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride (boasting) of life, is not of the Father (as the Judaists were claiming?), but is of the world. And the world passeth away" (in AD70). We have suggested that this boasting of life was a spiritual boasting by the Jews that they were blessed with superior wisdom and justification with God. 1 Jn.2:16 is looking back to Eve's sin in Eden (Gen.3:6)- she saw that the fruit of the tree of knowledge was good for food (the lust of the flesh), pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes) and to be desired to make one wise (pride of life). The Jews' desire for worldly wisdom was like Eve in Eden. Her motivation for taking the fruit would therefore have been that of spiritual pride, the desire to boast to her husband that she was now under no restrictions at all and had a wisdom equal to that of God. Exactly the same was true of the first century Judaizers.

4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (v.17). This indicates that these elders knew what they should be doing but consciously chose not to. In the light of their false claims to inspiration and the despicable doctrine and practice which they followed, it seems incredible that they could still have a knowledge of the real truth within them; and yet such is the deceit of the human heart that such doublemindedness can easily occur. There may be a reference here back to Lk.12:47: he that "knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes". James 4:15 has spoken about their conscious disregard of their Lord's will. Thus v.17 is saying 'You know God's will and you know that you should show your recognition of it publicly- but you don't'. Lk.12:48 goes on to say that knowing the Lord's will is the same as being given much- which the Jewish elders had been by having the miraculous Spirit gifts. The phrasing of "to him that knoweth... to him it is sin" implies that not all James' readership did have that knowledge- because they had become so hardened in their belief that their attitudes were correct, that they no longer had the knowledge of the truth? "To him it is sin" implies that there were some without knowledge to whom their lack of doing good would not be reckoned as sin- i.e. although all unrighteousness is sin, no matter who commits it, "sin" is reckoned to the person who has the knowledge of what he ought to be doing. This is another of the many indications that an ongoing record is kept of our actions or lack of them, so that our failure to do an action that we know we should is counted as sin to us at a certain moment in time.

5:1 "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you" (v.1). The reference to rich men weeping again suggests a link with the beatitudes: "Woe unto you that are rich... that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep... when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Lk.6:24-26). The mourning and weeping was what they were advised to do as a mark of their repentance in 4:9- perhaps this was therefore to be as a result of their no longer being rich, i.e. sharing their wealth with their desperately poor brethren. The beatitudes were saying that the rich would mourn and weep at the judgment; James is advising them to do so now, i.e. to judge or condemn themselves by their self-examination in this life, so that they would not experience the weeping and gnashing of teeth then (cp. 1 Cor.11:31). The weeping and howling were to be when "your miseries...shall come upon you"- i.e. in AD70. Thus the 'coming' of Christ then was also like the judgment seat at the second coming; the misery of the AD70 judgments and subsequent Jewish persecution was similar to that to be seen at the second coming. There should also be a parallel with the true contrition which we ought to have after repentant self-examination.

There is an allusion here to Zeph.1:11,12: "Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh (i.e. the market area near the temple- see N.I.V.)... I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. Therefore your goods shall become a booty". The Jews Zephaniah addressed were facing the coming day of the Lord at the hand of Babylon; the materialism and subsequent money-making from the temple worshippers that they were guilty of, was being repeated in a more subtle form by their counterparts in the Jewish ecclesia in the days before AD70. Zephaniah warned "The great day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly" (Zeph.1:14), hoping to motivate them to repent. Similarly James: "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (5:8). Ripping off the temple worshippers was paralleled by the financial abuses of the flock by the elders, to be mentioned in v.4. The idea of howling in Israel as a result of the impending day of the Lord due to their sins is common in the Old Testament prophets: Is.13:6; Jer.25:34; 47:2; Ez.21:12; Joel 1:5,8,11,13; Mic.1:8; Zech.11:3. Many of these refer to the priests or the prophet howling. Thus James is saying that as well as howling in repentance, these ecclesial elders as counterparts of the priests and prophets under the Mosaic system should be howling out warning to the flock concerning the coming day of judgment.

"Miseries" can also imply spiritual lowness; the rareness of the Greek word and the other allusions to Rom.7 in James suggest that we are intended to see a connection with Rom.7:24: "O wretched (same word as "miseries") man that I am!" - an exclamation concerning the intense evil of his natural

mind that was called forth by Paul's self examination, maybe implying that if they judged (condemned) themselves now in their self examination, they would avoid the misery and self-realization they were to have in the coming holocaust.

5:2 "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten" (v.2). The similarities between them and the priests is continued by their garments being described as moth eaten; which exactly fits the context of Heb.8:13, which describes the old covenant as a decaying garment about to vanish away in AD70. Thus the Jewish ecclesial elders were so closely associated with the Law due to their desire to justify their materialism (which the riches and garments must also refer to) that they were to be destroyed along with it. That these rich men were in the ecclesia is confirmed by the reference back to the rich brother in goodly apparel being given a prominent place in the ecclesial meeting place (2:2). Note the present tenses: "are corrupted... are moth eaten". The unlikelihood that they walked around in literally moth eaten clothes or that their gold was literally corrupted indicates that James meant that they were like this in the sight of God. This provides an interesting key to Mt.6:19-21, to which there is a clear allusion: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt... but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven... for their will your heart be also". Thus James read the moth and rust corrupting as being in God's sight- if a man's heart is set on earthly things, God looks ahead to the distant day when those possessions have decayed, perhaps after the person's death, and as they are then, so God considers them to be in this present life. The emphasis in Mt.6 is on where the heart is- which precisely agrees with the context of James. Our mind *is* able to see our material possessions in a similar light to how God does.

5:3 "Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (v.3). Their riches were specifically "gold and silver"- which we have identified as the main thing which these brethren were desiring (see notes on 4:3). The idea of corruption of financial wealth is repeated in 2 Cor.8:15, where Paul likens the Corinthians' giving of their financial blessings in order to make an equality among the brotherhood, to the manna not being left to corrupt by the morning, but instead being gathered and shared out (Ex.16:18,19). Those who refused to obey this command found their manna was corrupted by morning- teaching that unless we share our manna or money (as 2 Cor.8:15 interprets it) before the morning of the Lord's coming, we will incur His wrath. This fits beautifully with the situation in James; in our notes on v.1 we saw that there was probably the suggestion that they share their riches with the poorer brethren, so that the curses on the rich and happy in the beatitudes did not come upon them.

The eating of the flesh with fire connects the literal and symbolic use of fire to destroy the Jewish heavens and earth (2 Pet.3:7). Note the equation of the believers with their riches- as rust ate gold and silver, so fire would eat their flesh. Their life ("flesh") *did* consist in the abundance of the things which they possessed (Lk.12:15). The fire also represents the Gehenna fire of the rejected at judgment; its connection with the rust of their riches perhaps indicates that the punishment of the rejected at judgment is at the hands of those things which caused their rejection. Alternatively, this language may be similar in idea to "delivering to satan for the destruction of the flesh" in 1 Cor.5:5; the satan, or evil desires, in this case being their love of riches.

The Greek for "rust" occurs also in 3:8 translated "poison", concerning the nature of the tongue and the evil heart it is associated with. Thus they are being reminded that their gross materialism was rooted in their evil desires, and it is this fact that "shall be a witness (judicially) against you". Again this is the language of judgment, as if they were to be soon at the Lord's judgment seat. The idea of eating flesh at judgment occurs again in Rev.17:16 and 19:18- prophecies which must have an initial application to the AD70 destruction of Israel. They describe the military forces responsible for the AD70 punishments and subsequent persecutions as eating the flesh; here in James the evil desires behind their riches do the eating, implying that it was because of these that the judgment came, again stressing the ultimate importance of the heart's spiritual condition. Remember that the

judgments on Jerusalem in AD70 had repercussions for natural and spiritual Israel throughout the Roman world.

The heaping of treasure together is another allusion to the early chapters of Romans: "Despise thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (cp. 2 Pet.3:15 concerning the delay in judgment upon Jerusalem in order to allow natural and spiritual Israel time to repent), but after thy hardness and impenitent heart (notice the emphasis on this) treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath" in AD70 (Rom.2:4,5). The treasures they had heaped up were therefore directly proportionate to the amount of wrath they would receive- perhaps because their wealth was proportionate to the amount of defrauding and subsequent lack of love shown to their brethren (5:4). The Heavens and earth (natural and spiritual Israel?) were "kept in store" (2 Pet.3:7)- the same Greek phrase for "treasuring up" and heaping treasure together- for judgment by fire in AD70. The fact this fire was to come on individuals (2 Thess.1:8) invites us to interpret the heavens and earth as referring to the individual people that comprised the Jewish system; and we can conclude that this included both apostate, largely Judaist-influenced Christians, as well as the natural Jews. This Greek phrase for laying up treasure also occurs in Lk.12:21 concerning the 'greater barns' man laying up treasure for himself. Note that Lk.12:15, also in this context, has already been alluded to in James 5:3 (see above). The rich man was a farmer- as were some of the rich brethren amongst James' readership (5:4); he thought he knew the future, as the same class in James' letter thought they did (4:13), and the suddenness of his destruction corresponds with the rich in the ecclesia thinking that spiritually they were in peace and safety, and then the sudden destruction of AD70 coming (1 Thess.5:2,3) at "the day of the Lord"- note the many links between 1 Thess.4:15 - 5:9 and the Olivet prophecy concerning the same destruction. Again, James opens up a parable with an interpretation many of us otherwise would not have reached. The emphasis on their time being "the last days" is doubtless because they thought they knew the future- as indicated in 4:13-15 by their lack of saying 'If the Lord will', presumably because they thought the Lord's coming was far distant. Therefore along with their prototype in the rich farmer parable, they thought that they could go on building up their own Kingdom on earth.

Especially in our generation, we hold wealth- any wealth- in the full knowledge that our Lord could return at any moment. James 5:3 brings out the paradox- of hoarding up wealth for the last days! The Greek for 'hoarding up' means 'to reserve'. And this is just what our flesh tells us to do- reserve 'our' wealth for a rainy day, for long term security. It's as if James foresaw that in our last days, this would be a particular temptation. See on 1 Cor. 7:29.

Our words are as fire, and are to be connected with the fire of condemnation (James 3:5,6), which our words have already kindled (Lk. 12:49). Speaking of the last day Isaiah 33:11 had foretold: "your breath [i.e. words], as fire, shall devour you". Likewise wrongly gained wealth is the fire that will burn those who have it at the last day (James 5:3). James is picking up a figure from Is. 33:11, again concerning the final judgment: "Your breath, as fire, shall devour you". Their breath, their words, were as fire which would in the end be the basis of their condemnation. Nadab and Abihu kindled strange fire, and it was with that fire that God burnt them up, in symbol of His destruction of all the wicked at judgment day (Lev. 10:2). "He that believeth not is condemned already" (Jn. 3:18). A heretic is already condemned of himself (Tit. 3:11); our heart can condemn us now (1 Jn. 3:20).

There is an amazing ability in human nature to believe that wealth lasts for ever. That's why we recoil in horror at the idea of forsaking all we have. James 5:3 says well that gold rusts. Yet we know it doesn't rust. But in the very end, it does in the sense that it doesn't last in our hands for ever. Especially in the perspective of the soon return of Jesus, materialism is totally inappropriate for the believer awaiting Him. James 5:3 RV says it so clearly: "Ye have laid up your treasures in the last days". It's as if it's self-evidently inappropriate to build up wealth in the last days. Period.

The men of Beth-Shemesh were smitten because they looked into the ark (1 Sam. 6:19). I suspect this was because they wanted to find any more jewels which the Philistines might have placed there. In the face and presence of the things of the supreme glory of Jehovah of Israel, they scavenged around in a spirit of petty materialism- just as men gambled for the clothes of Jesus at the foot of His cross.

5:4 "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (v.4). We have frequently made reference to this verse previously, showing how this was being done by the rich farm owners in the ecclesia, under the pretext that the poor brethren who were their employees were spiritually unworthy; and it is to this that 2:6 concerning despising the poor refers. This situation could well have occurred within a small household ecclesia, thus putting much more pressure on the labourer brethren. There is a reference here to Mal.3:5, which is in the context of describing the day of the Lord's sudden coming to the temple in fire in AD70 (v.1-3), and primarily refers to the judgements on the corrupt priesthood: "I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against... false swearers, and against those that oppress (mg. 'defraud', cp. James 5:4) the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless (James 1:27), and that turn aside the stranger from his right (James 2:2cp. 2:6 implies unexpected visiting brethren were refused material help), and fear not Me... return unto Me.. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?..It is vain to serve God... we call the proud happy (cp. glorying in their proud boastings)"- Mal.3:5,7,14,15. Again, the eldership of the Jewish ecclesias is being likened to the priesthood under the Old Covenant (see notes on 4:8), and the priests' stealing of the offerings matched the elders financially abusing the poor of the flock within the ecclesias. The materialism and subsequent laxness of Israel's shepherds has uncanny similarities with criticisms which could be levelled at their latter day equivalent.

We have seen in our notes on "consume" in 4:3 and 5:3 that the weakness of these brethren was for hard cash- hence it was "the hire" that was kept back. Passages warning about the dangers of loving money (e.g. 1 Tim.6:10) can now be interpreted with reference to this class of believers. The cry of these brethren coming up to God connects with Elihu's inspired accusation of Job causing the cry of the poor to rise to God (Job 34:28), thus making Job a type of the rich Jews of the first century ecclesia who had to learn the true ways of God through their sufferings.

A cry entering God's ears recalls the effect of the slaughter of Abel by Cain (Gen.4:10), who as the first human liar and murderer was a prototype of the Jewish devil (Jn.8:44). His persecution and slaughter of Abel represented the oppression of the poor Christians by these Judaist-influenced brethren. Cain's killing of Abel pointed forward to that of Christ by the Jews, and thus James is saying that by enduring the abuses of these so-called elders in the ecclesia, the poor brethren were fellowshiping the sufferings of Christ on the cross at the hands of the Jewish elders of His 'ecclesia'. Each of our sufferings too can be examined to show echoes of the cross. It appears that Cain's hate of Abel was based on spiritual pride- Gen.4:3 speaks of their review by God "at the end of the day" (AVmg.), and Gen.4:7 suggests that then a choice was made between them by God as to who should be priest: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not have the excellency?... and unto thee shall be his desire" AVmg.). This type of hurt pride is easily discernible in the actions of the Jewish elders towards the more spiritual believers, and in the persecution of Jesus by the Jews. Thus the description of the brethren as condemning and killing the just in v.6 applies both to Christ on the cross and to the spiritual condemnation and lack of love ("killing", in terms of the sermon on the mount) which was being shown towards the poor brethren by their reprobate elders. Note how Rom.12:14 speaks of brethren persecuting each other within the ecclesia.

God's hearing of a sincere cry of affliction also looks back to Israel in bondage to Egypt, whose cry was then answered by Angelic intervention. Similarly the use of the title "Lord of Sabaoth" is the equivalent of the "Lord of hosts" with all its Angelic implications. This emphasis is doubtless due to

the fact that Angels brought the punishment of natural and spiritual Israel in the AD70 period (Mt.22:7 cp. Rev.19:14; Dan.4:35). The echo of Israel's experience in Egypt is surely intended: "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage" (Ex.2:23). This would associate the rich Jewish believers with the Egyptians in their persecution of God's people. And as natural Israel were delivered at Passover, so these suffering poor believers would be at the second coming, which the Passover deliverance typified.

"Reaped down" is a totally different Greek word to that used in "them which have reaped". The latter means to harvest in the agricultural sense, whilst the former means more 'to gather together', thus linking with the idea of heaping treasure together in the previous verse. The hard work of the labouring brethren had brought riches to the rich elders, yet still they defrauded them of their wages, showing the degree of their wide-eyed lust for money.

The complaint of the believer-labourers cheated by their masters is paralleled with the cry of the wages which they were owed. This cry entered into the ears of the Lord of judgment (James 5:4). The situation was counted as the prayer of those brethren against the brethren employing and deceiving them.

5:5 "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth (the land- of Israel?), and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter" (v.5). Note the certainty of James' accusations- "Ye have" occurs four times in as many verses. This shows the certainty of inspiration, either through James having seen how they had lived in Israel before their scattering, the inspired reports of the 'messengers of the churches', or a direct satellite-vision of their present situation given to James. Their living in pleasure on the earth may refer back to the affluent man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, who represented the Jewish priesthood (Lk.16:19). Compare this with the same class being represented by the rich farmer in the greater barns parable. The mocking of the requests of poor Lazarus would refer to the rich Jewish eldership despising the welfare requests of the poor believers.

The use of the phrase "on the earth" may be reminding them that they were amassing pleasure on earth as opposed to Heaven, as v.3 had also made clear. Alternatively, the past tenses here may refer to James' knowledge of how they had lived "on the earth" or land of Israel. The words for "pleasure" and "wanton" imply glorious feasting; "ye have nourished your hearts" therefore equates their minds with their bodies. This is a theme of James- that our way of thinking and our physical actions and sensations are indivisible. Their glorious feasting was really feeding the evil desires of their hearts which had led them to hold the feasts. Yet in practice they were fattening themselves in readiness for the slaughter to provide meat for another feast- that of God's wrath (cp. the description of the day of the Lord's judgment as a feast with slaughtered beasts in Is.34:6). The Greek for "nourished" can also mean 'to stiffen', digging at their refusal to let their hearts be changed by the word. "A day of slaughter" suggests reference to Ez.34:2-4, which condemns the pastors of Israel for killing the spiritually fat of the flock but not spiritually feeding the others; and also to the "day of slaughter" of those in Jer.12:1-3 whose hearts were far from God because of their prosperity, although they had a show of Godliness. There is probably another link to Jer.25:34, where the shepherds of the flock were to be killed in the AD70 slaughter (Jer.25:38=AD70; 25:32=Mt.24=AD70).

It is the Lord's will that we His people should be ready for Him; the harvest is reaped when it is ripe; His apparent delay in returning is in order to give us time for spiritual development. It seems not coincidental that in these last days there is now unparalleled opportunity for giving up what material wealth we have for the Lord's cause. To heap up possessions (in whatever way) in the last days is absurd; it's like a cow eating just before he's slaughtered (James 5:5), or in Jeremiah's terms, like a bird building up its nest just before it flies off in migration. There are concrete opportunities galore to give to the Lord's work, whether it be a postage stamp per week in one context, or trying to pay one's fares to a Bible School rather than presume on the generosity of others, to a large regular

donation of cash in another believer's context. Who we leave 'our' property to (if we have any) is something else we can ponder. We have been given all that we have from the Lord, it is not our own, and He watches our attitude to it carefully. What we have is not ours because we worked for it- although that, I know, is how it feels. It is ours on loan. Surely this of itself ought to mean that each of us leaves our property, if we own any, to the work of the Truth, or to a brother or sister who we know will use the resulting funds in the Lord's work (after the pattern of how David left all his personal wealth to the work of the temple, rather than to Solomon personally- 1 Chron. 29:3 NIV).

5:6 "Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you" (v.6). We have shown in our comments on v.4 that "the just" can refer to both Christ and the oppressed underclass of believers. Their sumptuous feasts of v.5 were at the expense of killing fatted animals- who represented the spiritually fat, ideal sacrifices of Christ and the poor brethren. The idea of killing being equated with lack of love is popular in James- e.g. 4:2; 2:11, based on Mt.5:22. There seems to be a contrast here with 4:6, where God is said to resist (same word) the prayer of the brethren. Maybe the maximum show of God's displeasure with them was only in not answering their prayers for material things and money. Thus an apparent lack of major signs of displeasure from God should not lull any of us into thinking that this means we are totally acceptable in God's sight.

"The just one" is a title of the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14) whom they crucified afresh, and "He doth not resist you" indicates that one particular "just one" is being referred to. However, "the just" can also refer to those justified by their faith, which is how it is used in early Romans (1:17; 2:13), a part of Scripture which James' readers seem to have been familiar with in view of the number of references made to it. By being justified by their faith these believers were not relying on the Mosaic law- for which they seem to have been condemned by their elders. Yet they did not resist the abuses made of them, but followed Christ's example on the cross. Thus we have the impression of this group of brethren being condemned by pompous, materialistic elders claiming to have some new revelation from God, who used this as an excuse to withhold their wages and publicly humiliate them at the communion service (2:2); and in the face of all this, they did not actively resist but took the sad state of the ecclesia to God in prayer- cp. the faithful servants sorrowfully telling their Lord about the abuses of one of their number by the much-forgiven ecclesial elder (Mt.18:31). The cry of those servants and their fellow brethren whom James is referring to "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth"- and He heard.

5:7 "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (v.7). This final section of the letter appears to be addressed to the whole ecclesia, with a bias towards those who were being persecuted by the rich brethren. Its theme is an appeal for positive co-operation in order to help each other repent and thus be ready for the imminent coming of the Lord. It is therefore intensely relevant to the Lord's people of today. Note that James appears to have expected the second coming in his time: "Unto the coming of the Lord". "Patient" means literally to be 'long-spirited', again showing the fundamental importance of the control of the mind. It can also imply to suffer patiently, as if encouraging the abused brethren to continue to use their spiritual minds to spiritually endure the trials the others were giving them. Their patience is equated with that of God, as a husbandman waiting for spiritual fruit to develop. This shows James' urging of them to continue their non-resistance to these brethren so that they would bear spiritual fruit, and maybe also the suggestion that they were to be patient with the misguided elders until they too bore spiritual fruit. James 5 goes on to speak of the patience of the prophets in continuing to speak the word- as if to encourage these brethren to keep using the word to help the others to bear spiritual fruit- cp. notes on 3:18.

"The coming of the Lord" is paralleled with receiving the early and latter rain, which must be referring back to Joel 2:23 and Dt.11:13,14 concerning the blessings of the Kingdom which would be experienced once Israel repented. Note that there is a dearth of direct Biblical evidence to support

the idea that the early and latter rains refer to the outpourings of the Spirit in the first century and the Kingdom- although humanly speaking the idea fits nicely. Biblically they seem to refer to the physical blessings of the land as a result of Israel's obedience. Thus again there is the inference that James looked for the literal second coming and establishment of the Kingdom being in AD70, conditional on Israel's repentance. The precious spiritual fruit of the ecclesia would only be fully harvested by the Lord then- maybe indicating that the attitude of mind we develop now will be fully manifested in terms of spiritual fruit by our reaction to that great moment of absolute truth at the judgment. "Precious fruit" carries the specific idea of great financial value in Greek- as if to encourage them that the spiritual fruit being developed by their poverty was the true riches, thus again connecting with the allusion in v.3 to the Lord's words about treasure in Heaven rather than on earth.

The long patience of God for spiritual development until the coming of the Lord is clearly parallel with 2 Pet.3:7-15, which says that the apparent delay in the Lord's coming was in order to give them the opportunity of developing spiritual fruit. "As workers together with God" for their spiritual growth and subsequent acceptance at judgement, they were to be patient under the trials God was bringing- as God too was patient in watching their gradual development of fruit. The husbandman receiving the rains connects with Dt.11:13,14 describing a repentant, obedient to the word Israel being given the rains- again showing the Jewish audience of the letter, and stressing the need for the whole ecclesia to repent.

5:8 "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (v.8). Again, James throws down an ultimate challenge- to show the same supreme patience to our stumbling spiritual development and blatant faults which God shows to us, to both the trials which help us develop and also to our weak brethren.

"Stablish" means both to set fast/ confirm, and also to turn resolutely- which neatly makes it relevant to both groups in the readership, the one who needed to continue to develop their already spiritual mind, and the other who needed to resolutely turn their hearts around in repentance. The word occurs relatively frequently in Thessalonians, also in the context of preparing for the Lord's coming- showing that the main way of preparing for the second coming is by a conscious development of our way of thinking, which can only be achieved through true commitment to the word. Very often the Greek word for "stablish" is used about God stablishing our heart- showing that God will work on our hearts in accord with our personal effort. 1 Thess.3:12,13 even suggests that this stablishing or confirming of the mind which we have personally developed will be done for us at the judgment seat, where self-doubt as to whether we have had a truly spiritual mind will loom large: "Abound in love one toward another...to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God... at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". Notice this stablishing is dependent on loving each other now- very relevant in the James context.

The coming of the Lord was drawing nearer on behalf of their patience. The exhortation to patience was not just because they needed to patiently endure in their spirituality, but also because James was probably aware that the second coming of the Lord which he expected in the first century was quite likely to be delayed, due to the lack of Israel's repentance. Both James and the parallel Peter (2 Pet.3:11,15) are saying: 'Be patient for the second coming and continue your spiritual patience so that it will come quicker and you won't have to be patient for so long'. Thus Peter's parallel to this v.8 is "The end of all things is at hands: be ye therefore sober (self-controlled- by having a stablished mind), and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves" (1 Pet.4:7,8). They were to continue their effective love to those brethren who so abused them, praying earnestly for the second coming. This would only be achieved by their continued attention to stablishing their thinking, so that it was consistently controlled by the word rather than just being partially controlled- which was the root cause of the semi-faith and lukewarm commitment to true spirituality that had been the downfall of the other brethren.

"Draweth nigh" literally means 'is made near'- the more spiritually aware, especially those who had heard of Peter's reasoning in 2 Pet.3, would have seen in this the implication that a stabilising of the mind would draw near the Lord's coming. The same Greek phrase occurs in 4:8 "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you"- and we have seen that this refers to praying to God acceptably from a heart influenced by the word. Such prayer would hasten the second coming- a basic principle taught in the Lord's prayer, seeing there is no point in praying "Thy Kingdom come" unless we believe those prayers will result in the days being shortened to that day.

James 5:8 cp. v.11 seems to connect "the coming of the Lord" and "the end of the Lord" with Job in Job 42. The fact that the Lord was "very pitiful, and of tender mercy" with Job thus reminds us of how He will be in our day of judgement.

5:9- see on Lk. 12:2.

"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (v.9). In view of the gross abuses going on, it must have been a sore temptation for the poor brethren to grudge against their elders- not least when they turned them away empty handed at pay day (v.4). James is pleading with them to keep up their excellent attitude of not resisting (v.6)- because at any moment the true judge would come. And note too that if they did resist by grudging, they also would be condemned at the Lord's coming- for taking the judgment of these renegade servants of the Lord into their own hands. How much less have we any right to judge our fellow servants of today! James' reasoning implied that the verdict of condemnation pronounced on them by the other brethren (v.6) was not valid- but they would only be condemned if they grudged against such treatment.

The Greek for "grudge" is normally used concerning the groaning of sincere prayer, often in silence, brought about by suffering- e.g. Mk.7:34; Acts 7:34; Rom.8:23,26; 2 Cor.5:2,4- although it also carries the idea of complaining. Thus instead of making their complaints to each other, they were to quietly make them to God- and the Lord Jesus, with "groanings (same word as "grudge") which cannot be uttered" (Rom.8:26) would make powerful intercession for them. Peter's equivalent for them being condemned is in his warning that Sodom and Gomorrah were "condemned with an overthrow", making them an ensample unto those that after should live unGodly" (2 Pet.2:6). If this is a valid connection, James is saying that vicious bitterness against brethren who are wrongly abusing you, leading you to condemn them, is the same magnitude of sin as living the reprobate life of the Sodomites. Similarly "the judge standeth before the door" is clearly matched by 1 Pet.4:4,5, which says that some - the same group of Judaizers within the ecclesia?- "think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (this is the sort of accusation often made by the Judaist infiltrators- cp. their smear campaign on Paul): who shall give account to him that is ready (cp. "before the door") to judge the quick and the dead". Thus a life of "excess of riot" is the same as giving way to bitterness in the heart that leads to condemnation of the brethren. This connection between 5:9 and 1 Pet.4:5 parallels the coming of the Lord in judgment with the resurrection- the judging of living and dead. Thus James and Peter did not think of the Lord's coming in any sense other than how we think of the second coming- to raise and judge the dead, and establish the Kingdom on earth (see notes on 5:7). Thus Paul, probably writing to the same group of Jewish believers: "Wherefore we receiving (i.e. being so near to receiving it we are practically receiving it now) a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear" (Heb.12:28)- i.e. in the development of truly spiritual characteristics in our heart. Such acute awareness of the imminence of the Lord's coming should surely be matched by us, as we live on the very edge of time and human experience as we know it, when "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet.4:7). This likening of the second coming to Christ standing at the door must surely connect with Rev.3:20: "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him". Having a formal meal ("sup") with the believer must connect with the Lord's parable of the marriage supper

representing the Kingdom. These letters having been written before AD70, Christ is maybe saying that if only there was a true response to His word on an individual basis ("If any man..."), then he would fully come in the glory of His Kingdom in AD70. The principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture- in this case Rev.3:20 by James 5:9- surely has violence done to it if the Lord's standing, knocking at the door is not understood with some reference to the second coming.

James 5:9 *pleads* with believers not to grudge / groan / sigh (Gk.) against each other *on the very eve of the Lord's coming*.

5:10 "Take, my brethren, the prophets, which have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience" (v.10). We have suggested in our notes on v.7 that the example of the prophets patiently speaking forth the word of God amidst opposition from others in their ecclesia, was an example of the patience the wrongly denigrated brethren needed in continuing to gently rebuke the erring brethren with the word; and to continue patiently letting the word dwell in their minds so that they did not let bitterness develop. This appears to be another allusion to the beatitudes- this time to Mt.5:11,12: "Blessed are ye, when men (even in the ecclesia, in their case) shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely... rejoice, and be exceeding glad (cp. James 1:2)... for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you". This enduring physical suffering not only associated them with Christ, but also with a whole band of men who had faithfully spoken forth the word in the past. The fact the prophets had suffered for speaking forth the word to an apostate Israel indicates that the persecution of the brethren was due to their Biblically hitting the rest of the ecclesia below the belt. The Greek for "suffering affliction" really means 'hardship', referring to the obvious domestic hardship brought about by the holding back of the wages by the criticized brethren. We have suggested that the eldership in the Jewish ecclesias probably had the gift of prophecy, and even if they did not, these to whom James was writing certainly thought they did. Thus James is pointing out from much Biblical precedent that being a prophet was associated with experiencing hardship as a result of persecution and unfair treatment by those who claimed to be brethren (so the Mt.5:12 allusion intimates); and also with being patient with many opposers. Such reasoning would have been very telling on these elders. It is hard to see why the reminder should be given that the prophets spoke in the name of the Lord. Maybe it was because the poor brethren's Scriptural protests were being ridiculed as not being spoken in the name of the Lord. In this case James would be encouraging them that by reason of their being persecuted for their message, they were proving their association with those who were truly inspired to speak in the Lord's name. Speaking forth the word is often associated with carrying the name of God; not only in the sense that prophets spoke God's word in the Lord's name, but that the word develops the attributes of the Name (Ex.34:4-7) in a man's character, thus leading him to carry God's Name if he shows forth the truth, mercy and patience of the Lord. By their correct response to the word these believers were similar to the prophets in that they spoke in the name of the Lord.

The whole of James 5:10-16 appears to be based on the example of Job: v.12= Job 3:1; v.13,14 cp. Job's afflictions; v.11= Job 42:10; God's mercy to Job is used by James as an encouragement to the sinners in the ecclesia to repent; v.16= Job 42:8. Job is held up in v.11-13 as an example of a prophet being afflicted, but then James goes on to speak of praying for the sick who had sinned- i.e. those who had been struck with physical illness as a result of their wickedness. The sick were to "pray for one another, that ye may be healed", knowing that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much". This may be alluding to Job's prayer for the friends in 42:8 while still sick himself. The word for "fervent" is the same translated "earnest" in the record of Christ's fervent prayer in the garden in Lk.22:44-46. Job's prayer for the spiritual welfare of the friends points forward to Christ's prayer in the garden. His prayer was for his salvation from death- which was tantamount to praying for our salvation, and that was certainly the motive behind it rather than of selfish self-preservation. Only through His resurrection could we be saved. Thus the motivation for Christ's earnest prayers for salvation was His desire to gain us salvation.

5:11 "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (v.11). The concluding theme of this letter is that despite their faults, all the ecclesia should pray for God's forgiveness for the others, especially bearing in mind the physical affliction that had been brought on some of them because of the grossness of their sins (see notes on 4:12). Job was a prophet (Job 29:4), one of those referred to in the preceding verse, and his example seems to be behind much of what James says in this chapter. "Happy" being the same word translated "Blessed" in the beatitudes encourages us to see an allusion here back to Mt.5:10-12, which v.10 has already referred to: blessed are those who endure tribulation for speaking the word. The Jews ("we") counted the prophets as blessed people because of their sufferings (Mt.23:29; Acts 13:15,27). Indeed, the Greek for "count" means 'to beautify', and is from the word for "happy/ blessed". The suffering which Job endured was not just physical but more especially from the mental trauma created in him by the criticisms of him by his friends with their (false?) claims to be inspired prophets, saying that his sufferings were due to gross spiritual weakness. This was probably the elders' reason for not supporting the poor brethren- they would have reasoned that their hardships were a sign of God's displeasure because of their lack of spirituality. We have discussed the problem of Job being credited with "patience" despite his mistakes elsewhere; his patience seem to have been in continuing to speak forth the true word of God, and in having the humility at the end to accept his failures. That Job did have failures is indicated by James saying that in "the end of the Lord" He showed great mercy and pity, which would imply forgiveness. The same word is used in Heb.10:28 concerning the man dying without mercy, i.e. forgiveness, under the Law as a punishment for sin.

"Very pitiful" is very intense in Greek- elsewhere it is translated "bowels", "inward affection". Thus the position of Job touched the Lord's heart in a way few other human experiences are said to in the word. We have elsewhere shown Job to have been a man who allowed himself to be too far influenced by the Judaist-type philosophy of the friends, the 'elders' of his ecclesia, and yet to have kept doggedly reflecting on and believing God's basic principles so that he eventually came to an appreciation of human nature and God's greatness which few others have done. The poor brethren in the Jewish ecclesias were in a similar position- being worn down by the spiritually cocksure reasoning of their elders, feeling increasingly spiritually desperate because of their words, as Job did, and therefore needing every encouragement to patiently continue rather than give way in bitterness, so that they might come to the same end as Job. The tremendous pity which God showed for Job would also be shown to them if they fully fellowshipped his example by their patient endurance.

It is not only so that we can limit God by our prayers. It is also true that prayer and spirituality can to some degree change the stated intentions of God, such is His openness to it. That God has intentions proves of itself that there can be a degree to which what He intends to do is governed by human response. James reasons that because we have seen "the end intended by the Lord" (James 5:11 NKJ) we ought therefore to do the maximum of *our* ability. Thus Amos pronounced what the Lord had shown him: that the land would be destroyed by grasshoppers, and then by fire. But each time he begged Yahweh to relent. And "the Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the Lord" (Am. 7:1-7).

That God has intentions proves of itself that there can be a degree to which what He intends to do is governed by human response. James reasons that because we have seen "the end intended by the Lord" (James 5:11 NKJ) we ought therefore to do the maximum of *our* ability.

5:12- see on Mt. 23:28.

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (v.12). This may well be referring to Job again, in his over-dogmatism brought about by the intensity of his sufferings; e.g. his cursing of the day he was born, and his swearing that he will never confess to

being a sinner or admit that his sufferings were justified because of his sinfulness (see Job 27:5 and context). This was the type of statement which he repented of at the end. Similarly, James wants the brethren not to let the emotionally charged nature of their situation lead them to make any other response apart from a humble response governed by the word. Hence v.13 and 14 go on to say that the response to affliction, sickness or falling away should always be expressed in the form of prayer, rather than in self-generated oaths. The stress of "above all things" is hard to understand until the passage in the sermon on the mount which this verse is based on is properly appreciated. Mt.5:33 quotes Lev.19:12 concerning swearing, which warns that oaths by the Lord's name should not be made lightly but had to be fulfilled, otherwise the name of the Lord would be blasphemed. Therefore the Lord quotes this as saying "Thou shalt not forswear thyself (i.e. swear falsely), but shalt perform (His emphasis being on that word) unto the Lord thine oaths" (i.e. oaths made in His name). But because Christ so appreciated the extreme proneness to failure which we have by nature, He correctly declared that whatever men claimed they would do 'by the Lord's name' was likely to be "of the evil one", i.e. the devil of their own heart (Mt.5:37), and therefore plans to do the Lord's work should be expressed in straightforward, unassuming language. Even with the best intention in the world, the Lord knew that oaths could so easily go unperformed. Christ concluded His advice with His reason for it: "For whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one" (AVmg.). The phrasing of James 5:12 is similar, and matches this with "Lest ye fall into condemnation"- which connects with the theme of the whole letter, that "above all things" the believer must not give way to his innate evil desires because doing so will lead to rejection at the judgment. And again, he singles out the expression of those desires through the tongue ("swear not") as being the most likely form of failure. The Greek word used for 'falling' here does not carry the idea of falling headlong, as in "Fall from your own steadfastness" in 2 Pet.3:17, but rather of a more gradual stepping down from their high spiritual position- as if to say that whether they dramatically fell by renouncing their faith or apparently just stepped down a little by responding to the trials given by these false brethren, the result was the same- condemnation at the judgment which James believed was so imminent. "Condemnation" is also translated "hypocrisy"- i.e. they could step down into a semi-spirituality, which was tantamount to being condemned.

Those who speak strong words with Divine oaths will 'fall under judgment' for those words (James 5:12 RV); if they don't use them, they won't have to have them considered at the judgment. And thus "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips [in this life] shall have destruction" at judgment day (Prov. 13:3). The children of Edom will have their words against Zion remembered against them at judgment: "Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom The day of Jerusalem; Who said, Rase it, rase it" (Ps. 137:7 RV). The link between the final verdict and the words we use today is that clear.

5:13 "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (v.13). The previous verse has been emphasizing the importance of not letting our words run away with us- and therefore James now tells us to channel all our words through prayer, rather than indulge in the circular talking of Job and the friends which was the exact opposite of "Yea,yea... nay,nay". "Afflicted" is the same word translated "affliction" in v.10 concerning Job's hardships.

"Merry" really means 'To be cheered up' after hardship, and is only used elsewhere in the record of Paul's shipwreck concerning the company being of "good cheer" after Paul's stirring exhortation on the deck- surely one of the most dynamic and powerful appeals for faith ever heard (Acts 27:22,36). It may be that some of them had found legitimate release from their sufferings, perhaps by contributions from other ecclesias. Alternatively, James may be talking hypothetically: 'Even if any of you find relief, then express your joy in the words of the psalms rather than giving reign to your own natural inclinations to make a rash oath to God in gratitude'. Those who had been 'cheered up' may refer to the rich brethren- instead of expressing their joy in rowdy parties dressed up with spiritual excuses (Jude 12; 1 Cor.11:21; James 2:2), they should express it in the words of psalms. "Sing" here is also translated "making melody" in Eph.5:19, where Paul speaks of doing so in the

heart by singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs". It is perhaps significant that Paul advises them to do this as an antidote to being drunk (Eph.5:18)- and if James is speaking about the need to sing psalms instead of indulging in drunken revelry at the communion service, then he would be saying the same thing as Paul. Drunkenness at the breaking of bread must have been a regular occurrence at Corinth at least, from how Paul writes (e.g. "Another is drunken... when(ever) ye come together... this is not to eat the Lord's supper, therefore- 1 Cor.11:20,21). Singing psalms would have been done at the breaking of bread service to imitate the singing of the Hallel Psalms (113-118) at the last supper (Mt.26:30); and the reference to Psalm singing in 1 Cor.14:26 also seems to be in the communion service context. Thus it may be that v.13-16 are describing what should have been happening at the memorial feast- there should have been prayer rather than complaining by the suffering, psalm singing rather than drunkenness by the joyful, the time given over to conversation- which would have been considerable, if the service was based on that of the Jewish Sabbath or Passover- should have been spent confessing faults rather than bragging, condemning and spreading false doctrine (Jude 10-12 cp. 2 Pet.2:18,19), and this should have given way to loving prayer for those who had been struck sick because of committing such sins.

5:14 "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they ("it", Gk.) shall be forgiven him" (v.14,15). There are two different words translated "sick" here. The first implies more 'weariness of mind', as if spiritual weakness is being referred to. The references to "save a soul from death and... hide a multitude of sins" in v.20 is in the same context of spiritual sickness. In any case, it is unlikely that James would be saying that any physical sickness could be cured, bearing in mind Paul's thorn in the flesh. "The sick" in v.15 however does refer to physical sickness, although "raise him up" is also used concerning a spiritual revival (Rom.13:11 cp. Eph.5:14). This confusion between physical and spiritual sickness is understandable once it is appreciated that physical sickness was brought upon weak members of the first century ecclesia in order to lead them to repentance (see notes on 4:12). Therefore v.16 tells them to confess their faults to each other so that they could pray for forgiveness and subsequent healing for their brethren.

"The elders of the church" may be those of the Jerusalem ecclesia, as that is whom "the elders" often refers to in the New Testament. However, it is just as likely that they refer to the Spirit-gifted eldership of the individual ecclesias to whom this letter was sent- their anointing with oil shows their control of the use of the Spirit. This pouring out of oil not only recalls the use of the Spirit to heal the physically sick by the disciples (Mk.6:13), but also the outpouring of the Spirit in the gift of forgiveness in Acts 2:37,38. In this case James would be emphasizing the need to respect the eldership because of their possession of the Spirit, which made them God's representatives regardless of their personal spirituality. Compare this with David's respect for apostate, Spirit-gifted Saul, and the respect Israel had to give their reprobate judges (Ps.82:1-5). Notice that it was possible for "the prayer of faith" by these elders to "save the sick" despite their unspirituality. Similarly Paul warned an identical group at Corinth that although they had faith to move mountains through the Spirit- e.g. curing the sick- their lack of love would deprive them of salvation personally (1 Cor.13:2). Spiritual success in any form- be it in preaching or the triumph of faith in a particular problem- can so easily tempt us to feel that therefore in all other areas our life must be acceptable with God. But not necessarily so.

5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (v.16). Note the parallel effect of the prayer of a friendly brother and that of the eldership in v.14,15- again indicating that in ultimate terms an elder had no spiritual power that was not possessed by any brother who had a humble faith. The Job allusions continue, this time to his prayer for the forgiveness of his friends (Job 42:8). Job himself was ill at the time he prayed for the friends- his "captivity" was ended "when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). That James too was counselling the sick to pray for the sick is implied by

"pray one for another, that ye may be healed". The sickness being brought on as a result of their sins in holding false, Judaist doctrine confirms that James read Job, under inspiration, as a type of those influenced by Judaist thinking. Based on Job's example, James is probably advising them to concentrate on forgiving and loving one another, as this would lead to their personal repentance and thus their cure too. This would imply that the fundamental sin that was causing their sickness was their gross lack of love and spiritual concern for each other.

As these sick brethren were to call for the elders of the ecclesia to pray for them, it may be that the rich, spiritually proud brethren whom James has been reprimanding in his letter may not have been the true eldership, although they fancied themselves as such. However, it appears that the problem of spiritual and subsequent physical sickness was widespread in all groups of the ecclesia, including the eldership. There seems, at first glance, two types of prayer spoken of in v.15 and 16; a calling of the elders to pray for the sick person, and the afflicted ones confessing their sins to each other in order to effect a cure. Yet in view of what we know of the corruption of the eldership, it would seem better to treat these two descriptions as parallel- the elder who had been struck seriously sick was to call the others to him, and at the pathetic bedside of the once arrogant rich farmer they, too, were to confess their sins, so that not only would he be cured, but their less serious sicknesses would also be lifted. To be successful this kind of prayer had to be "effectual". The Greek 'energeo' gives the idea of dynamic expenditure of energy. Such effort in prayer for the spiritual welfare of others can only come from a truly selfless spirit. The prayer of our Lord for us and the disciples in Gethsemane springs to mind. The connection is strengthened by "fervent" being the same word translated "earnestly" in Lk.22:44 concerning the Lord's praying more earnestly with huge tears. This would suggest that James understood Christ's prayer in Gethsemane not just to have been for personal strength but also for our forgiveness and salvation. Thus in Lk.22:46 He could encourage the sleepy disciples to rise and pray *also*- i.e. as well as him praying for them- that they did not fall into temptation. Note how "watch" in Mt.26:38 is elsewhere used about spiritual watching rather than being on the look out for people approaching. Heb.5:6,7 lends support by saying that Christ's agonizing prayer in the garden that God would save Him from death was fulfilling the type of Melchizedek, who prayed to God for other people, not just himself. The only way of reconciling all this is to see Christ's prayer for salvation from death as being motivated by His desire for our salvation from death. No wonder James refers to this as the supreme example of showing spiritual love for our brethren in our prayer life.

"Avaieth" means literally to 'in-work'- as if prayer for others will help us personally by our offering it. This idea seems to be picked up in the next verse.

James 5:16 speaks of the need to pray for one another, that we may be healed. This is an undoubted allusion back to mighty Moses praying for smitten Miriam, and to Aaron staying the plague by his offering of incense / prayer (Num. 16:47). Surely James is saying that every one of us can rise up to the level of High Priest in this sense.

Elijah could be so sure his prayer would be heard because he knew that he was genuinely motivated. His reason for withholding the rain and dew was so that Israel would come to repentance (James 5:16-18)- perhaps through them perceiving that lack of rain was a sign that they had broken the covenant. In this case, Elijah was somewhat harsher than God Himself, who had not yet withdrawn rain from His people. Elijah "shut the heavens, even though Israel rejected him at that time (Lk. 4:25,26). Their rejection of him is unrecorded in the Kings record, but we are left to reflect upon the wonder of the fact that Elijah's response to rejection was not to merely hurt back, but to earnestly seek their restoration to God. He "prayed in his prayer" (James 5:17 Gk.)- there was a deep prayer going on within his prayer, words and feelings within words- the prayer of the very inner soul. This was how much he sought their repentance. The James passage sets Elijah up as a pattern for our prayer for our wayward brethren. He really is our pattern here. He clearly saw prayer as requiring

much effort; and the way he prays at the time of the evening sacrifice on Horeb suggests that he saw prayer as a sacrifice (1 Kings 18:36).

5:17 "Elias was a man subject to (Strong: 'similarly affected by') like passions as *we* are (James found it hard too), and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (v.17). Elijah's prayer exemplifies how intensely we should pray for the spiritual benefit of others, and how that in itself helped him spiritually. In view of the exalted status of Elijah in Jewish theology, James stresses how he was of "like passions" to us (cp. Acts 14:15)- i.e. he too, because of his inherent human nature, did not find intense prayer easy. Elijah's fervent prayer was that it might not rain, and in the context of James his prayer was for the spiritual good of Ahab and apostate Israel. In the same way as apostles like Paul and Peter could pray for physical sickness to come upon men to lead them to repentance, so Elijah prayed for the famine to come upon Israel to make them realize their sin. James is saying that if the sick brethren and indeed the whole ecclesia prayed for forgiveness with the same intensity that the apostles and Elijah had prayed for such physical problems to come upon the spiritually weak, then those problems could be lifted. But it was only those who were sensitive to the true spirit of the word, in this case in the Elijah record, who would have grasped this. The intensity of Elijah's prayer needs some thought to appreciate, as superficially it appears that it is hardly recorded that he prayed for the drought. However, it must have been as a result of his prayer that he could say "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word". This is because of a principle outlined by Eliphaz in Job 22:27,28; he said that one of the blessings of living in good conscience with God was that one's prayers were powerful, and therefore "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto (God), and He shall hear thee... thou shalt also decree a thing (i.e. in prayer), and it shall be established unto thee". Thus the power of prayer is such that effectively requests became decrees, so sure can we be of their being answered. So many of the great prayers of Scripture are not littered with "If it be Thy will"- instead, because those who prayed were saturated with knowledge of God's will through their familiarity with the word which contains God's will (Jn.1:13 cp. 1 Pet.1:23), they could pray whatever *they* willed, and could be confident of being heard because the word was in them. And our Lord had said that nothing less was possible for His people now- Jn.15:7. Therefore if a man of our passions like Elijah could pray so powerfully for the weak in his ecclesia, the same was possible for that of the first century.

One way of realising the seriousness of our sin is to recognise that each sin we commit, we could have avoided. We must hang our heads, time and again. In the very end, we can blame neither our circumstances nor our natures, even though these are factors in the committal of each sin. We must each bear total personal responsibility for every sin, both of commission and omission. We must hang our heads. James, as he often does, foresees how in practice we may reason that fervent prayer isn't possible, because...we are angry, low, tired, don't feel like it. So we tell ourselves. But James cuts across all this: "Elijah was a man subject to like passions [RVmg "nature"] as *we*"- and yet *he* prayed earnestly (James 5:17). We can't excuse our lack of prayer by blaming it on the "passions" of our natures. Men like Elijah had the same nature as we do, prone to the same depression and mediocrity, and yet they prayed fervently.

We are intended to connect Elijah's 3.5-year ministry (James 5:17) with the 1260 days/42 months (i.e. 3.5 years) of the tribulation of God's people spoken of in Daniel and Revelation. The description of the whore of Babylon in Revelation is based upon Jezebel as a prototype. As she ruled over Israel through her puppet Ahab during Elijah's ministry, so latter day Babylon (through a puppet Israeli leader?) will dominate Israel during Elijah's future ministry. Whilst it is quite possible that Israel's holocaust will last for a literal 3.5 years, during which time 'Elijah' will be among them, it may be that the similarity of the time periods is just to indicate that the work of the latter-day Elijah will coincide with the holocaust period.

James, as he often does, foresees how in practice we may reason that fervent prayer isn't possible, because... we are angry, low, tired, don't feel like it. So we tell ourselves. But James cuts across all this: "Elijah was a man subject to like passions [RVmg "nature"] as we" - and yet *he* prayed earnestly (James 5:17). We can't excuse our lack of prayer by blaming it on the "passions" of our natures. Men like Elijah had the same nature as we do, prone to the same depression and mediocrity, and yet they prayed fervently.

Prayer is perhaps the area where it is easiest to have only a surface level of spirituality, without getting down to real faith, real perseverance in prayer, real wrestling with God. Elijah "prayed in his prayer" (James 5:17 AVmg.) reflects the Spirit's recognition that there is prayer, and real prayer. "Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer" (Ps. 64:1) seems to say the same: there is our true, pleading voice: and the outward form of prayer. The form of words we use, the outward form, conceals the *real* thing; the real groaning of spirit which is counted by God as the real prayer.

5:18 "And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (v.18). Again we are left to imagine when, where and how Elijah made this prayer, seeing that it is unrecorded. After his glorious triumph of faith on Carmel in the sight of all Israel, there appeared at last to be a significant repentance: "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Yahweh, He is the God", and promptly proceeded to massacre the priests of Baal. No doubt finding the four barrels of water to put on the sacrifice as the ritual required had involved considerable effort- making them reflect on the God whom they knew in their hearts provided rain. Elijah then went up to the solitude of the crags of Carmel, "cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees (in fervent prayer), and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea" for rain. This command was repeated seven times. Being a man of like passions as us, it took seven repeated prayers, a widow continually coming and not taking no for an answer, for there to be even an indication of a response. Thus Elijah's 'praying again' was for a lifting of the physical curse on the land because of their repentance. Note his running before Ahab's chariot as the rain started to come down, symbolic of his belief that by his repentance Ahab was the righteous king that he had come to herald (1 Kings 18:39,33,42-46). This same calibre of head-between-the-knees, up-in-the-mountain prayer, consistently repeated, would lead to the lifting of the sickness placed on the first century ecclesia. The heaven giving rain is associated with the earth bringing forth her fruit- miraculously, seeing that it is unlikely that anything had been planted in the previous three and a half years of total drought. Similarly God would act over and above their personal ability to develop spiritual fruit in them, given this basic prerequisite of total faith in prayer, based on the word truly dwelling in them as it did in Elijah. Similar victories of faith and repentance are just as possible for us, especially during the three and a half year period of tribulation which may well come upon us in the last days. James' specific, inspired mention of the three and a half year period of drought must be significant, as the duration of the drought is not mentioned in the Old Testament record. It is possible to historically demonstrate that there was a three and a half year period of especial difficulty in the land and among the Jews empire-wide before the final cataclysm of AD70; during this period the Jewish ecclesias would have had special opportunity to repent. The situation of AD70 is more than likely to be replicated in our last days. The way to ensure that we will stand up to that test is by each showing unlimited love and concern for the true spiritual welfare of our brother. The final two verses sum this up, and thereby the whole theme of the epistle.

5:19 "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (v.19,20). Erring from the truth in the terms of James' letter is not only limited to doctrinal deviance in the sense of 'first principles', but in showing a lack of love of each other and of the word, having a selfish materialism rather than a truly spiritual mind, and having a heart uninfluenced by the word, resulting in uncontrolled words and a lack of true compassion towards the Lord's brethren. In the context of the previous verses, James is giving extra incentive to pray for each other's repentance and forgiveness- such prayer as well as personal discussion and example

really can "convert him". This shows that to some degree our prayers can influence the spiritual state of another brother over and above his personal level of spirituality- given certain prerequisites. If this is not so, and we each totally determine our own spiritual destiny regardless of the effort of others, then these closing exhortations of James 5 are without purpose.

"Convert" here means literally 'to revert'. It is used in the New Testament particularly of the conversion of the Jews- i.e. a reverting of their hearts to the true spirit of their father Abraham (cp. Lk.1:17). Interestingly, Is.6:10 and Acts 28:27 talk of the Jews refusing to be sensitive to the word preached in the first century, and therefore not being healed- both physically and spiritually. This background of the word 'convert' nicely fits the context of James in its associating the ecclesia with the apostate Jewish world by which they were influenced, and warning that unless they were more sensitive to the word they would not be healed. By the same token those who did speak forth the word to try to convert their brethren were being classified along with Christ and the apostles, who also spoke the word to try to convert the Jews.

"If... one convert him, let him know..." sounds as if the brethren were not consciously trying to win converts- yet James encourages them that their conscious 'preaching' of the word to their wayward brethren and praying for them were all to the same effect as preaching, seeing that these brethren were spiritually dead anyway. By re-awakening them to a truly spiritual life they were saving their soul from death. The 'soul' here may mean the body or life, in the sense that ultimately acceptance at the judgment seat would mean that their "soul" or life would not die; however, it is more likely that the soul here refers to the spiritual record of the believer. The language of preaching- i.e. conversion and saving souls- is being used here about the upbuilding of brethren. The same style is found in Dan.12:3: "They that be wise (Heb. 'teachers', i.e. prudent guides) shall shine as the (stars)... and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars". 1 Thess.1:8 similarly speaks of the word of the Lord sounding out from the Thessalonian ecclesia- in the sense that all the ecclesias near and far were inspired by their evident faith. Thus it was their spiritual example to others that was their sounding out of the word. Another example is Phil.2:15 speaking of the ecclesia witnessing as lights in the world to "a crooked and perverse nation". A closer examination of this passage shows that this was through their holding forth the true word of life to the Judaizers amongst them. The specific nation referred to cannot be the Roman world in general, but rather the Jews. This suggestion is clinched by the fact that Paul is here quoting Dt.32:5, which is describing the apostate among the ecclesia in the wilderness as "a perverse and crooked generation". Thus Paul like James is using the language of preaching, to describe how they should work through the word and prayer to build up the apostate amongst the new Israel during their wilderness walk to the Kingdom. Likewise Acts 20:7 speaks of Paul "preaching unto" the Troas ecclesia in his breaking of bread exhortation. The language of preaching being used in upbuilding existing believers may help explain why Paul sometimes speaks to believers as if he is imparting basic doctrine to them; thus "Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor.15:51) was written to believers. Writing to the same ecclesia a while later there is more of the same: "As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5:20).

The exact parallel of these verses in James is found in 1Pet.4:7,8: "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (for each other, we may imply from the James parallel). And above all things have fervent charity (cp. fervent prayer, James 5:16- through which true love can be expressed) among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins". This parallel shows that fervent prayer for each other spiritually is the way fervent love is shown. Converting the erring brother will "hide a multitude of sins", alluding to Prov.10:12: "Love covereth all sins". True love is therefore shown by loving rebuke, rather than turning a blind eye. Truly "the end of all things is at hand" for us, as never before. There is a special need in our last days to show these qualities of true love to each other. We have to seriously ask ourselves personally whether we have that degree of selfless concern for the spiritual welfare of each other that we would climb mountains to find the solace conducive to prayer; to have our face between our knees in the

intensity of our pleading with God, for the sake of our brother's spiritual growth. Elijah and the brethren of the first century did this for men who were far gone in their declension; how much more motivated should we be for our far less errant brethren? Many of us do not have the fear of sin, both in ourselves and in our brethren, which leads us to such intensity of effort either for others or for ourselves in our own weaknesses. Surely each of us needs to assimilate more the idea of striving for God's glory in the conquest of the flesh. But this is the high challenge of the letter of James- to drive ourselves onwards to an altogether higher and fuller spirituality, which by its very nature concerns itself with the triumph of others in the day of judgment to the same extent as we care for our own.

Our 'conversion' of people doesn't just mean that we teach them true doctrine and see them baptized; the priests were to 'turn' [s.w. 'convert'] believers away from the life of sin and behind the way of God (Mal. 2:6 LXX, applied to all of us in James 5:19).

5:20 The book of Malachi stresses what the priesthood *should* have been like, compared to what it actually was. Indeed, many of the Old Testament prophecies against Israel are specifically aimed at the priests. The priests should have followed the example of the early descendants of Levi: "The law of truth (God's word- Jn.17:17) was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity" (Mal.2:5,6). These words are alluded to in James 5:20 concerning how we, as the new "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9) should turn our brethren from the error of their ways. This covenant was given on account of Eleazar's going in among the people to slay them, and thereby turning many others away from iniquity. He was not just showing an iron fist to those who were being disobedient; his real role was to turn men away from sin. As the future priests, our role will also be to execute the judgments written; but it will be to the end of bringing men to appreciate the seriousness of sin, and to turn them away from it. To this end, "the priests lips should *keep* knowledge (i.e. they shouldn't apostatize from it), and they should seek the (meaning of the) law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (Mal.2:7) by reason of accurately speaking forth His word. The priests were to use their knowledge of God's word to turn the people away from sin. If we have a real hate of sin and a true love of God's righteousness, we ought to have a burning wish to take the Gospel to the kids in the tower blocks, to the call girls and drug addicts. Yet we are frustrated by the knowledge that somehow they are deaf to God's word. The joy of the Kingdom is that we will be able to speak forth the word with convicting power within the community we rule over, and to see its very real effect.

The Lord spared Aaron because of Moses' intercession for him (Dt. 9:20); and this is perhaps the basis for James' appeal to pray for one another, that we may be healed, knowing that through our prayer and pastoral work for others, we can save a man from his multitude of sins and his soul from death (James 5:20). The very ability we have to do this for each other should register deeply with us. And in response, we should live lives dedicated to the spiritual welfare and salvation of our brethren.

1 PETER

1:1

James	1 Peter
1:3	1:7
1:1	1:1
1:10	1:24
1:12	1:7;3:14
1:25	1:12
1:18	1:23,3
1:17	1:3
1:2	1:8
1:12	1:9
1:17	1:12
1:21	2:1
Whole of James	1:13
1:14	1:14
1:17	1:23,25

Like James, Peter in both his letters is emphasizing the need to develop spiritual attributes in the light of the imminence of the Lord's coming; and he warns that false teachers would sidetrack them from the pursuit of real spirituality, which is a major theme of James.

Scattered- Gk. *diaspora*. The language used in this verse is all relevant to Jews living outside of Israel. The Greek translated “strangers” means just that- resident aliens. In v. 2, Peter speaks of them as “elect”, using a term the LXX uses for Israel- Ps. 105:43; Is. 65:9,15,22. However, Peter’s letter applies the titles of Old Testament Israel to the community of Israel [see e.g. on 1 Pet. 2:5], and describes all believers as “strangers” (1 Pet. 2:11). So the language used here in 1:1 doesn’t necessarily have to apply to natural Israel- it could be equally applicable to Gentile converts.

Pontus, Galatia... These were all areas where Paul had preached; Peter was writing to Paul’s converts, therefore he so often alludes to Paul’s writings to emphasize there was no essential division between them.

1:2 *sprinkling*- this begins a series of Passover allusions, most obvious in the reference to girding up our loins as Israel did on Passover night (v. 13). The allusions continue into chapter 2, where the body of believers are pictured as Israel having now crossed the Red Sea and declared to be God’s Kingdom as Israel were (1 Pet. 2:5 = Ex. 19:5,6). These evident Jewish allusions may suggest Peter was writing to a Jewish audience [see on 1:1], but was reframing their Jewishness, their being a separate people in the Gentile world, in terms of how all true Christians are no longer identified by their human ethnicity but by their membership in the newly formed “people of God”.

The election, foreknowledge and predestination of God is intended to lead to “obedience to Jesus Christ”. This is a pithy summary of Paul’s argument in Romans 8-11. The fact we are predestined and foreknown doesn’t mean we can therefore ignore spirituality in practice- the wonder of it is intended to inspire us to obedience in practice.

Elect- It has been argued that for lower class readers, especially slaves, the idea that they had been ‘elected’ would’ve been amazing- for ‘election’ was understood to have meant election to a specific office or role. For those whose lives were endless mundane work, this would’ve been an ennobling and inspirational idea.

1:3- see on 1 Thess. 1:2.

Hope- the Greek word translated “hope” doesn’t mean a mere possibility, a hoping for the best, a wish; the idea is specifically of confident, joyful expectancy.

Begotten us again- a clear reference to baptism connecting us with the resurrection of Jesus (Jn. 3:3-5). But even this in a sense was done to us by God’s mercy and grace.

1:4 *Incorruptible-* Peter uses this word three times in his letter. The word of God is “incorruptible seed” (1:23); the spiritual character developed within us by it is “incorruptible” (3:4); and we will be “incorruptible” for ever when we are given incorruptible bodies at the resurrection (1 Cor. 9:25; 15:52). The word of God which we can hold in our hands therefore has the power to give us incorruptible characters; which will be matched with incorruptible bodies at the Lord’s return. Who we are now is who we shall eternally be. In this sense we have the future inheritance within us now, insofar as we are spiritually minded. For to be such “is life”, it is the kind of life we shall eternally live (Rom. 8:6). Elsewhere Peter speaks of how even now we can be partakers of the glory which will only be revealed at the Lord’s return (5:1 cp. 1:5).

Reserved- our specific future reward has been prepared, as a chamber uniquely for us (Jn. 14:1-3), it exists in Heaven right now, and will be brought to us when the Lord Jesus returns to earth.

There are a series of allusions to Daniel which show him to be representative of all those in Christ:

1 Peter 1 (re. the saints)

Daniel

"An inheritance... reserved... for you" (v.4)

"Thou shalt... stand in thy lot (inheritance) at the end of the days" (12:13)

In heaviness of spirit (v.6)

Daniel's heaviness of spirit

"The proof of your faith... is proved by fire... unto praise and honour and glory" (v.7 RV)

The experience of Daniel's friends
Daniel praised, honoured and glorified (2:6 cp. 4:37)

"Whom having not seen ye love... now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice" (v.8)

The spirit of Daniel?

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (v.9)

Cp. Daniel's assurance of salvation (12:13)

"The prophets have enquired and searched

Peter was certainly writing here with his eye on

diligently... searching what manner of time the spirit... did signify" (v.10,11)

Daniel's enquiring and diligent searching "what manner of time" his prophecies referred to (8:15,27; 9:2; 12:8)

"Unto whom it was revealed (in response to their enquiries) that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister...

This is definitely alluding to Dan. 12:4, where Daniel is told that he cannot understand his own prophecies, but they will be understood by latter day believers to whom they will be relevant.

... which things the Angels desire to look into" (v.12)

Angelic interest in prophecy is mainly demonstrated in Daniel.

1:5 The fact that God so loves us is itself a limitation to Him. Because in any relationship, one person usually loves more than the other. And the one who loves the most- which is unquestionably God- has the least power. This is why He, the more powerful in physical terms, changes His mind to accommodate us. But the Almighty also allows His infinite power to become limited by our degrees of spirituality. We are kept "by the power of God through faith..." (1 Pet. 1:5); His power in practice is in some sense paralleled with and in that sense controlled by our faith.

Kept- to some extent, we are "kept" in the faith by God, and yet this doesn't mean we don't have to make any effort to believe- for we are kept "through [our] faith".

Revealed- a unique reward has been prepared for each of us (v.4) but we will only receive it when it is "revealed" at the return of Christ, "the last time". Salvation in this sense is uniquely personal- we shall each eternally "be" something different from anyone else, it's a Name given which nobody else can know except the one to whom it is given. It has been prepared, AV [misleadingly] "[made ready]" and is as it were stored with God in Heaven waiting for Jesus to return and give it to us. 1:5 says that salvation will be revealed at the last time; 5:1 says that "glory" will be then revealed. Salvation is about glorification in that God's glory is a reference to the things of His character (Ex. 34:5-6); and these things will be ultimately revealed in our eternal salvation. This is why loving those things now, to be spiritually minded, is of eternal consequence.

Last time- s.w. 1:20 "these last times", 2 Pet. 3:3 "the last days" before Christ's return. Peter therefore thought that he was living in the last days before Messiah would return, and / or that the predicted events of AD70 were the "last days" of Judah's commonwealth and the Mosaic system of things.

Whatever else it referred to in its local context, the gift of the Spirit promised after baptism in Acts 2 was related to forgiveness and the subsequent hope of salvation. At baptism we rise in prospect as Christ rose, to total victory over sin. In prospect, all our sins were forgiven. As forgiveness is a spiritual gift, or gift of the Spirit, it follows that in some way we receive this at baptism. The continuation of this gift is conditional upon our using faith to keep it active on our behalf. We are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (alluding to our baptism), to an inheritance (a place in the future Kingdom)... reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power (spirit) of God *through faith* unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet.1:3-5). That faith comes from our response to the word (Rom.10:17); thus again we see the same process, of our freewill obedience to the word resulting in God's spiritual help being made available to us to keep us from "falling from grace", from falling away from those great gifts of forgiveness and salvation which we receive, in prospect, at baptism. Yet in no way does God irresistibly regenerate us from baptism.

1:6 Those believers both ‘rejoiced’ and were “in heaviness” at one and the same time. Many of us will realize how this almost schizophrenic experience is indeed part of living the spiritual life encased in flesh and within an unspiritual society.

What were the varied and complex [AV “manifold”] tribulations affecting the [Jewish?] believers in the areas of v.1 in the leadup to AD70? Wherein “you greatly rejoice” uses the same word as in Mt. 5:12, where the Lord taught that we should “greatly rejoice” when being reviled, persecuted and falsely accused. This great rejoicing can occur whilst we feel “in heaviness”, and so the promised Christian joy isn’t necessarily a case of face-cracking smiles, grins and giggly laughter. Note that the same word is used in 4:13 for how we shall be glad with exceeding joy when Christ is finally revealed at the last day. The joy we shall have then should in essence be within us now, although it is elicited by our experience of severe trial.

1:7- see on 1 Pet. 3:15.

1 Pet. 1:7 speaks of "our faith" being found worthy of praise at the appearing of Jesus. But in this life, choosing the life of faith as opposed to the legalism of neo-Judaism will also result in "the praise of God" (Jn. 12:43). Likewise Rom. 2:29 speaks of receiving praise of God for choosing to circumcise our heart rather than resting content with being a Jew outwardly.

Found- the Greek implies discovery by testing. The day of judgment will not as it were teach our Judge anything. He knows all, right now. Who, then, will discover things about us which lead them to give us honour and glory in that day? Surely our brothers and sisters in Christ, for the judgment process will in some sense occur before all. It could also feasibly refer to the Angels who will also be present at the judgment.

We will receive blessing, glory and honour when Jesus returns and we come before Him- but these very same Greek words are used about the blessing, glory and honour which is now given to Jesus personally (Rev. 5:12,13; 7:12). His victory will be counted to us. We will receive blessing and honour from Jesus as He goes through our deeds and commends us for them (Mt. 25:37).

Perishes- s.w. “is marred” Mk. 2:22. The whole idea of gold is that it doesn’t get marred and thus destroyed; but compared to the value of our faith being accepted by the Judge of all, gold is corruptible and of no value.

Tried with fire- Our tribulations in this life are the “fire” which tries our faith; and yet 1 Cor. 3:13 states that our trial by fire will occur at the final judgment. Our response to trials in this life is therefore a foretaste of the final day of judgment.

1:8 Whom having not seen, Peter writes, we love and believe in (1 Pet. 1:8). Peter almost implies that His very invisibility is what makes us love Him, through His revelation to us in Scripture, in the way He seeks us to. We believe in Him because He is presently invisible to us; for faith is belief in what cannot be seen (Heb. 11:1-3).

Full of glory- RVmg: “glorified”. We rejoice now *as if* we have already been glorified; the joy of the Kingdom, of acceptance at judgment day, can be ours now.

Not seen- the same Greek words were used by Peter in each of his denials when he said “I *know not* what you say... the man” (Mt. 26:70,72,74). Here we have a perhaps unconscious reference by Peter back to his denials. Or he could be implying ‘Although we at times don’t know Him in that we deny Him, we love Him’. For in this very context, as Jesus three times undid the denials by asking Peter ‘Do you love me?’, Peter had insisted that although he had said ‘I don’t see / know the man’, he did in fact “love” Jesus. Seeing that Jesus was in eyesight of Peter- for the Lord turned and looked upon Peter when the cock crowed- Peter may literally have been appearing totally disinterested in Jesus and not looking at Him, whereas the eyes of those around Peter would all have been turned toward Jesus as the obvious figure of interest on the scene. In this case it would’ve been Peter’s not seeing Jesus which gave him away. Oddly enough, those same words “not seen” or

‘know not’ are assigned to Peter at the transfiguration (Mk. 9:6). Perhaps all of this was subconsciously in Peter’s mind, and only the kind of literary analysis of his words which we’re now attempting brings it out- more clearly to us than he himself perhaps ever felt.

Unspeakable- The Greek implies ‘which cannot be told to others’ [cp. Acts 23:22]. There’s an element in our relationship with the Father and Son which cannot be shared with others because it’s so very personal- and it will issue in a name written which nobody knows except the Lord and ourselves.

1:9- see on 1 Pet. 3:15.

Receiving- Peter’s other usages of this word are about our receiving reward at the future day of judgment (1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:13). But the essence of judgment is going on right now- God sits enthroned as judge of all and in this sense, in prospect, our rewards are given. Salvation is given at the last day (1:5), yet we in prospect can receive it now.

1:10 A clear equation of prophets and Angels is found by comparing 1 Pet. 1:10 and 12: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently... which things the Angels (also) desire to look into", referring to the Cherubim Angels peering down intently into the blood on the mercy seat, the "salvation" which the prophets searched after. In the parable of redemption contained in getting a wife for Isaac, the servant went to seek our Rebecca, representing the prophets going to take us out of the world to begin a wilderness journey to our new husband. He must surely represent the word taking us out of the world; yet he was led by an Angel (Gen. 24:7), suggesting the Angels work through the word they inspire to bring us out of the world. Other passages relevant to this theme of Angels giving the Word of God are Ex. 23:22; Num. 22:35; 23:17; 24:1,2; Heb. 2:2. See on 2 Sam. 23:1-3.

The prophets weren’t just passive fax machines, unquestioningly accepting the material they were to speak forth. They enquired into and explored it, like Habakkuk entering dialogue with God concerning the message he was being asked to speak forth. “The prophets” may not refer to Old Testament prophets but instead to the New Testament prophets, i.e. those given the gift of prophecy [the Greek word refers to the speaking out or speaking forth of God’s word rather than specifically predicting the future]. However, 1:11,12 imply these were the Old Testament prophets who are referred to.

The grace- Salvation is grace, and grace is salvation. God’s grace was something which the prophets wished to explore further.

1:11- see on Mk. 14:35.

Sufferings- Peter three times uses this word to describe the “sufferings of Christ” (4:13; 5:1). His sufferings were a major theme with Peter, because he had personally witnessed them (so 1 Pet. 5:1 implies).

They ‘searched out’ the things of the Lord’s death and resurrection- and yet verses 9 and 10 said they searched out the things of our salvation by grace. As they reflected upon the sufferings of Messiah which they were predicting, they came to marvel at the grace and surety of salvation that was implicit in them. Our reflection on the Lord’s sufferings should lead to the same. Those prophets searched out the sufferings of Christ “and the glory that should follow”. Perhaps that “glory” refers to the grace and our salvation by grace which followed as a result of His sufferings.

“Spirit of Christ”- This doesn’t mean that the Christ existed at their time. The “spirit” is one, in essence; the things of God’s Spirit are the essence of the character of Christ, all the things He stood for, thought about, taught, lived and breathed- were and are the things of God’s Spirit. The Spirit of God which was in the prophets therefore was the spirit which was later to be in Christ personally; it was the spirit of Christ in that all the prophets spoke of Christ in various ways.

Testified beforehand- the Greek used here carries the idea of predicting the future- which the word translated 'prophecy' doesn't. That one strictly means to speak out God's word.

1:12 *Sent down from Heaven*- a reference to Pentecost. It was those who received the Holy Spirit in this way who had taught the readership to whom Peter is here writing. The list of geographical areas in v.1 is similar to the areas present at the day of Pentecost in Acts 2- perhaps Peter's letter was a follow up to those baptized in Jerusalem at Pentecost who had now returned to their homes?

The Holy Spirit working within the Old Testament prophets was saying the same thing as the Holy Spirit in the New Testament prophets, even if it worked in a different way.

Angels desire to look into- a reference to the cherubim Angels looking down upon the blood of atonement [representing the sufferings of Christ] sprinkled on the mercy seat. "Look into" is the same word used of Peter's stooping down and looking into the tomb of the risen Lord (Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:5). Perhaps this was an unconscious allusion- to an event and a reality which must've been emblazoned in his consciousness, as the Lord's resurrection should likewise be in ours.

1:13 Peter's letters are full of reference to the cross and various physical aspects of the trial and mocking of the Lord which he witnessed firsthand (5:1). "Girding ourselves with humility" 1 Pet. 1:13 is a reference to what the Lord did at the last supper (s.w. Jn. 13:5), although then, Peter had so misunderstood what He had done. Other examples in 1:19; 2:20; 2:22; 2:23; 2:24; 3:18; 4:1; 5:3.

Well does the NCV translate Prov. 4:23: "Be careful what you think because your thoughts run your life". We are to gather together "the loins of your mind" (1 Pet. 1:13), make a conscious effort to analyze our thinking, get a grip on it and gather it together into Christ.

The eating of the meal with girded loins (Ex. 12:11,13) is seen by Peter as meaning we should have our *minds* girded, gathered up, in place and order (1 Pet. 1:13). Note how 1 Peter is replete with Passover allusions (1:17 cp. sojourning with fear in Egypt; 1:18 silver and gold taken from Egypt; 1:19 the Passover lamb; 1:23 corruptible seed= leaven; 2:9,10 cp. leaving Egypt at night, led from darkness to the glory of Sinai, where they became a nation. The Passover night is alluded to in the New Testament as being typical of the spirit which we ought to have in daily life as we await the Lord's return. They were to eat it with their clothes girded together ready to up and go, huddled together in their family / ecclesial units, focused upon the slain Passover lamb in their midst which was to be their salvation. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind... and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ... forasmuch as ye know that ye were [redeemed] with... the precious blood of Christ, as of a [Passover] lamb without blemish" (1 Pet. 1:13,18,21). "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return... that they may open unto him immediately" (Lk. 12:35,36). In order to be ready to quit this life at any moment, with no looking back after the pattern of Lot's wife, we need to live in a daily spirit of urgent awareness of our position, living as we do in Egyptian darkness. 1 Peter 1 is packed with Passover and exodus allusions; v. 13 interprets the girding of loins: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you". The sober minds of those families on that night, their thoughts like their garments pulled together and tightly bound, should resemble the type of mind control which we exercise in the face of our Lord's return.

Hope to the end- i.e. hope completely. Our hope is to consume us, and not be a vague feeling which we are occasionally enthusiastic about.

1:14 *Fashioning yourselves*- God is the potter and we are the clay, and yet we also have some degree of mastery over the shape our characters and destinies will turn into.

Lusts- Peter uses this word eight times in his two short letters. He speaks of how he had once lived in lust (4:3), and he seems to have understood our lusts as what define us and shape our lives. There

can also be positive 'lusts' - our dominant desire and deepest passions are to be for the spirit and not the flesh.

1:15 The Hebrew idea of holiness suggests both separation *from* [unholy things] and separation *unto* [holy things]- it's not all negative.

1:16 This could be a quotation from several parts of Leviticus. But they are all telling the priests, the Levites, to "be holy". As all believers are now part of the new priesthood, such verses and concepts which were relevant only to the priests are now applicable to us all.

1:17 Peter had found it hard to accept that truly "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:37). And, as was well known, there had come a time when he had slipped back into the old mindset, and had once again respected persons by refusing to break bread with Gentiles. And yet he reminds his Jewish readers that their prayers ascend to a Father "who without respect of persons judgeth according to *every man's* work" (i.e. Jew or Gentile, 1 Pet. 1:17). He was asking them to learn what he had so slowly and falteringly come to accept as the articulation of the very same grace to the Gentiles which had been his salvation too.

It has been demonstrated that the record of the exile from the land is framed in terms of the exile from Eden; the offer of return to the land is therefore an offer of paradise restored, fellowship with God renewed- for those who wanted it. Let's remember that the exiles were symbols of us. We in this life are passing through "the time of our exile" (1 Pet. 1:17 RSV).

We are all parts of the same body, branches on the same vine, bricks in the same building; we are all strangers and pilgrims, lacking any rights of a citizen (1 Pet. 1:17 Gk.). We are all members of the same priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), with equal responsibility to offer up acceptable sacrifice. Don't miss the power of this to New Testament Jewish ears: the special responsibilities of the priests were now applied to *every* believer.

The trial of our faith is going on now; the judgment will simply formally reveal the verdict which is now being arrived at. The Father judges now "according to every man's work" (1 Pet. 1:17), as He did in OT times: "Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Ps. 62:12). Yet when His Son returns, He will give every man "according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). It couldn't be clearer: the judgment is going on now, and the Lord Jesus returns to give us the reward which has been 'judged' appropriate for us. With this background, Peter drives home the almost inevitable practical lesson: "... [therefore] pass the time of your sojourning here in fear". Now Yahweh's eyes judge and examine the righteous, as He sits enthroned; and He *will*, at the future day of judgment, rain sulphur upon the head of the wicked and chase them away with His brining wind (Ps. 11:4-6 RV- reference to the Angel of the Lord chasing the rejected away?).

God will judge every man's work "forasmuch as ye know that ye were... redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb slain..." (1 Pet. 1:17-19). The link between our judgment and Christ's death needs to be reflected upon here. Our appreciation ("forasmuch...") of the cross is related to how we will be judged. The Lord's death should influence our works and therefore it is intimately related to our final judgment. We will be judged in accordance with how far we have let the cross influence our daily works.

Baptism can never be undone; as a result of that covenant statement before God, we for evermore live our lives with a sense of responsibility to Him. "If ye call [upon yourselves] on the [name of] the Father [an allusion to baptism into the Father's Name]... pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: *forasmuch* as ye know [i.e. the more you realize this, the more you will live in fear / reverence] that ye... were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:17-19).

1:18- see on Lk. 24:21.

Do we feel that life is just pointless, an endless round of childcare, working all day doing in essence the same job for 30 years, a trudging through an endless tunnel until our mortality catches up on us?

We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from the “vain way of life handed down from the fathers” (1 Pet. 1:18), from the frustration of this present life. The word used for “vain” is that used by the LXX for the ‘vanity’ of life as described in Ecclesiastes, and for idol worship in Lev. 17:7 and Jer. 8:19. We have been redeemed from it all! Not for us the life of endlessly chasing the rainbow’s end, slavishly worshipping the idols of ever bigger homes, smarter technology... we were redeemed from the vanity of life “under the sun” by the precious blood of Christ. We were bought out of this slavery, even if in the flesh we go through its motions. Knowing this, we the redeemed, the bought out from vanity, shouldn’t spend our hours in front of the television or doing endless crosswords, or frittering away the time of life as the world does. James foresaw that a man could appear to be religious, and yet have a religion that was “vain” (James 1:26)- because he didn’t appreciate that the cross has bought him out of vanity.

New life is always needed. This is why in our daily reading and fellowship with our Lord, as we enter ever more deeply into His character, we are challenged afresh daily. We aren’t professionals, committee members, in this drive for spirituality. We are amateurs at heart, children, wide eyed with wonder at what we are being shown, ever moving on to some fresh endeavour. Our spiritual new life need never become a mere routine, a burden, a duty to be performed, a habit. For “[in the heart] where the spirit of the Lord [Jesus] is, there the heart is free” (2 Cor. 3:17); we were brought out from the pointless, repetitive bondage of Egypt by the blood of Christ. What this means is not that red liquid somehow did something for us; His example of death, how He was there, inspires us to break out from the vain way of life we received by tradition from our fathers (1 Pet. 1:18). We alone, as true believers in the representative nature of His sacrifice, are thereby empowered to break out of the routine of our lives.

1:19 1 Pet. 1:18,19 sets the blood of Christ in utter opposition to materialism; the very historical fact of His cross of itself means a rejection of material things. We are familiar enough with the way in which Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea represents our redemption in Christ. Their response when they got the other side was to willingly sacrifice the riches of Egypt which they had brought with them; they gave them to the Lord’s work, so that the tabernacle could be built up. Israel’s exodus and establishment as God’s Kingdom at Sinai was the prototype of the early church’s experience. They too, for the sheer joy of the Truth, resigned their material possessions. The merchant man for the sheer joy of finding the beautiful pearl sells *all* he has, for the pure excellency of possessing just that one pearl (Mt. 13:44-46).

1:21 Peter writes of “your obedience of the truth unto [issuing in] unfeigned love of the brethren... having been begotten again... of incorruptible seed, through the word of God” (1 Pet. 1:21,22 RV). The purity and truth of the “word of God” - and by this he surely refers to the Gospel message- is what issues in a true love for others, in comparison to the pseudo-love that fills our human experience in this world. Truth leads to true love- that’s the message. This is the importance of doctrine. And yet how often have we used the concept of ‘truth’ to hate and divide our brethren...? John’s writings reflect many struggles. But in the end they all forge into one ultimate struggle- between light and darkness, love and hatred, truth and error, life and death. Hence the struggle for purity of doctrine becomes parallel with the struggle between love and hatred. Love is therefore and thereby connected with purity of doctrine.

Nearly everyone in the first century believed in the God-idea. There were very few atheists. Hence the radical nature of statements like 1 Pet. 1:21: we “through him [Jesus] are believers in God”, because God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord inspires faith in the Father to such an extent that anyone whose faith in ‘God’ is not based on the risen Jesus does not actually count as a believer in God.

1:22- see on 2 Cor. 6:6.

We obeyed the truth "unto unfeigned love of the brethren... [therefore] see that ye love one another" (1 Pet. 1:22). Our obedience to the truth of Christ placed us in the status of those who unfeignedly love their brethren; but this means, Peter is saying, that we'd better get on and love them in practice.

Jonah 2:9 contains the enigmatic statement that those who "hold to empty faiths" (Heb.) "forsake their own *hesed*". *Hesed* basically refers to the capacity a superior has to show mercy, grace and love to someone in an inferior position. For over 20 years I wondered what Jonah was really getting at. I think I then grasped it- those who hold to empty faiths forego the capacity to show *hesed*, favour to others- the implication being that the result of the one *true* faith is that we are empowered to show *hesed*, love, favour, grace, mercy, to others. And this ties in perfectly with 1 Pet. 1:22- we obey the truth *unto*, with the result that, we show "unfeigned love of the brethren". This is how and where true doctrine comes to its ultimate term- love of others. Karl Barth put it powerfully: "The best theology would need no advocates: it would prove itself". If each doctrine of the Gospel had its intended outworking in our lives, there would be no need for the explanation of Gospel doctrine; the doctrines would be lived out in our personalities. Perhaps this was why there was so little 'theology', propositional truths or academic doctrine, on the lips of the Lord Jesus. For He was the word of the Gospel made flesh. To quote Barth again: "Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do. He is Himself the way".

The experience of the grace which brought about the forgiveness of our sins will make us gentle people, kind hearted, generous, not hard-minded in our judgment of situations; it will make us dedicate ourselves to the work of sharing this superb grace with others through preaching, and will inspire us to work unceasingly to reclaim those who have wandered away from the grace of God, and to build up those who hesitate to fully accept it. As God has reached out into our little world, so we will try to do in the lives of those around us. The end result of obeying the truth is "unfeigned love of the brethren... love (of) one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). "Ye were running well; who did hinder you, that ye should not [keep on] obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7) suggests that obeying the Truth is not just in baptism; it is an ongoing motivation to keep running the race of practical life in Christ. We "love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again..." (1 Pet. 1:23). Love of the brotherhood is in the end the result and guarantee of the new birth. We are asked not to receive God's grace in vain, nor do despite unto the spirit [power] of grace. These phrases surely suggest that the experience of grace is a compulsion to action, which we can resist but ought rather to allow to work in us to bring forth fruit. The [Gospel of the] Kingdom of God and our relation to it now ought to bring forth fruit in us (Mt. 21:43). It isn't just a set of true propositions.

1:23- see on Job 22:27,28; Lk. 8:11.

Peter clearly held the conception of baptism as an ongoing process; he speaks of how we have already been born again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Christ (a clear reference to baptism), and yet goes on to say that having obeyed the truth, we must go on in being (continuous tense) born again by the work of God's word (1 Pet. 1:3,23). See on Col. 2:6; Gal. 3:27.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth (accepting the basic doctrines)... see that ye (continue) being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God... and this is the word which by the Gospel (true basic doctrines) is preached unto you" (1 Pet.1:22-25). Note the continuous tense of "*is*", remembering that Peter is writing to those already converted. The once off act of intercourse and begettall, whereby the seed or sperm initiates new life, is here spoken of in the continuous sense. Similarly, a sower sowing seed is a once-off act, yet the parable has an ongoing application. Human "seed" and begettall is "corruptible" (1 Pet.1:23)- i.e. the offspring does not have the exact character of the person from whom the seed originated. Yet God's seed is "incorruptible" in that it will eventually result in our being brought forth in the exact image of God after the judgment, when we are fully born of Spirit nature. This is because "the word (seed) of

God... liveth and abideth for ever", i.e. God's word can have constant intercourse with us, constantly creating us after the image of our spiritual Father.

The word is to be made flesh in us as it was in the Lord. "The word" in the New Testament often refers to the basic Gospel rather than every inspired word which there is in the whole Bible. "The word of God (a title of Jesus)... the word of the Lord... is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:23,25 RV). It is this word of the basic Gospel which is the "milk of the word" which enables us to "put away therefore all malice... guile... hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1,2). And having spoken of tasting / drinking the word of God (the same figure is in Heb. 6:5), Peter then speaks of tasting the grace of the Lord Jesus (2:3). He is the word of the Gospel made flesh- to taste His Gospel, the word, is to taste of Him.

1:24 We shouldn't see the mortality of man and the true meaning of the Hebrew word *nephesh* as a negative thing that we unfortunately have to tell people who believe their loved ones are alive in Heaven. "The voice" tells Isaiah to cry. "And I said, What shall I cry?" (Is. 40:6 LXX; RVmg.). What was to be the message of Isaiah's Gospel? The voice addresses Isaiah as "O thou that tellest good tidings", and tells him the good news he is to preach. It is that "All flesh is grass... the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever". The reality of man's mortality is the backdrop against which we can see the eternity of God and the offer made to us through His abiding word that we really can escape from our condition. Christian preaching about "man is mortal" need not be bad news. The message can be turned into good news! For it was this message of mortality which prepared the way for men to accept Christ (Is. 40:3-5); the mountains of human pride are made low by this message so that we can accept salvation in Christ. 1 Pet. 1:24 RVmg. quotes these verses and concludes that we are being offered salvation through "the word of the God who liveth for ever" - the Gospel that is prefaced by the message of human mortality. God's eternity and man's mortality are placed side by side- and thus the way is prepared for the wonder of the fact that through "the word" of Jesus, of the Gospel, we the mortal are invited to share in that immortality.

2:1 *laying aside*- this is the same Greek word used by Paul when he says that we should "put away" the very same things- deceit, lying, malice etc. (Eph. 4:22,25; Col. 3:8). The connections are so close that it would seem Peter is purposefully repeating Paul's words- as if to show that although Paul had publically rebuked him, he still respected him and agreed with Paul's moral teaching and understanding of the Gospel. At times we do have to go out of our way to emphasize our abiding respect for those with whom we've had disagreements.

Peter says we must 'lay aside' malice, unkind words, deceit etc. *so that* we can receive the word of the Gospel and be built up by it. James 1:21 uses the same Greek word in the same context- we are to 'lay aside' bad habits and "receive with meekness the engrafted word". Our ongoing response to the word of the Gospel will be limited if we are living deceitful lives and speaking hard words against others.

"Laying aside" isn't only negative- these things are to be laid aside and replaced with the milk of the word; James 1:21 says likewise- lay aside these things and receive God's word. Heb. 12:1 exhorts to 'lay aside' [s.w.] the weight of our sins and run the race looking towards Jesus as our personal example. We are to 'lay aside' these things as a garment, and put on Christ, the new man (Eph. 4:22-25; Col. 3:8-10); casting off [s.w.] the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light (Rom. 13:12). All these passages make the point that we are not to simply discard sin but to replace it with something positive. "Holiness" means both separation *from* and separation *unto* the positive things of God.

Peter was carried away with the "dissimulation" of the Judaizers (Gal. 2:13), and he uses the same word when he appeals to the brethren to lay aside "all hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1); he was asking them

to do what he himself had had to do. He had been a hypocrite, in living the life of legalism within the ecclesia whilst having the knowledge of grace.

All malice... all guile- “All” refers to ‘every kind of’. Peter foresees the tendency to lay aside one form of guile, malice etc.- and think we’re done.

2:2 ‘Be babes’ he exhorts, ‘and grow as they do’ (1 Pet. 2:2). The same word occurs in Lk. 18:15 in description of the “infants” whom Peter rebuked. The Lord’s response had been to tell Peter to be like them (Lk. 18:17). And, having been humbled into learning something of a child’s teachableness, a babe’s desire for the sincere milk, Peter now asks others to learn the lesson.

As *newborn babes* could suggest that Peter is writing to recently baptized converts. Hebrews criticizes some for needing milk and not meat, despite having been converted for some time; whilst Peter commends his readership to the milk.

Sincere- ‘without guile’, *a-dolos*. The Greek word is the negative participle of that translated “guile” in v. 1, *dolos*. The word of God is *without guile* and so to be influenced by it, we must lay aside *guile*. The attitude with which we come to the word of the Gospel is therefore crucial in determining how we will be affected by it.

James 1:18 speaks of “the word of truth”, the inspired word of the basic Gospel message. But he goes on to appeal for us to be “doers of the word” (James 1:22,23). “The word” must be that of v. 18- the word of the Gospel. He sensed the tendency to accept the word of God as true, to show this by baptism: and yet not to be “doers” of that word of the basic Gospel. It is in this sense that the word of the Gospel is what we grow by (1 Pet. 2:2 cp. 1:23,25; 2:8; 3:1); by our daily response to the most basic things which we have understood and claim to believe, we will grow spiritually. When we were baptized, we read the simple Biblical statements about baptism and obeyed them. That translation from Bible reading into practice is something which we thenceforward struggle to maintain for the rest of our lives. There is a power in the inspired word, whereby one mind- God’s- can penetrate another with no intermediary but a piece of flattened wood pulp, black print on white paper. It’s an amazing phenomena to be part of. Leo Tolstoy in his spiritual autobiography *A Confession* tells in gripping manner how he read the words of Jesus “Sell everything you have and give to the poor” and then finally overcame all the restraints of his nature to do just that. He freed his serfs, gave away the copyrights to his writings and began to dispose of his huge estate. Words on paper must likewise lead to action in us. The more familiar we become with the text of Scripture by daily reading, the stronger is the temptation to become blasé, and not read the word expecting to be taught something new, expecting to be challenged to change.

Grow thereby- Perhaps Peter was concerned that his newly converted audience would forget the basic Gospel which had converted them, whereas he knew that only by attention to this “milk of the word” would they find spiritual growth. “Thereby” suggests that the milk of the word is the agency of growth- we neglect it at our spiritual peril. Many of Peter’s audience were likely illiterate, so he wasn’t necessarily commanding ‘Bible study’, as in reading of black print on white paper [most converts wouldn’t have had their own scrolls anyway], but rather was he urging meditation upon the principles of the Gospel, the milk of the word. With this in mind, none of us can excuse ourselves by saying we have no time or opportunity to ‘do Bible study’. Feeding on the milk of the word is a matter of reflection and meditation.

In Jeremiah’s time, gossiping was associated with ‘proceeding from evil to evil’ (Jer. 9:3); it is part of a downward spiral of spirituality. Once gossip starts a quarrel, it’s like water bursting out of a dam; soon the whole land of Israel will be flooded (Prov. 17:14 NIV). So it’s best not to start it, not only for our own sakes, but because of the effect it will have on the rest of the body. Peter likewise points an antithesis between gossiping and receiving “the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:1,2). Real spiritual growth is impossible if we are taken up with gossiping; and this is true on the communal as well as individual level.

2:3- see on Rom. 2:4.

The GNB puts this verse as a quotation of Ps. 34:8: "As the scripture says, "You have found out for yourselves how kind the Lord is"". Tasting that the Lord is good is a reference to first conversion- that was a mere taster, the best is ahead.

1 Pet. 2:3 describes desiring "the sincere milk of the word" as *tasting* the grace of the Lord, through knowing "the word of his grace" Acts 20:32). Peter may well be alluding to Heb. 6:4,5 concerning *tasting* "the Heavenly gift", *tasting* "the good word of God", which parallels being "made partakers of the Holy Spirit". Thus the word is connected to the gift of the Spirit, a connection made all the stronger once we realize that the Greek word for "grace" sometimes refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious- Gk. *chrestos*, just one vowel different from *Christos* [Christ- as in v. 5]. Seeing Peter was writing for a largely illiterate audience who would've heard his words rather than read them, it would appear that this play on words is intentional. Once we have tasted the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, really tasted it at our conversion, then we will desperately and eagerly crave more of Him, and thus will desire the sincere milk of the word. The allusion is to how once a newborn baby has tasted its' mother's milk, it is as it were hooked on it. This, of course, is how things *should* be after our conversion, but there's nothing automatic about it. "If so be" that we have *really* tasted His grace, then we will naturally be hooked for more. Conversion, therefore, isn't joining a denomination or mastering a set of theology- it is in essence a personal tasting of grace. Heb. 6:4,5 appears to be a related passage, and there we read of tasting the Word of God. It is there, in the basic Gospel which is that "good word of God", that we learn of God's grace and taste it for ourselves; and that exposure to God's word, if we really 'get it', will lead us to desire the milk of the word further.

2:4 *disallowed*- the Greek implies rejected after a test or inspection. This would hint that the Jewish 'builders' (v.7), those given the job of building up God's spiritual house / His people, were intended to have accepted Jesus and built up God's house upon Him. But instead they considered Him and rejected Him. Many questions and issues are opened up by the thought that they *ought to have accepted Him as God intended*- and not crucified Him.

Precious- the idea of a precious foundation stone (v.7) recurs elsewhere only in Rev. 21:19, where we read that the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem are decorated with "precious stones", i.e. gemstones. 'Precious stone' therefore suggests a gemstone, the kind of small stones which might possibly be used to extravagantly decorate a corner stone. But Jesus is being likened to one huge 'precious stone' which is itself the cornerstone and not just the cosmetic decoration. It may be that the idea of a 'living stone' alludes to the impression which gemstones have of being alive in the way they refract light. This is all a visual image and literary device which expresses the utter greatness and huge value of the Lord Jesus.

2:5 *ye also*- You plural. We are not just individually built up, it is the entire community which is built up collectively, so that the collective temple of believers becomes a framework, a structure, in which God can be glorified. He is glorified by us collectively, not just as individuals.

We are built up by others' building us up (s.w. 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Cor. 8:1; 10:23; 14:4,17 s.w.)- and yet we are built up by God through His word. God chooses to work through others to do His work of building up- and if those builders fail in the work, or do things to others which do not build up (as in 1 Cor. 8:1; 10:23; 14:4,17) then His work remains undone, not completed- and others really do suffer the consequences. God has chosen to do *His* work through us, rather than directly. And this has consequences and responsibilities.

The language of a church or spiritual house being built upon a stone is obviously an allusion by Peter to the words spoken to him in Mt. 16:18. In the building analogy, the living stones come to a larger and greater "living stone", the Lord Jesus (2:4) and are built upon *Him*. So Peter is almost at

pains to point out that it's not him personally who's the foundation of this new building- but the Lord Jesus.

Living stones- we are living stones, the Lord Jesus is *the* living stone, 2:4. The identity of nature between the Lord Jesus and the believers is being gently emphasized.

Peter in his pastoral letters (which were probably transcripts of his words / addresses) makes many references back to his own failures, and on the basis of having now even more powerfully learnt his lesson, he can appeal to his brethren. And so it should be in our endeavours for our brethren. Paul had warned him that by adopting the Judaist stance, he was *building again* what had been destroyed (Gal. 2:18). And Peter with that in mind can urge the brethren to *build up* the things of Christ and His ecclesia (1 Peter 2:5,7 s.w.), rather, by implication, that the things of the world and its philosophy.

Every Israelite was intended to be a priest; they were to be "a Kingdom of priests". The "covenant of my peace" was with both Israel (Is. 54:10) and the priesthood (Mal. 2:5). The same is true of spiritual Israel; "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5). The process of baptism recalls the way in which the priests washed and then embarked on service to the rest of Israel. Christ is the supreme priest; but because we are "in Him", we too have some part in the priesthood. See on Rom. 12:1.

We don't have a head office that dictates belief and practice, nor a system of paid pastorship or priesthood- quite simply, because we're all priests. As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: "Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11). Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord... praise ye the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

Our offerings are acceptable to God by (Gk. *dia*, "in", on account of) Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5); by / by being in Christ we offer to God the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). The fact we come unto God directly *dia*, "by", through, on account of the Lord Jesus does not mean that therefore Christ must interpret our every word to God; it cannot mean that in prayer we cannot come directly to the Father. If this were so, the Lord's model prayer would be seriously lacking in its omission of any such clause which reminds us that we are praying to God through the mediation / interpretation of Christ. If English and Greek mean anything, the Lord categorically stated that He does *not* transfer our prayers to God; through Him, as a result of His work, we have a direct approach to God: "Ye shall ask *me* nothing... Ye shall ask [the Father] *in* my name (i.e. because you are located there, in that position / relation): and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you" (Jn. 16:23,26,27). Christ does not pray for us in the sense of offering up our words of request to the Father; He prays for us, according to Rom. 8, of His own freewill, with His own agenda, not ours. The aim of His suffering and Heavenly mediation today, is that He might "bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). This refers to His reconciliation of us to the Father, rather than His offering of our prayers. Because we are in His Name, on account of ("by") Him and His work, we can pray directly to the Father. He does not pray the Father for us.

Offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God- there would seem a connection with Rom. 15:16, which speaks of us as priestly ministers offering up Gentile converts as an acceptable sacrifice. The sacrifices which are offered to God therefore include the converts made and the lives transformed by the collective work of the body of Christ. In this sense, it's rare that one individual totally converts and disciples someone to eternity- it's usually that different members of the church play different roles in this process. The temple, or in another figure the body of Christ, is built up *so that* this kind of thing can be achieved.

2:6 *not be confounded / ashamed*- i.e. at the day of judgment, when the wicked shall slink away in shame. When Peter later writes that our false accusers will be "ashamed" [s.w.] , he likewise has in view the day of judgment- for slanderers appear to prosper in this life (1 Pet. 3:16). Hope [of acceptance by Christ in the last day] makes us unashamed [s.w.- Rom. 5:5]. Belief that we shall be unashamed in that day because of how Christ's righteousness is and shall be imputed to us- this leads us to being unashamed here and now. See on 2:22.

Peter of all people would've struggled with feeling ashamed as a result of his public denial of the Lord. Unless he had dealt with that shame, it would surely have been a psychological impossibility for him to stand up before mass audiences and preach so powerfully that he converted and baptized thousands in a day, became the leader of the early church, then lived a life of preaching and pastoral care resulting in him writing inspired letters which were largely critical of the audience he wrote to. He dealt with his shame by believing in the forgiveness and acceptance of Jesus- and he was the parade example of such a believer who would not be ashamed.

2:7- see on Jn. 12:3.

Precious- RV: "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness". The same stone appears a precious corner stone, a "precious stone" in the sense of a huge gemstone- in our eyes; but to others, it becomes a stone over which they stumble. The meaning of the stone of Christ is therefore in the eyes of the beholders, rather like the preaching of the Gospel is both a savour of death and of life, depending upon the perceptions and reactions of the audience (2 Cor. 2:16).

The Greek translated "precious" is elsewhere translated "honour[able]". When we read that Jesus now has been given "glory and honour" (e.g. Heb. 2:9; Rev. 4:11; 5:12; 7:12), this is actually a description of *us* right now giving Him honour- for honour is something given by persons to another. As we honour Him now, perceive Him as "precious" [s.w. honour], so by a profound mutuality He will 'honour' us at His return when we stand before Him in judgment [s.w. 1 Pet. 1:7]. For this really is what love between persons is all about- not a club of mutual admiration, but mutual honour.

Builders- the Jewish leadership who rejected Jesus were supposed to be building up the house of God, and should've used Jesus as the corner stone of that temple. If their motivation had been genuine, if they truly wished to see God's house / community / people built up, then they would've quickly perceived in Jesus the ultimate way to achieve this. But they rejected Him, didn't discern Him, because they weren't as it were into the work of building up the community. If that had been their genuine concern, then they would've perceived in Jesus vital material, a crucial resource for that work- rather than reject Him. I commented under 2:5 that God builds us up through 'builders up' within the church; yet His willingness to work in building us up is in a sense frustrated if the 'builders' are corrupt and rejecting of His Son. This is why the Lord commented that the Scribes and Pharisees stopped men entering God's Kingdom, they would not suffer others to enter it, they threw away the key of knowledge etc. It's not that God will always find another way to work. The fact that He in this dispensation appears to always work through agencies means that there is the real possibility that the work He wishes to be done will not be done because of the weakness or dysfunction of the agents. And this is why we through whom God works carry such heavy

responsibility, and why the consequence of our doing or not doing God's work, and the quality to which we do it, is indeed eternal- our personal salvation by grace notwithstanding.

Notice how the spiritual failures of one group or individual can affect others- because "the builders", the Jewish leadership, rejected Jesus, therefore "them which be disobedient"- a different group of people- stumble. Hence Jesus condemns those who make others stumble- we really can affect the spiritual destiny of others, hence the crucial importance attached to life and living, especially in how we treat others.

2:8- see on Mt. 21:44; 1 Pet. 5:2.

Some "stumble at the word, being disobedient: *whereunto also they were appointed*" (1 Pet. 2:8). This passage does not just say that the wicked are disobedient; they are *appointed* to this. God therefore had a hand in their disobedience- through confirming them in their conscious rejection of Him. On the other hand, "Whom (God) did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). The predestination was not just to know the Gospel, but to be righteous- to be able to conform our characters to the perfect example of Jesus. Thus "I have chosen you... to bring forth fruit" (Jn. 15:16), i.e. spiritual attributes. There's a downward spiral here- those who are disobedient find Christ to be a stone over which they stumble.

They stumble over "the word" [*logos*]- but the stumbling stone is clearly Christ personally (2:7). He is His word, the word / *logos* was made flesh in Him- as it should be in us. The total congruence between His words and His person means that "the word" of Christ can be put for the person of Christ. It should be the same with us; the self we project to the world should be our real self and not some shadow image, carefully crafted for the public consumption of others.

Looking back, it must have been shameful for Peter to recollect how he had sought to dissuade the Lord from going up to Jerusalem to die there for the world's redemption. At that time the Lord had called him a rock, upon whose declaration of faith he would build his church, and then soon afterwards a stumbling-stone, an offence. Peter combines these two descriptions in styling the Lord "the head(stone) of the corner (upon which the ecclesia would be built), and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (1 Pet. 2:7,8). There is undoubted allusion to the very titles which the Lord had given Peter. And yet here Peter applies them both to the Lord Jesus, even the "rock of offence". His point perhaps was to show that he saw Christ as manifest in him, and he being "in Christ", *even in his weakness*. Nothing could separate Peter from the love of Christ; and therefore he merges the titles of Christ with those of himself, even when they describe his weakness. This was the unity that was possible between a man and his Lord, and Peter holds it up in inspiration to his readers.

Is "stone of stumbling" put as a repetition of "a rock of offence", just for emphasis? Or is there a significant difference between the two? The Lord Jesus and His word becomes a reason for unbelievers stumbling, He is the small stone over which they trip and the large rock onto which they stumble and break themselves. There is a downward spiral for those who chose not to believe, and the Lord Jesus plays an active part in it. Note that the idea of stumbling over a stone is used in the wilderness temptations- the Lord Jesus was tempted to think that the Angels would automatically keep Him from dashing or stumbling [s.w.] His foot against a stone of stumbling (Mt. 4:6). Stumbling against the stone is clearly to be understood here in Peter and elsewhere as referring to stumbling into sin and unbelief. This could mean that He was tempted to think that the Angels would somehow automatically keep Him from sinning, from spiritually stumbling over a stone. But perfection wasn't automatic for the Lord, nor did His Father enforce His moral perfection through Angelic means. He was no puppet, as required by bunk Trinitarian theology. Yet like us at times, He was tempted to think that somehow God would take care of shielding Him from temptation.

Appointed- s.w. "lay" in 2:6. If we refuse God's appointed One, then we shall be likewise appointed unto salvation. The double usage of the word is surely to show that it's not a case of some people being 'appointed' to condemnation; but rather they chose that 'appointment' by refusing to accept

God's appointment of His Son.

2:9 This verse is full of allusion to Israel's appointment as God's nation and redeemed people as they stood at Sinai (Ex. 19:5,6). Clearly the believers in Christ are being described as a new, spiritual Israel. The "people for God's own possession" (AV "a peculiar people") is an allusion to Is. 43:21 LXX which speaks of Old Testament Israel as "this people have I formed for myself". That same passage and also Is. 42:12 speak of God's intention that His servant people should show forth His praises to the Gentile world- and this is to be done by us. Those passages in the LXX use the same Greek word translated "praises" in 1 Pet. 2:9. It was God's intention that all Israel should've been a priesthood to the Gentile world; this disappointed hope is why He has turned to the Gentile church and asked us to go into the world and show forth His praises and be a priesthood to the world.

royal priesthood- Priests came from Levi and Kings from Judah, so the idea of king-priests implied a new kind of priesthood. We shall be king-priests in God's future Kingdom on earth (Rev. 5:10), but that work is to be done by us right now in this life, so that our immortalization will be a seamless transition of nature rather than of our essential reason for being.

Peter speaks of how our *genos* (AV "generation"), *ethnos* (AV "nation"), *laos* (AV "people") is all now new and defined in the Father, His Son and His people. These three concepts were fundamental to the self-definition of people in first century Mediterranean society. The sociological challenge of becoming redefined as "Christian", a new Israel, a new nation- was and is radical. And even more cutting is the comment in 2:10 that they had in fact never been a people. All they had previously been had in fact been as nothing. National, tribal and geographical pride was paramount in those days.

We have been called out of the darkness as Israel were called out of Egypt. Col. 1:13 says we have been delivered from that darkness; 2 Cor. 4:6 implies the darkness is in our own hearts. In a sense we have been delivered from it, in another sense we've been called to come out from it.

God intended Israel to be "a Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). "All the people of Israel" were the builders of the spiritual house of God, i.e. His people (Acts 4:10,11). All Israel were to lay their hands on the Levites to show that they were truly Israel's representatives (Num. 8:10). When Israel were rejected, they were told that they as a nation could no longer be God's priest (Hos. 4:6). By baptism, we become spiritual Israel; and this idea is relevant to us too. Peter picks up these words in Exodus and applies them to every one of us: "Ye *also* are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5,9). The Lord Jesus is a King-priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:13-18; Ps. 110:4); and through being in Him, we share this position. Through what He achieved for us on the cross, we have been made *now* king-priests, with the future hope of reigning on earth (Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

Israel were constituted a Kingdom of priests; a whole nation who would preach forth God's ways to those about them. And this designation and commission is applied now to the new Israel (1 Pet. 2:5,9 cp. Ex. 20:5). Males who could not procreate were barred from the congregation (Dt. 23:1), possibly in prototype of how spiritual procreation was to be a vital characteristic of the future Israel.

Israel were called out of Egypt in order to declare among the surrounding nations the character and greatness of Israel's God. In this calling to be a missionary nation they failed miserably (what similarities with the new Israel?). The very reason why we are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood (is) *that* we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness (cp. Egypt)" (1 Pet. 2:9). Our separation from this world is therefore related to our praise of God. We don't shew forth the knowledge and praise of God to this world by singing to them; but rather by showing in our lives and preaching that we have been separated unto a glorious Kingdom of light. This is the true shewing forth of praise.

2:10 After their baptism at the Red Sea, Israel were declared the Kingdom of God by reason of God being their King through their promised obedience to His word (Ex.19:5,6). They were "saved"

(Jude 5) from the power of Egypt (cp.sin). Yet they had to walk through the wilderness (cp. our probations), behaving according to the responsibilities of being God's Kingdom, and yet still capable of backsliding before they became established as the physical Kingdom in the land. Those very same Abrahamic promises of inheriting the land of Canaan as the centre of the coming Kingdom are made to us through our Red Sea baptism. Abraham lived in the land of promise in his mortal life, but did not of course experience what it would be like in the Kingdom (Heb.11:9). That he had to look forward to in faith, as do we, his seed. Peter leaves us with no doubt as to the validity of this parallel: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (cp. "a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation", Ex.19:6), an holy nation, a peculiar (i.e. purchased) people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness (Egypt) into His marvellous light (cp. the glory at Sinai?). Which in time past were not a people (Kingdom), but are now the people of God" (1 Pet.2:9,10). Alluding to this same idea, our guardian Angels, speaking on our behalf, welcomed the risen Lord into Heaven with the song "Thou...hast made us unto our God (now) a Kingdom of priests; and we shall (in the full manifestation of that Kingdom) reign on earth" (Rev.5:10). Hebrews 12 describes our being in Christ in language referring back to God's declaration of Israel as His Kingdom at Sinai (Heb.12:18,29= Ex.24:17). See on Acts 7:36.

In time past- a favourite word of Peter's (1 Pet. 3:5,20; 2 Pet. 1:10,21). The way Bible writers have favourite words and phrases, sometimes unique to them, or used by them far more frequently than other writers do, all serves to indicate the dynamic meeting between God and man which took place in Biblical inspiration.

Were not a people- they were, humanly speaking [Jews, Corinthians, Samaritans etc.]; but as they were not *God's* people, all human nationality and ethnic affiliation is, relative to that, of no account at all to the extent that in fact it effectively never existed.

The allusion is clearly to Hos. 1:6-10, where Hosea's children are named 'Not having obtained mercy' and 'Not my people'- although the prophecy goes on to say that the hope of Israel is to again be called "My people" and to obtain God's mercy through as it were re-marrying Him, making a new covenant with Him. Peter seems to be saying that this ultimate hope of God for His wayward people is fulfilled in anyone who turns to Christ and becomes part of God's people today. The hope, tension, stress, desire of God, that 'this time it'll work', is all now focused upon us.

2:11 *Beloved*- a favourite term of Peter's. It doesn't necessarily express Peter's love for them- it could equally mean that his readers are beloved- by God.

Strangers and pilgrims- following on from the theme that believers are a radically new nation, never at home in this present world, always feeling as foreigners, travelers passing through, aliens temporarily residing in a foreign land. Because we're just passing through this world and don't belong to it- we are to abstain from our internal "fleshly lusts" which are actually at war against "the soul", which in this context must refer to 'our real spiritual person'. Peter's teaching that separation from the world around us is really an internal matter- separating from the "fleshly lusts" within us.

Peter was writing to Jewish believers, and he may be alluding to the meaning of the word 'Hebrew'. Donald Redford, *The Biblical Story of Joseph* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970) p. 202 suggests: "'*Ibri* in the OT is not an ethnic term, but a common noun meaning something like "stranger", and is not therefore necessarily synonymous with "Israelite"'. In this case, Peter would be asking physical 'Jews' to act and feel as true Hebrews in spirit.

2:12 *Evildoers*- Peter uses this Greek word four times, and its' only other occurrence is in Jn. 18:30, where just at the time Peter is denying Jesus, the Jews accuse Jesus of being an "evildoer". Peter is unashamedly remembering his own time of failure, and yet making the point that as Jesus was called an "evildoer", so all of us in Him will to some extent share in His sufferings and likewise be slandered.

Whereas they speak... - RV and Gk 'Wherein...'. The sense is that those very things in which we are slandered as having done *evil*, will in fact be revealed to all at judgment day as "*good works*". Having our good works misrepresented as evil shouldn't at all surprise us.

They shall behold- Gk. 'watch'. In some sense, the judgment process will be transparent to others, and they will see the good works of our lives, which perhaps they slandered at the time, as it were played back to them for them to watch. This recalls how the Lord taught that He will remind the faithful of all their good works, e.g. 'I was hungry and you fed me'.

Glorify God- this could refer to the critics of the early Jewish Christians glorifying God in AD70. But there seems no historical record of a turning to Christ by the Jews then. Those who slandered God's people will "glorify God" at the day of judgment in that they will come to see things from God's perspective- but then be rejected. Hence the unspeakable pain, the gnashing of teeth, as they finally 'get it' - but all too late.

The "day of *visitation*" is coming for us all (1 Pet. 2:12). The Greek is related to the word describing how after the denials, Christ turned and *looked* upon Peter (Lk. 22:61). This was for him his day of judgment, which we must all pass through. He called down Divine curses *upon himself* if he knew Jesus of Nazareth- and thus brought the curse of God upon himself (the record of his cursing and swearing refers to this rather than to the use of expletives). This was for him his day of judgment, which we must all pass through.

Visitation- Gk. *Episkope*. This is the usual word for bishop / overseer. The day of judgment is the day of the over-seeing, the coming of the One who sees and has seen all. Significantly, Peter uses the word again in 2:25 concerning how the Lord Jesus is right now our bishop / overseer. But He will also be in the day of overseeing. From this we can draw the conclusion that the day of judgment is in essence going on now; our lives are currently open to His view, His judgment. God sits enthroned as "judge of all" right now. Judgment day is now. It's not that God is somehow oblivious to our behaviour but on judgment day He will open the record books and weigh up the evidence. The evidence is being weighed up right now, before the eyes of the all seeing bishop of our souls.

2:13 *Submit*- a major theme with Peter (1 Pet. 2:13,18; 3:1,5,22; 5:5).

Regarding the question of how we are to submit to evil Governments, see on Rom. 13:1.

2:13-17 Peter asks his sheep: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man... unto governors... as free... honour all men" (1 Pet. 2:13-17). This is all evident allusion to the way he had once felt that as free in Christ and in Israel, he didn't need to submit to men and pay taxes. But the Lord had gently rebuked him, and provided the coin to pay for them both (Mt. 17:25-27). The Gospels records would have been well known amongst the early believers; there is a tradition that at least the Gospel of Mark was learnt by heart as part of instruction for baptism. Peter's readers would have known of the incident, and now, here he is telling them to learn the lesson he had had to learn.

2:15 *put to silence*- Literally, 'muzzle'. The "foolish men" here are the same category as the rejected "foolish virgins" and are those of 2:12 who slander the faithful, but who will come to see at the day of judgment that the faithful were actually doing good works. I suggest they will be "put to silence" at the day of judgment, being in the category of those rejected who are "speechless" at their rejection (Mt. 22:12- this uses the same Greek word as translated "put to silence" in 1 Pet. 2:15). It is our good deeds performed *now* which will in that day put them to silence- for in this life, our good deeds are spoken of as evil by this group (2:12). Those who slander Christ's followers are therefore working out for themselves an awful judgment- to walk away in silence into condemnation, all for the sake of having spoken evil of us...

2:16 *as free*- As if we are freemen, i.e. not slaves. "As"- because some of Peter's readership would've been slaves. But they were to feel as if they were *not* slaves, due to their freedom in Christ. Romans 6:1-10 explains that life before baptism was lived in slavery to sin- but baptism was

the moment of changing masters and freedom from that old master, sin. There is allusion here to how first century Judah considered themselves “as free” from Rome, even though they were still on paper subject to Rome and part of the empire. Paul in writing to the Romans and Peter here writing to Jewish believers were surely alluding to this very popular idea and refocusing it- the real freedom was from personal sin, Rome was irrelevant, the freedom of God’s dear children would be in the coming of the Kingdom on earth at Christ’s return, and not through violent revolution against Caesar.

A cloak- i.e. a pretext for wickedness. Paul addressed the same problem in Romans 6:1- there was clearly the idea amongst some early Christians that they could continue sinning and even sin very badly because they were free in the grace of Christ’s salvation.

As servants [slaves] of God- the allusion to Romans 6:1-10 continues- there Paul states that conversion is a changing of masters, from sin, to God. The paradox is that we are made ultimately free by accepting slavery to God.

2:17 *Honour-* We are to value all people, to perceive the value and meaning of the human person. The same word is used later in the verse about honouring the Emperor. Perhaps the point is that we should honour those who demand extreme honour and respect only insofar as we honour / value all human beings- they are nothing more and nothing less than human. We should fear God, not the Emperor; and only honour / respect the Emperor insofar as we honour / value all human beings.

2:18 The instruction to slaves to “fear” their masters suggests that ‘fear’ means more than literal fear; for such fear would’ve been a natural reaction to the threats of the bad masters. Clearly, fearing means ‘respect’, and we must apply this to our concept of fearing God in the preceding verse (2:17). This would continue the theme of 2:17- of valuing all human beings, and that includes bad, twisted [Gk.] masters.

2:19 *Thankworthy-* At the day of judgment, this is the kind of thing which will be praised when the Lord Jesus ‘goes through’ the good deeds of our lives with us, as outlined in Mt. 25:36.

For the sake of our conscience, we should endure persecution *after the pattern of Christ on the cross* (1 Pet. 2:19-22). Enduring, suffering wrongfully are all ideas associated with His sufferings. He did not hang there fearing a bad conscience; it was his clear, sinless conscience before God which motivated him to endure. See on 1 Jn. 3:18.

2:20 *What glory-* A reference to how for each individual act of suffering wrongfully we will receive “glory” at the day of judgment when the Lord goes through our good deeds with us and ‘glories’ in them (Mt. 25:36). “This is *acceptable* with God” uses the same word translated “thankworthy” in 2:19 which we suggested refers to our being “accepted with God” in the day of judgment (see 2 Cor. 5:9). “This *is* acceptable with God” suggests that the process of acceptance is going on right now; in that day we “shall be accepted of Him” (2 Cor. 5:9), but the essence of the acceptance or rejection process is going on today.

It is interesting to note the changes of pronouns in 1 Pet. 2:20 ff: “Hereunto were *ye* called: because Christ also suffered for *you*, leaving *you* an example, that *ye* should follow his steps... who his own self bare *our* sins... that *we* having died to sin, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes *ye* were healed”. In the context, Peter is speaking about the need for slaves to live out the death and life of Christ; but when he comes to speak of the Lord’s death for sin, he cannot but include himself as a sinner and a beneficiary in the cross. In Peter’s final maturity, his mind was full of the cross. His letters and preaching were full of allusion to Isaiah’s prophecies of the suffering servant (especially Acts 3:13,26; 4:25-30; 1 Pet. 2:21 ff.); he and Philip are the only preachers to explicitly make this connection. It could be that Peter was so impressed by the way the Lord washed his feet that his mind was evermore transfixed with this image and the Biblical allusions behind it. And note that initially, Peter had totally failed to grasp that Jesus was indeed “the servant”. Every allusion he makes to Jesus as the servant was a reflection of his recognition of his earlier failure to perceive it.

Buffeted s.w. Mt. 26:67 re. Christ being struck with a fist- something Peter would have probably watched out of the corner of his eye from where he was.

2:21- see on Jn. 21:19.

Christ also suffered- connects with the idea of us suffering wrongfully in the previous two verses. His sufferings and ours are thus directly connected. His sufferings aren't to be merely observed from afar- they are our "example", *hupo-grammos*, the under-writing, the letters which the pupil was to copy out in his own hand.

Follow His steps- John's Gospel finishes with Peter following the Lord Jesus but losing his focus because of his concern about John (Jn. 21:20). The Lord had to remind Peter yet again not to lose focus but to concentrate on the essence- which was to walk behind Jesus. Peter had made the same mistake in Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33 [see notes there]. And fully aware of this, Peter urges his converts to follow in the steps of Jesus, even though he himself had faltered in this. Again, he alludes constantly to his own failures as a basis upon which to exhort others.

2:22 This verse is a quotation-with-interpretation of Is. 53:9. "Who did no violence" is rendered / interpreted as "Who did no sin". All sin is in a sense "violence"- the thought of hatred is murder, the Lord taught. Thus the seriousness of sin is highlighted.

Through being justified, any repentant sinner will then have the characteristics of Christ, in God's sight. In Christ there was no guile (1 Pet. 2:22), as there was not in David (or any other believer) after the justification of forgiveness (Ps. 32:2).

"No guile found in his mouth" (2:22)- the trial trying to find evidence that the Lord had spoken bad words during His ministry, but no conclusive evidence being found. "Found" (2:22)- a legal word, s.w. Mt. 26:60; Jn. 18:38; 19:4,6 concerning Christ's trial, parts of which Peter would have seen or heard first hand. Is. 53:9, which is being quoted here, doesn't feature the word "found"- it states simply that no guile / deceit was in His mouth. Peter adds this detail because of his own presence at the trial, where there was an attempt to 'find' such deceit in Him.

No guile will be found in *our* mouths at the day of judgment (Rev. 14:5)- because the righteousness and character achievement of Jesus will be counted as ours. See on 1 Pet. 1:7; 2:6 for similar examples.

2:23 *When He was reviled*- the context of 2:20 is of slave brethren suffering unfairly. The stress should therefore be upon the word "He".

Committed himself to him that judgeth righteously- a reference to the Lord's final words on the cross: "Into thy hand I commit my spirit"? See on Lk. 23:46. We likewise should follow that example in our dying with Him, in that we too "commit the keeping of [our] souls to him in well-doing" (4:19). See on Mt. 27:26. If the allusion is indeed to the Lord Jesus breathing His last, then God was indeed judge of all, enthroned upon the cross. Truly therefore did the Lord speak of His death as "the judgment of this world". The suffering Lord committed the keeping of His soul to the Father "that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23). He judged both His Son's righteousness and the world's rejection of it at that time. See on Jn. 12:42; 19:13,37. 1 Pet. 2:23 speaks of the Lord in His time of dying committing Himself "to him that judgeth righteously". It's as if the Father judged the world as unworthy and His Son as worthy in the time of the Lord's death. This makes sense of the passages which speak of our being judged and acquitted at the time of Christ's death.

2:24- see on Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 5:1.

Stripes (2:24)- Gk. 'weals', the swollen up bruises, which Peter would have seen when Christ turned and looked at him through blackened eyes (after the beating of Mt. 26:67). The allusion is to Is. 53:4-6. See on Mk. 15:15.

The tree (2:24). An unusual term for the cross (he also uses it in Acts 5:30; 10:39). Perhaps because he saw the crucifixion (5:1) and was struck by the way the Lord carried a piece of a tree and was impaled upon it.

Who his own self bare our sins in his body up on to the tree (2:24 RVmg.) suggests the watching Peter reflecting, as the Lord's body was lifted up vertical, that his sins of denial and pride were somehow with his Lord, being lifted up by Him. "His own self" may suggest that Peter was already up against the false idea that it wasn't actually Jesus personally who died on the cross but someone took His place. "His own self... his own body" emphasizes the extent of His identity with us and our sins.

The Lord died as He did so that we might live righteously (1 Pet. 2:24); the account of the crucifixion is written as it is so that we might be inspired to a true faith (Jn. 19:35).

He "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that *we might die to sin* [Gk.] and live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). He died for our sins, there all our weakness met their death in His death- so close was the association between Him and our sins. Our response to that is to put those sins to death in *our* bodies, as He put them to death in His on the tree.

He carried our sins "*that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes* (Gk. weals- Peter saw them) *ye were healed*" (1 Pet. 2:24). Because of the suffering entailed in the putting to death of our sins by the Lord's cross, we should respond in likewise mortifying them. We are healed- in that before conversion we were spiritually sick and dying, afterwards we are healed and healthy. The new life which we have to live is therefore going to be lived in His service.

2:25 - see on Lk. 15:4-6; Acts 2:39; 3:19; 1 Pet. 2:12.

Peter reminds his sheep of how they are now "returned" (s.w. 'converted') to the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 2:25), just as he had been. His experience of the Lord's gracious spirit inspired him.

3:1 The church is *subject* to Christ, as wives are to their husbands (1 Pet. 3:1). Yet because the wife too represents the body of Christ, all of us are to be subject to each other (1 Pet. 5:5). See on Eph. 5:31.

3:3 As He prayed for those who spitefully used Him, and blessed and cursed not as the thieves did, so must we (Mt. 5:44; 1 Pet. 3:3).

3:4- see on Lk. 24:39; Rom. 7:22; 1 Cor. 2:15.

"The hidden man... a meek and quiet spirit" is not corruptible (1 Pet. 3:4), surely alluding to the description of our spiritual treasures as eternally lasting in Heaven, where there is no corruption (Mt. 6:19,20). Our future inheritance is described by Peter as "incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:4), yet he also speaks of God's word which creates the new man, as also being "incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:23), as is the hidden man which it develops (1 Pet. 3:4). This teaches us that the new man created within us here and now by the action of the word, is in fact strongly related to the future "incorruptible" inheritance we will receive at the second coming.

3:4-6 The way in which God chooses the good side of Sarah and recognizes it for what it is can be seen even more finely in 1 Pet. 3:4-6. Here sisters are bidden follow Sarah's example of

1. Having a meek and quiet spirit
2. Not outwardly adorning herself
3. Obeying Abraham
4. And calling him her "Lord".

It can be shown that the Spirit in Peter is adopting an extremely positive reading of Sarah.

1. She isn't revealed as having a meek and quiet spirit at all; but presumably, God saw that underneath her anger and bitterness there was a meekness and quietness, perhaps especially seen as she grew older.

2,3. Concerning not outwardly "adorning", the Greek text is alluding to the Septuagint of Gen. 20:16, which says that Abimelech told Sarah that he had given Abraham many silver pieces "that these may therefore be for thee to adorn thy countenance". Abimelech is speaking sarcastically (note how he calls Abraham "thy brother", referring to Sarah and Abraham's family relationship). It was a custom for married women to wear their silver pieces on their face (cp. Lk. 15:8). Presumably she had taken these off, in order to appear single and sexually available. Abimelech is saying: "I've given your so-called 'brother' Abraham 1000 silver pieces, so just make sure you wear them in future and don't lead any more men into sin". And what does the Spirit comment? "Thus she was reproved" (Gen. 20:16). Her willingness to pretend she was single and not refusing the sexual advances of Abimelech can only be seen in a negative light from the Genesis record. She lacked continued faith in the promises of a seed, and she disregarded God's marriage principles for the sake of an all too convenient 'obedience' to her husband. It may have been that she regarded her inability to have children as partly his fault (cp. the deadness of Abraham's body, Rom. 4:19). The thing is, she had already shown enough faith to conceive (Heb. 11:11), and presumably the effect of this was seen in the physical rejuvenation of her body, which made her so attractive to men, although she was 90 years old. Both Sarah and Abraham had shown faith, she was living with her own body as the constant reminder of God's faithfulness, and yet in the incident with Abimelech she wavered and had to be reproved. Yet she is seen in a positive light by the Spirit; her lack of wearing ornaments, even though it was to show she was single, is commended; as is her obedience to her husband, even though she was reproved for this. The point is, like all of us, her motives were probably mixed. She did want to be truly obedient to Abraham, she did want to have a meek spirit rather than outward adorning. Her wrong motives surfaced, and were rebuked. But God saw deep inside her heart, and saw the good motives, and drags them out and holds them up as an example.

4. Sarah is commended for calling Abraham her "Lord" (1 Pet. 3:6). She is recorded as doing this in one place only: "Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen. 18:12). She doubted God's promise; she is rebuked for this by the Angel. Yet in doing so, when she came to think of Abraham, in her heart she called him "my lord". So in the midst of her lack of faith in one respect, she also had a commendable attitude to Abraham. All this, don't forget, was going on "within herself". God searched her thoughts, He saw her wrong attitudes there deep in her heart, and He saw what was commendable there too; and through Peter He drags this out and reveals it to us all as an inspiration. See on Gal. 4:30; Heb. 11:11.

3:7 1 Pet. 3:7 gives an unexpected reason for appealing for husbands and wives to get along with each other: that your prayers be not hindered. So important was prayer in the thinking of Peter. Comparing ourselves with the first century community, it seems to me that we simply don't give prayer the place of importance which they did. 1 Tim 2:1 reflects *their* balance: "I exhort therefore, that, *first of all* [the Greek implies 'most importantly' rather than just being first in a list], supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men". Marital strife results in prayers being "hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7), the same word translated 'hewn down' (Mt. 7:19) in a judgment day context. The evidence that the experience of answered prayer is an indicator of God's pleasure with us is quite compelling.

Peter describes sisters as 'joint-heirs' with their husbands, implying "full religious equality with man- a thought impossible for Judaism".

The way Paul talks of how in 'marriage', the man represents Christ and the woman the church, helping each other towards salvation, would indicate that he presumed marriage was only relevant to believers; Christian marriage seems to be the only model of marriage he assumes. Likewise Peter speaks of husband and wife praying together (1 Pet. 3:7); he too assumed marriage in the Faith as the only model of marriage.

Husbands and wives are "*heirs together*" (1 Pet. 3:7)- as the whole church are "heirs together" through being one in Christ (Gal. 3:29; Eph. 3:6). See on 1 Pet. 3:1.

3:14 "But and if ye should suffer for righteousness sake... fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man" (1 Pet. 3:14). *Knowing and having* Christ as Lord of our hearts will practically enable us to overcome tribulation, and will lead to a suitably humble witness in response.

3:15 They were to be ready always to give an answer to those who ask, albeit with fear (1 Pet. 3:15)- exactly what Peter failed to do on the night of the denials.

From where do we get the motivation from for loyalty to Christ? I'd suggest that it comes from first of all realizing, on a theological level, the greatness of Christ. He is now Lord of Heaven and earth, all power has been given unto him, He is the "Prince of the Kings of the earth". Those early brethren who had seen the Lord in His humanity really appreciated this. Thus "Yahweh of hosts, him shall you sanctify" (Is. 8:13 LXX) is applied by Peter to the Lord Jesus, whom we should sanctify (1 Pet. 3:15). Paul speaks about "the Lord" as if we all know who he refers to; *the* Lord, the one and only Lord, the exalted Lord Jesus. This especially comes out in his breaking of bread passage in 1 Cor. 11:23-29. Such is the supremacy of Christ that "We cannot lift Christ too high" as Robert Roberts expressed it. If we appreciate the extent and height of His Lordship and exaltation, we will see the extent to which our minds should be dominated by Him. Our very consciousness should beat with His spirit, His mind. We are told that He should *live in our hearts*; for us, He should be the alpha and omega (Rev. 1:11). The confession of faith before baptism is summarized, in its quintessence, as confessing with the mouth Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9 RV). All the doctrines a candidate must know beforehand are summarized in this.

Because Christ is Lord of all, we must preach Him to all, even if like Peter we would rather not preach to them. This was the motivational power and reality of Christ's universal Lordship for Peter (Acts 10:36). The same link between Christ's Lordship and witness is found in Phil. 2:10 and 1 Pet. 3:15 (which alludes Is. 8:13- Yahweh of Hosts, of many ones, becomes manifest now in the Lord Jesus). The ascended Christ was highly exalted and given the Name above every Name, so that for those who believed this, they would bow in service at the Name of Jesus. Peter preached in and about the name of Jesus- this is emphasized (Acts 2:31,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,17,18,30; 5:28,40,41; 10:43). The excellence of knowing Him and His character and the wonder of the exalted Name given on His ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12) lead Peter to witness. Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this. Lifting up Jesus as Lord is to be the basis of giving a witness to every man of the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15 RSV). The knowledge and experience of His exaltation can only be witnessed to; it can't be kept quiet. 3 Jn. 7 refers to how the great preaching commission was obeyed: "For his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing (material help) from the Gentiles" (Gentile believers). For the excellence of knowing His Name they went forth in witness, and moreover were generous spirited, not taking material help to enable this. The knowledge of the Name of itself should inspire to active service: for the sake of the Lord's Name the Ephesians laboured (Rev. 2:3).

In our suffering for righteousness' sake at the hands of the world, we must "give an answer (s.w. 'a defence, clearing of oneself)... a reason (*logos* , cp. Mt. 12:36)... with meekness and fear... having a good conscience... let him not be *ashamed* " (1 Pet. 3:15,16; 4:16). This is all judgment seat language. And yet we must go through this now in our confrontations with the world. The trials of our faith are like fire which purifies us (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12). And yet this is the language of the last judgment (Mal. 3:1,2). In our response to trials, we have the outcome of our judgment. We must rejoice *now* in our tribulations with the same joy which we will have when we are accepted by the

Lord at the last day (1 Pet. 4:13). Job felt that his calamities were God entering into judgment with him (Job 14:3). If we react properly to trials, we thereby receive now "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:9). Thus the question of the degree to which we now are 'saved' is connected with the fact that to some degree, the judgment process is also going on now.

Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this. Lifting up Jesus as Lord is to be the basis of giving a witness to every man of the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15 RSV). The knowledge and experience of His exaltation can only be witnessed to; it can't be kept quiet.

3:16- see on 1 Jn. 3:18.

3:18- see on 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; 5:1.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18) could well have been written by Peter with a glance back at the way that after his denials, he the unjust went to the crucifixion scene and reflected just this. When in 5:1 he comments that he witnessed the sufferings of Christ, he could be saying that therefore these thoughts were his thoughts as he witnessed it: the just suffering for him the unjust, to bring him back to God.

Do we seek strength to endure unjust treatment and the grace to submit cheerfully to the loss of what we feel is rightfully ours? Be it discrimination in the workplace, persecution from the Government, perceived abuse or degradation by our partner or family...? Let the cross be our endless inspiration: "For it is better, if the will of God be so [a reference to the Lord's struggle in Gethsemane being our struggle], that ye suffer for well doing... *for* Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:17,18). Remember how under persecution, the faithful love not their lives unto death because of their experience of the blood of the lamb shed for them (Rev. 12:11).

Can we know that we have the spirit of Jesus, and that we are living the eternal life, to the point we are confident that "we will be there"? John addresses this question head on. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him... if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 Jn. 3:19-22). The answer of our conscience is therefore highly significant. Now living in societies as we do, based around shame and guilt, we can condemn ourselves more harshly than God does. Baptism is "the answer (RVmg. 'appeal') of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:18). Note how the phrase "toward God" occurs in both passages. We need to reflect more deeply upon what baptism really meant. Just as Romans 6, the classic baptism chapter, is asking the Romans to think back and remember what their baptisms really did for them before God. There we were counted as being 'in Christ'. God now looks upon us as if we are in Christ, covered with His righteousness. In the court of Divine justice, the fact we have been baptized and had our conscience cleansed is our appeal for justification. And it will be heard. We condemn ourselves for our failures, yes. But on the other hand, do we believe that we really are baptized into Christ, with all that means in terms of how God now sees us? Do we believe rather than merely know... the most basic elements and realities of our Christian faith? I believe we do underneath, but we need to think deeply about all this.

Eph. 2:18: "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father". This access is not only in the moments of time we designate for prayer. Christ suffered for us and obtained our forgiveness, "that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18), and we are in that position now, all the time, not just when we pray. Being in this position means that our Spirit, the essence of our spirituality, our deepest spiritual desires, are transferred to the Father by the Son.

3:19- see on Acts 3:26; Acts 3:34.

preached The Lord Himself quoted Is. 61:1 about Himself: He proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. But this passage is evidently behind Peter's assertion that after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus preached to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3:18,19). His resurrection was the basis of His command to go into all the world and preach the word; and thereby His preachers went out to do and continue the work which He personally had done.

Christ and "The spirits in prison"

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:18–21 ASV).

"He went"

Firstly, we need to remove any misunderstanding which arises from the phrase "he went". Contemporary Greek literature often used such expressions in a redundant sense. Eph. 2:17 speaks of the Lord Jesus 'coming' and preaching peace to us. But this doesn't mean that He Himself in person came up to us and preached. Indeed, the language of going, coming or moving is often used in relation to the preaching of a person – e.g. Mt. 9:13: "*but go* and learn what that meaneth". The Lord didn't intend that they literally went away somewhere. Likewise Dan. 12:4 and Hab. 2:2 bid those who understand God's word to "run" – not literally, but in response to the word preached. God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so – but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time.

Preaching in the Spirit

We seek to understand how Christ could preach in his spirit. He was "put to death in the flesh but made alive in [Gk. 'through, on account of'] the spirit". The Lord was raised "according to the spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4). Why was Christ resurrected? Because of His sinless life and character, i.e. His "spirit" of a holy life. In this lies the connection between the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus. He was raised by the Father because of His spirit of holiness, his holy spirit of life. We too will be raised to eternal life on account of our spirit of life which we are now developing: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). This passage shows that the spirit of Christ is the same spirit that is to dwell in us. This doesn't mean we are disembodied spirits, but rather that our way / spirit of life must be that of Jesus. 1 Pet. 4:1 makes the same point – we are to arm ourselves with the same mind / spirit that was in Christ as He suffered on the cross. If our Spirit and that of Christ coincide and are one, then we have the witness that we are truly God's children (Rom. 8:16). It was through *this* same spirit that Christ witnessed to imprisoned humanity, especially at the time of Noah, as Peter shows. The spirit of Christ was in all the prophets, and this was the essence of their witness. "The testimony [preaching] of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" in the sense that the preaching of the prophets was in essence the preaching of Jesus insofar as they had His Spirit in their message.

There is an undoubted theme throughout 1 Peter 3 and 4 of the opposition between the “flesh” (that which is external, the appearance of things) and the “spirit”, that which is internal, which is of God.

Being dead to sins	Should live unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24)
Not the outward adorning	But the hidden man...a quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:3,4)
Put to death in the flesh	But quickened by the spirit (1 Pet. 3:18)
Baptism is not a washing of the flesh	But the answer of a good conscience / spirit (1 Pet. 3:21)
Don't live in the flesh	But to the will of God (1 Pet. 4:2)
Judged by men in the flesh [outwardly]	Live to God in the spirit (1 Pet. 4:6)

The spirit by which Jesus was quickened is thus paralleled with our spirit of living to God, a quiet spirit, a life of righteousness, of good conscience etc. His Spirit is to be our spirit – we are to be of the “same mind / spirit” with Him, sharing the mind which He had especially during His time of dying (1 Pet. 4:1). And this is exactly the point of Phil. 2:5: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” at the time of His death. Notice that the Spirit of Jesus is epitomized by the mindset which He displayed during His death. It is this very mind / spirit which is to be in us. It is therefore in this sense that *through His death* the Lord Jesus preached ‘in spirit’ to those whom He had never met.

In this sense, it was the spiritually minded lifestyle of Noah which was his witness to the world of his day. Peter says in 1 Pet. 3:19 that Christ through His Spirit preached to the people of Noah’s day. In 2 Pet. 2:5 he says that Noah was a preacher of, or [Gk.] ‘by’ righteousness to the people around him. Yet in 1 Pet. 3:19 Peter says that Christ preached to those same people through His Spirit. The resolution surely is that although Noah had never met the Lord Jesus, he lived according to the same Godly spirit as did Jesus; and this was his witness to his world. There is ultimately only one Spirit (Eph. 4:4). The same spirit of holiness which was in Jesus was likewise thus in Noah. “The Spirit”, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are all equated in Rom. 8:9.

“The spirits in prison”

Biblically, a man or woman is identified with their spirit in the sense of their mind or way of life. Heb. 12:23 speaks of the spirits of just men, with whom the believer ought to associate. This means that we ought to identify ourselves with the way of life, the spirit of life, of “just men” of the past. God is “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num. 16:22; 27:16) in the sense that He is the God of all humanity. So “spirits in prison” can refer to people who, in their spiritual lives, are imprisoned. Immediately the mind goes to Is. 42:2,7, which in speaking of the preaching of Jesus, prophecies that He would release the spiritually imprisoned – not so much by direct didactic teaching, but by the spirit of His personality and example. So the “prison” is simply the prison of the human mind, which the mental example of Jesus can open up.

We obviously ask *why* ordinary people should be described in this passage as “spirits”. The context is speaking of the witness of Jesus to people through His Spirit or way of life as manifested in His people. The *spirit* within His people appeals to the imprisoned *spirit* or heart / mind of their audience. We appeal to the *heart*, the spirit, by our witness – not merely to the intellect. The spirit of Christ within us appeals to the imprisoned spirit within others.

The “spirits in prison” were once [“aforetime”] disobedient (1 Pet. 3:20). The same two Greek words translated “aforetime” and “disobedient” occur in Rom. 11:30 about all of us, who “in times past [s.w. “aforetime”] have not believed [s.w. “disobedient”]. This is surely one of the many times when Peter’s phrasing is so similar to Paul’s that he is surely alluding to him; and thus Peter is making the point that although the witness of the spirit of Christ was, in his context, specifically to

Noah's generation, it is also the witness which we all receive from those with the spirit of Christ at any time. Peter has just spoken of how disobedient [s.w.] people are converted by the witness of a spiritual, Christ-centred way of life (1 Pet. 3:1). Peter is writing against a background of "the last days", of which Noah's generation is a clear type. Just as they were witnessed to by the spirit of Christ in Noah, so will the generation of the last days have a like witness. God's patience "waited" in Noah's time; the Greek implies to wait *for* something. It is also translated "expect". God was waiting for and expecting a response from Noah's witness; and in this we see the essential hopefulness of God. He hoped against hope for response; and none came. The Spirit of Christ and of God has always been His witness to all generations. The question arises as to why Peter chose to especially focus upon the example of Noah out of all the generations. Perhaps this was because Noah's generation is a type of the last days, in which Peter believed he was living. And therefore this entire study has a great relevance to our day; for the crucial witness of the last days is through the spirit of Christ in us witnessing to an increasingly self-imprisoned world.

3:20- see on Mt. 24:48.

Peter likens the ark in the time of Noah to Christ, showing that as the ark saved Noah and his family from the judgment that came upon sinners, so baptism into Christ will save believers from eternal death (1 Pet. 3:20,21). Noah entering into the ark is likened to our entering into Christ through baptism. All those outside the ark were destroyed by the flood; standing near the ark or being a friend of Noah was quite irrelevant. The only way of salvation is, and was, to be inside the Christ/ark. It is evident that the second coming, which the flood typified (Lk. 17:26,27), is nearly upon us. Entry into the Christ/ark by baptism is therefore of the utmost urgency. Human words really do fail to convey this sense of urgency; the Biblical type of entry into the ark in Noah's time is more powerful. Noah's ark was an appropriate symbol for salvation through baptism in that the Hebrew word *teba* ("ark") only occurs elsewhere in reference to the "ark" or "chest" in which the baby Moses, condemned to death, came through water to a saved life. And "a similar root in Egyptian means chest or coffin" - connecting with the idea that baptism is a burial with Christ in water, as it were entering a coffin with Him, to emerge into new life. Indeed the dimensions of Noah's ark are in proportion similar to those of a coffin.

Peter reasons in 1 Pet. 3 that the ark represents two things- being in Christ by baptism, and being saved from the tribulations to come on the world of the last days. These are typified respectively by the first and second entries of Noah into the ark. If our baptism is like that first entering in, then Noah's tense, earnest waiting for the rain in the next 7 days should typify our feelings towards the second coming (cp. the rain). We should live our whole lives after baptism as if we know for certain that the second coming is but a week away.

Knowing the destruction that would come on all except Noah, God waited in the hope that more would be saved. He as it were hoped against His own foreknowledge that more would be saved (1 Pet. 3:20).

The flood was brought about by God's wisdom, not because a deity lost his patience and temper with mankind. God destroyed mankind because of His *grief* (Gen. 6:6)- and He did so because He planned on saving the world through water (1 Pet. 3:20). Noah and the faithful were saved from corruption and the faith being lost by the world that threatened to destroy them (spiritually) being itself destroyed.

3:21- see on Gal. 3:27; Heb. 10:17,22.

The resurrection of Christ thus "interrogates our conscience" in all areas of life (1 Pet. 3:21 RVmg.). We can't be passive to it; it's not painless to believe.

4:1- see on Phil. 2:9.

“Christ hath suffered for us *in the flesh*” (4:1). That He suffered “in the flesh” could be seen as stating the obvious until it is realized that Peter is referring to the way in which he actually saw the flesh of Christ really suffering.

4:2 Reflection upon the cross must have a distinct mental impact upon us, if we reflect upon it in sincerity and truth. There is what I would call a crucifixion compulsion; a transforming power in the cross. His sacrifice *must* have an effect upon those who believe it: “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves *with the same mind*... that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (1 Pet. 4:1,2). So often the will of God is associated with the Lord’s death (e.g. Acts 2:23; Lk. 22:22; Mt. 26:42; Jn. 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:9,10; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:17,18). As the Lord’s life and death was devoted to the fulfilment of God’s will and not His own, so we too will have that stamp upon us “forasmuch...” as our Lord did and died as He did.

4:3 It’s possible that sometimes “fornication” refers to a way of life and thinking rather than just the specific physical actions. Thus 1 Pet. 4:3 speaks of how before conversion “we walked (lived day by day) *in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine*...”. It doesn’t mean that all day every day Peter and those brethren had committed fornication; but it was a way of life that got a grip on their personality. And so it is today, although made much worse by the ingenuity of man. That sexual impurity is a state of mind was of course taught by the Lord Himself (Mt. 5:28).

4:3,4 Peter, in a rare autobiographical comment on his life before conversion, admits that he “walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine... running with them (the Gentiles) to the same excess of riot” (1 Peter 4:3,4). He uses the same Greek word as in Lk. 15:13 regarding the riotous behaviour of the prodigal. He saw himself in that younger son, rejected by the Judaistic elder brother, who would not sit at meat in table fellowship with him. According to other NT allusion, we are to see the prodigal as a symbol of all of us who will ultimately sit at meat with the Father in His house. And yet Peter makes the link plain for all to see.

4:4 The warnings of the New Testament letters concerning the state of the ecclesia just prior to AD70 also have reference to our own times, living as we do on the brink of the second coming. The final part of this study is written unwillingly. But in all spiritual, expository and intellectual honesty, it is impossible to overlook the fact that just prior to AD70, there were groups of false teachers within the ecclesia, nibbling away at the basic tenets of the true faith, whilst appearing to be respectable believers. 1 Pet. 4:4 and Heb. 13:4 indicate that some of these people advocated that any form of behaviour was acceptable, especially in a sexual context. It should be noted that the man of sin is associated with those within the ecclesia; he is framed as a Judas-like character. We have seen earlier that there are connections between the image of Daniel 2, Goliath, and the man of sin. All of these are to be destroyed by Christ’s return. The tribulation of the first century ecclesia was both from the Jewish / Roman beast outside it, as well as from the supporters of those systems inside it (see Eph.6). It is therefore to be expected that there will be elements within the latter day ecclesia affiliated to the persecuting beast also.

4:5- see on Lk. 20:25.

4:6- see on Rom. 8:18.

4:7 Passover night was to be “a night of watching” (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), strongly suggesting “watching in prayer” (Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Cor. 11:27?). Similarly those who are found “watching” at the Lord’s midnight coming (cp. that of the Passover angel) will be found acceptable (Lk. 12:37).

4:9 Peter speaks of the need to use hospitality *without grudging* (1 Pet. 4:9); he foresaw how brotherly love could be shown physically, but with an underlying grudge that in fact we somehow *must* show such love. This is not the "love unfeigned" of which the Scriptures speak.

4:10 The grace of God is "manifold", using a Greek word which means multi-faceted, many coloured, light split into its various components through a prism (1 Pet. 4:10).

A deacon means literally one who serves at table. We must all serve [deacon] one another (1 Pet. 4:10; Eph. 4:12). And yet there were clearly specific 'deacons' in the New Testament ecclesias. Clearly they were officially doing what was in fact the duty of *everyone* to do. And so it is with us. There may be brethren whom we appoint to teach us; but we should all in some sense be teaching and influencing each other in the Lord's way. Likewise there was an office of 'evangelist' (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5), but none would doubt that we are *all* evangelists.

We have all been given some gift, and that is to be used in the servanthood / slavery of our Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 4:10). We can mindlessly say that yes, Jesus is Lord, quite forgetting that it implies we are His serving slaves. The magnitude of the 'slave' concept in the ecclesia of Christ is easily overlooked, and it was this which made it so different from others.

4:11- see on Rom. 9:17.

4:12 "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you" - i.e. some thought that Peter's warning of a coming holocaust, based as it was on Old Testament precedent, was "strange" [Greek: 'foreign, an intrusion']. And how many will react to similar warnings made in our last days in just the same way? The Greek word translated "strange" here often refers to the Gentiles- as if Peter is correcting any feeling they may have had that the tribulation predicted would only affect the Gentiles. 'Think it not *strange*, a Gentile thing only- it will affect both you believers and the Gentile world at large'. This is a highly relevant warning to those today who state with such dogmatism that believers will not experience any of the tribulations which are to come upon the surrounding world. A suggestion worth testing is that the sufferings of natural Israel have always been matched simultaneously by difficulties for Israel after the spirit.

4:13 The purpose of the tribulations of the last days will be to make us truly fellowship our Lord's agonizing, to make us know for ourselves that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him". It is fair to assume that those who really try to shoulder their Lord's cross now will not need to go through such an experience. Thus there are many connections between the experiences of the latter day saints, and the sufferings of Christ. Peter's letters were written to strengthen the faithful in the problems of the AD70 'last days', as well as our own. They are full of reference to Christ's sufferings (e.g. 1 Pet.1:11,19,21-24; 3:18; 4:1). "The fiery trial which is to try you (is cause for rejoicing because it makes you) partakers of Christ's sufferings" (4:13). See on Mk. 13:13.

"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy". We have shown that our sufferings in the holocaust will associate us with Christ's sufferings- so that the joy on his return will be "exceeding"! "The time [AD70] is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" [4:17]. Going through the holocaust will effectively be our judgment seat. "The righteous [will] scarcely be saved" [4:18]- spiritual survival during this time will be by the skin of our teeth; as was our Lord's spiritual survival on the cross which we will then fellowship.

4:14 "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Pet. 4:14) uses 'the name of Christ' as meaning 'preaching the name of Christ'. The two ideas are so closely related. In the course of this witness, men will 'speak evil' of us, and yet in doing so they are speaking evil of the Christ we are so identified with (1 Pet. 4:4,14). "For his name's sake they went forth" in obedience to the preaching commission (3 Jn. 7). Because we bear the Lord's Name by baptism into it, we *are* Christ to this world. Likewise, those in covenant relationship in the Old Testament bore Yahweh's

Name, and were therefore in all ways to act appropriately lest their behaviour “profane my holy name” (Lev. 22:32).

4:15 Reflect on 1 Pet. 4:15- we shouldn’t suffer as murderers or thieves... nor as meddlers in others’ matters. Meddling in others’ matters is put on the same level as murder and theft! Time and again, we expect there to be a dichotomy made by the Lord between the sinners and the righteous, the good guys and the bad guys. But before Him, we are all sinners. Thus to the prostitute kneeling before Him, He assures her that her sins are forgiven; but He turns to the ‘righteous’ Simon and severely rebukes him for a lack of love and for being too judgmental (Lk. 7:36-50).

4:17 The cherubim visions of Ez. 1,9 and 10 are applied in the New Testament to the glorified Christ (Rev. 2:18; 1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Pet. 2:4-9). This surely implies that they were ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah; and perhaps we are to understand that they could have had fulfilment in a Messiah figure at the time of the restoration.

4:18- see on Mt. 14:30; 2 Pet. 3:15.

Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. Indeed, they shouldn't be. For Christian believers aren't good people. We are saved by grace alone. The righteous are "scarcely saved" (1 Pet. 4:18). The righteous remnant who spoke often to one another about Yahweh will only be "spared" by God's grace (Mal. 3:17). The accepted will feel so certain of this that they will almost argue with the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment that He hasn't made the right decision concerning them (Mt. 25:37-40). It's only a highly convicted man who would dare do that. Thus the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome (Rev. 21:4). We will be like the labourers in the parable who walk away clutching their penny, thinking "I really shouldn't have this. I didn't work for a day, and this is a day's pay".

4:19 Because Yahweh God was Israel’s creator, therefore He ought to have been their King (Is. 43:15). If we really believe His creative authority over us, then He will rule in every aspect of our lives. Realizing that God is a "faithful creator" should inspire us to commit the keeping of our lives to Him in time of suffering (1 Pet. 4:19).

5:1 Knowing his condemnation, where did Peter go after his denials? Probably he could quite easily have also gone and hung himself- for he was of that personality type. But instead he went to the cross- for he was a witness of the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 5:1), and his words and writing consistently reflect the language of Golgotha’s awful scene. There, in that personal, hidden observation of the cross, probably disguised in the crowd, not daring to stand with John and the women, his conversion began. Then his love for his Lord became the more focused. Now he could *do* nothing- and his thinking had been so full of *doing* until that point. All he could do was to watch that death and know his own desperation, and somehow believe in grace. “Who his own self bare our sins in his body up on to the tree” (2:24 RVmg.) suggests the watching Peter reflecting, as the Lord’s body was lifted up vertical, that his sins of denial and pride were somehow with his Lord, being lifted up by Him. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18) could well have been written by Peter with a glance back at the way that after his denials, he the unjust went to the crucifixion scene and reflected just this. When in 5:1 he comments that he witnessed the sufferings of Christ, he could be saying that therefore these thoughts were his thoughts as he witnessed it: the just suffering for him the unjust, to bring him back to God.

Peter was a “witness” of the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 5:1). The same word is used to characterize his witness of preaching in Acts 1:8; 5:32; 10:39. The Greek word doesn’t convey that he simply saw the Lord’s sufferings, but that he saw-and-therefore-spoke it. There is something in the cross that cannot be held passively once it has been seen / understood. It *must* be spoken out. Having

described the physicalities of the cross, Is. 52:15; 53:1 continue: “So shall he sprinkle many nations... for that which had not been [i.e. the like of which had never been] told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard [ever before the like of] shall they consider. Who hath believed our preaching (Heb.)? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” by our preaching? There is an undeniable link between the Lord’s sufferings and the preaching of them. They are in themselves an imperative to preach them. So shall He sprinkle many nations with His blood of atonement and new covenant, in that His sufferings would provoke a world-wide (“to all nations” cp. “many nations”) witness to them by those who knew them. Paul sums it up when he speaks of “the preaching of (Gk. ‘which is’) the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18). This is how essential the link between preaching and the cross. Peter’s witness to men is a living exemplification of this.

Our eternal future will be about God’s glory being revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). And yet we are even now partakers in that glory which shall be revealed through us in the future (1 Pet. 5:1). In this we see the connection between our present spirit of witness, and the eternal life. We ‘have’ eternal life in the sense that we live out now the essence of the life we will eternally live. Our eternal future will be all about revealing Christ, who is the glory of God; and this therefore is to be the essence of our lives today. Which is all why ‘preaching’ isn’t an optional extra to the Christian life, something some are into but not others; the essence of revealing / manifesting Christ is to be the essence of our whole existence. And further, the fact we will do this to perfection in God’s future Kingdom is seen by Paul as the ultimate encouragement for us, on account of which we can count all the sufferings of this life as nothing (Rom. 8:18).

We have been called to “glory” in possessing Divine nature in the Kingdom (2 Pet.1:3,4). Obviously we do not fully have that now. Yet we are firmly connected with that hope; Peter earlier described himself as “a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” in us (1 Pet.5:1). Likewise we have been credited with righteousness now through Christ (Rom.9:30), yet our reward in the Kingdom will be a “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim.4:8).

5:2 The Lord’s commission to Peter to “Feed my sheep” is now passed on by Peter to all pastors (1 Pet. 5:2), whom he pointedly describes as “fellow elders”, as if to safeguard against any possible misunderstanding to the effect that he was the senior, special elder. They were *all* to follow his path and thereby achieve the same for others. It is only the typical perversity of the Catholic church which makes them read Peter as the very opposite: as a father figure unapproachable in achievement by any other. The way Peter calls Christ the *petra* of the ecclesia (1 Pet. 2:8) is surely to warn against any view of himself as exclusively the rock.

5:3 Elders are to be “ensamples” (5:3)- s.w. Jn. 20:25 about the “print” of the nails.

Elders are not to be domineering but to be examples, *typoi* (1 Pet. 5:3); but we are all *typoi* to each other (1 Thess. 1:7).

5:3-5 James and John had desired the senior places in the Lord’s Kingdom. “And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren”, and we can imagine Peter to have been the most indignant. For he had thought then that he loved the Lord more than any of the others (cp. Mt. 26:33; Jn. 21:15). “But (in admonition) Jesus called them unto him” and taught that only in the world did men worry about who was greatest and mind that others were over them, and went on to teach that the true greatness was in humility: “whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life...” (Mt. 20:25-28). These words were lived out in epitome at the last supper- and again, Peter had objected to it. He had failed to grasp the Lord’s teaching here. And having learnt the lesson finally, he can teach others that they like their Lord should not ‘lord it’ over their brethren, but rather be clothed with humility after the pattern of the kneeling Lord in the upper room (1 Pet. 5:3,5).

5:5- see on 1 Pet. 3:1.

“Gird yourselves with humility to serve one another” (1 Peter 5:5 RV). This is a clear reference to the Lord’s humility at the last supper. But it had been Peter who didn’t perceive it. Now, it is as if he pleads with his readers not to be as slow as he had been to perceive the supremacy of humility.

A relationship with a God like this really ought to humble *us*. He, the Almighty, has asked us to humble ourselves so that we might walk with Him, as if He is so far beneath the petty pride of man (Mic. 6:8 mg.). This really ought to humble us. The whole purpose of the Gospel is to bring down the mountains of human pride and lift up the valleys of those who lack any self-respect (Is. 40:4), thereby making an equality of attitude amongst God’s people. The vision of the Kingdom in Is. 2:2-4 was used as an appeal for *humility* amongst Israel (2:10-12). We have been clothed with God’s righteousness (Is. 61:10; Rev. 3:18), and therefore we should be clothed with humility too, as our response to this (1 Pet. 5:5).

5:6- see on Mk. 9:35.

5:7- see on Phil. 4:6.

5:8 Pliny records how Christians were asked to make a threefold denial of Christ (*Epistles* 10.97). It has been suggested that the account of Peter’s threefold denials of Christ has been included in the Gospel records as an encouragement to those whose faith failed them that still there was a way back to restoration with the Lord Jesus, just as there had been for Peter. When Peter encourages his persecuted brethren to resist the “roaring lion” of Roman / Jewish persecution (1 Pet. 5:8), he is therefore to be seen as writing against a background in which he had actually failed the very test which his brethren were facing. Yet he can therefore even more powerfully encouraged them, because he had also experienced the Lord’s restoring grace.

It’s maybe significant that the Septuagint translates “going to and fro” in Job 1:7 with the word *peripatei* – and we find the same word in 1 Pet. 5:8 about the adversary of the early Christians ‘going about’ seeking them – a reference to the agents of the Roman and Jewish systems.

They were to “be watchful” (1 Peter 5:8 RV), watching unto prayer as the end approaches (4:7), as Peter had not been watchful in the garden and had earned the Lord’s rebuke for going to sleep praying (Mt. 26:40,41). They were to learn from his mistake. Their watchfulness was to be because the devil was prowling around, seeking whom he could desire (5:8). This was exactly the case with Peter: Satan desired to have him, he should have prayed for strength but didn’t do so sufficiently (Lk. 22:31). He was warning his brethren that they were in exactly the situation he had been in, a few hours before he went into that fateful High Priest’s house.

5:12 The sheer complexity of human persons means that we cannot ultimately judge them. We see our brother’s various personas, sometimes his true, reborn self coming out; and our images of others derive as much from ourselves as from them. It amazes me that we humans succeed in accurately communicating with each other as much as we do. The more one perceives the complexity of the person and the personas whom we meet, the more apparent it is that we cannot claim to be their judge. And the more evident it is that the judgments which human beings constantly make about each other are so superficial and often inevitably false. Further, if we truly believe that we ourselves are in Christ and “impute” His person as being the essence of our real self, then we must likewise impute His righteousness to our brethren. Thus Peter could say that he ‘imputed’ Silvanus to be a “faithful brother” (1 Pet. 5:12). If only we could consistently live out this truth, then all friction between brethren would be a thing of the past.

2 PETER

1:1 2 Pet. 1:1 RV speaks of us as having faith in the imputed righteousness of our God and our Saviour Jesus. We cannot believe in imputed righteousness unless we have firmly set our faith in the fact and appreciation of the fact that the Father and Son are there, and they are righteous. This may sound obvious. But if we do really believe it, we cannot be idle in this knowledge of Christ; it will elicit in us a response (:8 RV).

1:4 The very fact we have received the promises should mean that therefore we separate ourselves "from the corruption that is in the world" (2 Pet. 1:4). We will be happy to have a light hold on possession of property, knowing that this earth is ours, it's just that for now, we are just passing through it, surveying it, after the pattern of Abraham.

1:5 Add "to virtue knowledge". There is a great emphasis by Peter on the need for "knowledge" to overcome the coming tribulation: 1 Pet.3:7; 2 Pet.1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18; an impressive list. By all means compare this with Dan. 12:10, which prophecies a sudden jump forward in understanding God's word by the faithful of the last days. The increasing branding of Bible classes, study articles etc. as 'academic' seems to indicate that we are in the same position as those weak believers whom Peter encouraged in the first century. It seems that we are willing to stop at 'Christian service' ("virtue") rather than *adding* knowledge.

2 Pet. 1:5-9 speaks of "knowledge, temperance... charity... if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ... and (can) see afar off" - i.e. the correct application of knowledge in practical terms leads to being even more fruitful and having even greater knowledge and spiritual vision. The RV reads: "In your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue knowledge"; and the Greek definitely means that we should develop one virtue through the exercise of another. Strength leads to strength.

1:5,6 Peter's confidence in preaching to the wise of this world in his *a-grammatos* way (see on Acts 4:13) is continued in the way his letters stress that the only true knowledge is that of Christ (2 Pet. 1:5,6; 3:18). He was writing in response to the Gnostic heresy that 'gnosis', knowledge, enlivens the eternal spark within man until a man's knowledge becomes his 'immortal soul'. Peter didn't leave this for the more erudite to combat. Like an illiterate peasant farmer unashamedly challenging atheistic evolution, Peter powerfully made his point.

1:7 Our experience of tribulation leads to the development of patience, then real hope of salvation, and above all, as the final stage of maturity, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). 2 Pet. 1:5-7 describes a similar upward spiral of chronological development, again culminating in brotherly kindness and then, love. And then, Peter goes on, we will **know** the Lord Jesus Christ (v.8). This is not to say that we cannot show love in our days of spiritual immaturity, but "love" in the sense of that final state which is saturated with the experience of Christ is the ultimate end which God is working in us to achieve.

1:8- see on 3 Jn. 11.

1:9- see on Lk. 17:12.

1:11 There will be different degrees of reward in the Kingdom. Are these not a reflection of the different levels which men have served God on in this life? One star will shine brighter than another; one will rule over five cities, another over two. There is entry into the Kingdom, and an 'abundant' entry (2 Pet. 1:11).

1:12 One of the themes in Peter's second letter, written as it was at the very end of his life (2 Pet. 1:14), was that of the need to "remember" the words of the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 1:12,13,15; 2:3; 3:1). This was with evident allusion (the same word is used) to the way that on his shameful night, Peter had remembered the word of Christ, and wept those bitter tears of ineffable regret (Lk. 22:61). Peter knew some of his sheep were weary with the way, and needed a like repentance and subsequent

energizing which he had known. He was wishing all his readers (and that includes us) a path of growth that followed his. He had always *known* the words of Christ; indeed, he had loved them. He shows himself an enthusiast for Bible study and reflection on the Lord's words. But he didn't remember them in that they weren't living as a compelling force within his conscience. After his first denial and the cock crowing, surely he 'remembered' the Lord's words: that before the cock crowed twice, he would deny Him thrice. He must have shrugged off that first cock crowing as coincidence, sure he wouldn't deny again. And then the second denial- well, there was no cock crow, so, don't worry... But he wasn't aware enough of his own liability to failure to have the Lord's warning words in the forefront of his mind. He didn't pause to reflect that the cock would soon crow again, and therefore he would be sorely tempted to make the third denial. He knew the word of the Lord, but failed to remember it. And this he now realized. And he urges his readers to learn more quickly and less painfully what he had to be forced to learn.

Now Peter was converted, he was strengthening his brethren (Lk. 22:32). This theme of strengthening was evident in Peter's letters (s.w. 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:12; 3:17). Some of his last written words were that "Ye... be *established* in the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12); he uses the same Greek word which the Lord used when He asked Peter so *strengthen* his brethren (Lk. 22:32). Peter at the very end knew that he had made it. His awareness of his own failures was at the root of his appreciation of his Lord's grace, and this was the motive power behind all his pastoral work.

1:13 Peter preaches Christ as 'the stone / rock' in his letters, knowing that this was the title which the Lord had given *him*. He saw his death as a taking down of a tent (2 Pet. 1:13), using the same word for the tabernacle he had wanted to build for his Lord at the transfiguration (Mt. 17:4). Then, he had wanted the tent to be set up so that the time of the Lord's departure wouldn't come; so that the Lord would stay with them there, with Moses and Elijah, in what must have seemed like the Kingdom of God. Again, Peter didn't want the cross, either for his Lord or for himself. But now he had learnt his lesson; he saw that his tent must be taken down, the vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus, the words of His coming death and future Kingdom, these were quite enough. There had been no need of the tent on the mountain, and now he saw there was no need for the tent of his body either. We are all the same. Our death will literally be a death with the Lord, in that our resurrection will be after the pattern of His (Rom. 6:5).

1:15 As he faced up to his own imminent time of dying, he saw that his death would be a death with the Lord (Paul also spoke of his death in this way). He spoke of his death as "my *exodos*" (2 Pet. 1:15), using the very same and specific word which he had heard at the transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah comforted the Lord regarding His *exodos* (Lk. 9:31).

1:16-18 The letters of Peter recount the transfiguration experience, and tells his brethren that they need to take heed to the word (2 Pet. 1:16-18), just as he had to be almost rebuked: "This is my beloved Son: *hear* him". Peter loved the word, but so often didn't hear it, and at the crucial moment didn't remember his Lord's word. He had said "at thy word" I will let down the net; but when he saw the huge catch, he was amazed; he realized that he hadn't really believed his Lord's word. And he knew he was simply "a sinful man", worthy of condemnation for his lack of faith ("depart from me"). He had to be taught that his own natural abilities were nothing at all. He was taught this in relation to fishing, to his faithfulness, commitment to laying down his life for Christ. He was made to learn that he knew nothing as he ought to know. And he implicitly admits this to his readers, when he asks us to take heed of the word which we may think we well know, just as he had to. Peter learnt the lesson of the transfiguration, for he told the Jewish authorities that he had to hear God's word rather than theirs (Acts 4:19).

1:17- see on Jn. 13:32.

1:18,19 "There came *such* a voice to (Christ) from the excellent glory...and this voice which came from heaven *we* heard...we have also a *more sure word* of prophecy, whereunto *ye* do well that *ye*

take heed" (2 Pet. 1:18,19). Notice the progression in his reasoning here. Peter considered it such an honour that he could hear the words which God primarily intended for Christ. And even more wondrous, the word of prophecy which we have all heard is an even *more* wondrous revelation of God's glory than the word of God which came at the transfiguration. Yet do we even begin to reach that sense of wonder which Peter had on the mount? That sense of rapture, of real spiritual transport, of reaching out of earthly things into Heavenly, that desire for the experience never to end, even though we realize that we only understand a fraction of the infinity which is revealed by God's word?

1:19 2 Pet.1:19 speaks of the more sure word of prophecy shining as a light (candle) in the dark ("squalid", R.V.mg.) place of our mortal mind, "*until* the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts". When the day of Christ's coming arrives, we will then have the fullness of the light of God's revelation. The present word of prophecy is but a lamp struggling against the darkness of our natural mind, in this life. But at the Lord's return, our very innermost beings will be filled with the light of God's revelation in Christ. Somehow our knowledge of God will be of such a different magnitude, that we will no longer relate to the word of prophecy in the same way as we do now.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed (as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, *until* the day dawn, and the day-star arise) in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19). We must take heed to the word *in our hearts*- this is the idea, rather than any suggestion of a mystical coming of Christ in our hearts.

1:21 We need to clear up the misconception that the prophets were merely fax machines, dispassionately forwarding God's message to men. Their words were indeed the words of God, they were inspired, but they also had emotional involvement. All Scripture is indeed God-breathed, but this involved the prophets in breathing in of that Spirit and exhaling it, as it were (2 Tim. 3:16). The passage in 2 Pet. 1:19-21 has been somewhat misunderstood. Holy men of God indeed spoke as they were "moved" by the Holy Spirit; but, contrary to what is repeated parrot fashion by so many, the Greek for "moved" doesn't necessarily mean 'irresistibly carried along', as if the prophets had no personal input into what they said. The Greek word *phero* appears several times in 2 Peter:

- "The grace that is to be *brought* unto you" (2 Pet. 1:13)
- "There *came* such a voice to [Christ] from the excellent glory" (2 Pet. 1:17)
- "This voice which *came* from heaven" (2 Pet. 1:18)
- "The prophecy *came* not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *phero* [*'as they were...'* is not in the original- it's in italics in the AV] the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21)

Clearly enough, *phero* in 2 Pet. 1 doesn't mean 'irresistibly carried along by'. The context of 2 Pet. 1:21 is a warning that as there were false prophets in Old Testament times amongst the people of God, so there will be in the new Israel. Peter's stress is that the Old Testament prophets were *holy*, they spoke according to the will of *God* and not the will of *man*; their words came from the Holy Spirit, and not the spirit of the flesh- in distinction to the false prophets who spoke of the flesh.

2:1- see on Gal. 5:1.

Peter must have felt to the false teachers with whom he contended as he did towards Ananias. He warns that they even deny the Lord who bought them (2 Peter 2:1). They *even* do this- as if denying the Lord was the worst possible, imaginable sin. And it was the very thing which he had so publically done, three times, and had effectively done again when bowing to Judaist false teaching. They deny "the Lord"- and that had been Peter's favourite title for Jesus during the ministry. As he warned of the evil of the apostate brethren, his own sense of personal failure and frailty was so evidently shown. And yet it was no reason for him to simply say 'So, I can't judge, I can't criticize another after what I did'. What he had learnt from the whole experience of forgiveness and grace was that the wondrous grace and atonement of Christ *must at all costs be preached and preserved*.

The tragedy is that Israel's rejection of Moses is typical of the rejection of Christ by those in the new Israel who turn away. The same word used about Israel *refusing* Moses as their deliverer (Acts 7:35) is used about those who *deny* (same word) the Lord (Jesus) that bought them (2 Pet. 2:1). This latter verse is prefaced by the information that as there were those who lost their faith in the ecclesia in the wilderness, so there will be among the new Israel (2 Pet. 2:1). Therefore "the Lord that bought them" is an allusion back to Moses as a type of Christ. The illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses when he first appeared to them is so apparent. They were slaves in Egypt, and then one of the most senior of Pharaoh's officials reveals that he is their brother, and has been sent by God to deliver them. Yet they preferred the life of slavery in Egypt. This same illogicality is seen in us if we refuse baptism, preferring to stay in the world of slavery, or later when we chose the world as opposed to Christ. We deny, we refuse, we reject, the Lord who bought us by going back to the world from which he redeemed us. The illogicality of going back to the world is brought out by the illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses. Israel rejected Moses because it was easier to stay where they were. Such is the strength of conservatism in human nature; such is our innate weakness of will and resolve. They rejected the idea of leaving Egypt because they thought it was better than it was, they failed to face up to how much they were suffering (Num. 11:5). And our apathy in responding to Christ's redemptive plan for us is rooted in the same problem; we fail to appreciate the seriousness of sin, the extent to which we are in slavery to sin- even though the evidence for this is all around us.

The 'last days' letters are full of warning not to follow the false teachers who will be within the ecclesia. "There were false prophets also among the people (of Israel) even as there shall be... among you", the new Israel [2 Pet.2:1]. And dare we continue: "Many shall follow their pernicious ways". This has to be connected with the Lord's teaching that "many" (Gk. the majority) would fall away just before his coming (Mt. 24:12); Peter is perhaps picking this up, and shewing that this will be due to a tolerance of false teachers. The failures of natural Israel are likewise traceable to false teaching from the priesthood, rather than purely personal apostacy. All the examples of rejected false teachers mentioned in 2 Pet.2 were responsible, and in the ecclesia of their times. These false teachers had once known the Truth [2 Pet.2:12] and would therefore be reserved to judgment [2:9]; they attended the memorial meeting [2:13], they had the gift of prophecy as Balaam did [2:15 cp. Heb.6:4-6], and had once left the world, although now they were returning to it [v.20-22]. In other words, they had all the external trappings of good Christians. We must expect something similar in the latter day ecclesia.

2:2 False prophets bring forth bad fruit; the nature of the teaching therefore affects the nature of the fruit (Mt. 7:16). False teaching [which isn't the same as genuine intellectual failure] therefore elicits a bad way of life (2 Pet. 2:1,2); and the false prophets of the latter days will result in iniquity abounding (Mt. 24:11). This is why teaching does matter. Without faith- which comes from holding *the Faith*- it is impossible to please God. True righteousness is the fruit of the Spirit; the result of the word of the Gospel working within us, the result of the Spirit of Christ which God has sent forth into the hearts of His people. Many outside of the Faith appear to in fact be far more righteous than most of us, in terms of 'good works'. But these good works are an outcome of their natural personality type; this is how they *are*. But God has sent His Son to the sick who need a doctor, to those imprisoned by their own natures, to the tragically blind. Through the power of the basic Gospel doctrines which comprise the One Faith, we have the power to change.

2:3 Any student of the New Testament epistles cannot fail to notice these repeated warnings against false teachers. Peter reminded his readers of "the words... spoken by the holy prophets [New Testament ones?] and the apostles... knowing this first [i.e. most importantly], that there shall come [false teachers and mass apostacy] in the last days" [2 Pet.2:3]. Unless we say that "the last days" is a phrase which has no reference to our own times, we have to accept that there will be major false teaching and apostacy within the brotherhood just before Christ's return. Personally, I can't see that we have completely reached the position described in the letters for the last days- yet (although it is

quite possible that we take a more positive view of ourselves and our community than God does). But the holocaust to come will no doubt crystallize the attitudes which are now developing, to create the horrendous situation prophesied. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new Heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, *beloved*, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless".

2:4 It was presumably in one of the previous creations that the Angels were developed. They have knowledge of good and evil, just as fallen man has (Gen. 3:22). This could suggest that they too had the experience of temptation and choice between sin and obedience. Job speaks of the angels who were charged with folly as if this fact was well known (Job 4:18). John Thomas suggested that the "angels that sinned" in 2 Pet. 2:4 lived at this time. There is no doubt that this passage in Peter, and the parallel in Jude, has some reference to Korah's rebellion. However, there are many such warnings to God's people which combine reference to more than one historical event, and it could be the same here: as if to say, 'History repeats itself. The angels that sinned so long ago went through in principle the same process of apostasy as Korah's company, and you too are capable of falling from grace in the same basic way'. Apostasy has a long continuity; all who fall follow a similar pattern, ultimately sharing the same apotheosis. It could even be that the fall of the Kings of Tyre and Babylon (Is. 14; Ez. 28) are recorded in the language of an angel / "anointed cherub" who wanted superiority over the others, and who then fell from Heaven (Ez. 28:14; Is. 14:13,14 cp. Eph. 4:10). There are strong similarities between these passages and the Jewish understanding of Angels that sinned before creation. These similarities would be in order to show the same kind of historical continuity: between the Angels who once sinned, and spiritually blessed men who turned away from what they could have had. The fact that *all* the Angels *now* are righteous and incapable of sinning (cp. Lk. 20:35,36) doesn't mean that Angels never sinned in a previous creation. But the point to note is that they are now in the grave, chained in darkness- not running around as evil spirits causing mischief. They are "reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4), when "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3).

Chains of Darkness

Comments

1. Angels in the sense of super-human beings cannot sin.
2. If literal angels are referred to here, then they are not going round making people sin, seeing that they are kept safely chained up. They are "under darkness", i.e. not openly on the earth nor in heaven.
3. The context of Jude 5 implies that Jude 6 is a reference to a well known fact, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this". There is no record in any other part of the Bible about angels sinning in Eden; how then could these Christians be reminded of these things? All the other examples which Jude mentions are taken from Old Testament examples which were well known, and v. 6 is no exception.
4. There is no indication that these things happened in Eden. There is no mention of the angels starting to cause trouble after they sinned – the implication in v. 6 is that they were immediately chained up under darkness. At the creation "all the sons of God (the angels) shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) and they saw "everything... was very good" (Gen. 1:31); there was no evil whatever.
5. "Angels" can refer to men.
6. These "angels" are to be judged at "the great day" of the second coming. The punishment of the unworthy at that day will be total destruction (Mt. 25:41); yet we know that angels cannot die or be

destroyed (Lk. 20:35,36). an angel walked with Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:27,28). We read of the angel that appeared to Manoah, "when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar" (Jud. 13:20). God "makes his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104:4). Therefore these "angels" who are to be condemned must be human ones, because fire cannot destroy angels.

7. Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah also ("even as") "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (i.e. total destruction after judgment – Mt. 25:41). This implies that the angels that sinned were made a public example (as was Sodom) of what would happen to those who disobey God. However, there is no Biblical record of angels sinning in Eden – so how are these "angels" of v. 6 "set forth for an example"? There is no indication that even Adam and Eve saw the punishment of anyone apart from the serpent. Remember that sin entered the world "by one man" – Adam (Rom. 5:12) – not by an angel sinning.

8. Notice that the words "Devil" and "Satan" do not occur in these passages.

9. 2 Peter 2:9–11 interprets the reserving of the angels unto judgment as "The Lord knows how... To reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished... them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government... speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels... bring not railing accusations". This is saying that the counterparts of the sinful angels are the unjust men who follow their human lusts. That these men are not angels is shown by the fact that they speak evil of people, whereas angels do not. Peter doesn't imply there are different categories of angels, sinful and good. He does not say 'the good angels do not...', but rather he refers simply to "angels", all of whom are good beings.

10. "Chains of darkness" represent death in Proverbs 5:22–23 ("cords" in v. 22 is rendered "chains" in the Septuagint). Thus the 'angels' are now dead. They are "reserved" unto the day of judgment. "Reserved" does not mean (in the Greek) 'kept prisoner', it implies rather that God has made a note of these people, and will give them their judgment accordingly, at the second coming of Christ.

11. 2 Peter 2:1 sets the context for v. 4: "But there were false prophets also among the people (of Israel, in the wilderness, cp. Jude 5), even as there shall be false teachers among you". Thus the angels that sinned appear to refer to false teachers amongst Israel in the wilderness. That God "spared not" the sinful 'angels' connects with how God "spared not" the sinful Israelites in the wilderness (Ps. 78:50). Indeed, the idea of God not sparing is often associated with His attitude to apostate Israel: Dt. 29:20; Jer. 13:14; 21:7; Ez. 7:4,9; 8:18; 9:10. The angels "reserved unto judgment" matches how the Jewish world was "reserved unto judgment" in AD70 (2 Pet. 3:7).

12. The immediate context is in 2 Peter 2:3 – the Judaizers were about to be suddenly punished (in the holocaust of A.D. 70) – "whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not". Peter then reasons that as God immediately punished the 'angels' that sinned, so the judgment and damnation of the Judaizers would not be long delayed. If the angels were super-human beings who still have the liberty to go about tempting us to sin, and have had such liberty since the garden of Eden 6,000 years ago, then their day of judgment *has* lingered, it *has* been a long time coming, and therefore Peter's use of the angels that sinned as an example of God quickly punishing sin in v. 4 does not apply. Jude was writing against a background of belief that sinful Angels were roaming the world and inciting people to sin. He surely is attempting to debunk this idea by stressing that "the Angels who kept not their first estate" – whoever we understand them to be – are safely locked up in chains, unable to influence anyone on earth today.

Suggested Explanations

1. We have noted that this incident is probably concerning human “angels” at some point in the history of Israel, probably on the wilderness journey, and that it would be well known and documented in Jewish history (i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures). It also involved a great public punishment of the wrongdoers which set them “forth as an example”. The rebellion of the 250 princes of Israel in the wilderness led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram, as recorded in Numbers 16, seems to fit quite well.
2. “Angel” can mean “minister”, “messenger” (as John’s disciples were messengers or ministers to him, Lk. 7:24). Numbers 16:9 describes the rebels as “ministers” of the congregation. The Septuagint uses the word *aggelos* for “ministers”, which is the same Greek word translated “Angel” in 2 Peter 2:4. They left their first, or original, “principality” (Jude 6, A.V. margin); the rebels were princes, but wanted to be priests as well (Num. 16:2,10). Because of this, the ground opened and swallowed them (Num. 16:31–33), as a dramatic example to everyone of the fate of those who rebel against the Word of God. It was especially dramatic in that it is emphasized that this was the first time that such a thing had happened (Num. 16:30). Thus they are now dead, “in everlasting chains under darkness”, in the heart of the earth, to be resurrected and judged at “the judgment of the great day”. Jude 8 implies that “likewise”, i.e. like the angels that sinned, the Judaizers “speak evil of dignities”, e.g. Jesus and Paul. The rebels spoke evil of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:11–14). “Cast them down to hell” (2 Pet. 2:4). “Hell” in this verse is *tartaroo* in the Greek and is used only once in the New Testament. It was used in pagan Greek mythology to describe a subterranean place of darkness for the dead. “Chains of darkness” is rendered “pits of darkness” in the R.V. The Greek word *serius* (pits) indicates an underground granary or prison, which corresponds with Korah, Dathan and Abiram’s destruction when they “went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished” (Num. 16:33).
3. That they were destroyed and were not left alive is shown by a comment on this incident in Psalm 73. Here Asaph describes how “my steps had well nigh slipped” (v. 2) because the wicked seemed to be prospering so much. Then, “I went into the sanctuary (tabernacle) of God; then understood I their end” (v. 17). This was because the brass censers of the 250 rebels were melted down after their death and beaten into plates with which the altar was covered – another example of the angels that sinned being publicly “set forth as an example” (Jude 7). Asaph would have seen these and reflected on the fate of the wicked men. Thus he reflects upon the rebels, the angels that sinned, “surely thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down (by the earth swallowing them) into destruction” (v. 18) – therefore they are not alive, but in the same way as Sodom was destroyed with eternal fire, i.e. totally, so, too, were these “angels” (Jude 6,7).
4. The language of being cast down to the underworld and the darkness of the grave all features in the record of Egypt’s judgment in Ez. 31:16–18. Yet Egypt was not literally cast down from Heaven. The allusion to Egypt is to show how the apostate Jews in the wilderness were treated as if they were actually Egyptians – because in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.
5. We must understand the immediate context in which Peter uses the idea of God having judged ‘angels’ [whoever they refer to]. He reasons that *if* God didn’t spare ‘angels’ who sinned in the past but judged them; and *if* God punished sinners by a flood but saved Noah; and *if* God overthrew the wicked in Sodom but saved Lot... *then* we can be assured that God knows how to rescue the Godly and to judge the wicked in a future day of judgment (2 Pet. 2:4–9). The example of angels being judged must be seen as a warning and a comfort to us in our day. The implication would surely be that just as the flood and the destruction of Sodom were well known Biblical examples of Divine judgment, so must the judgment of the ‘angels’ be. And therefore the interpretation which associates them with Korah and his rebellion in the wilderness would seem to be most appropriate. And note

that there is *no* Biblical record of rebellious Heavenly angels being judged and thrown down to earth.

2:5 Given this apostasy of the sons of God and the unwillingness of the world to listen to Noah's preaching (2 Pet. 2:5) the size of the ecclesia must have declined, until it was only 9 strong. 'Methuselah' means 'When he dies, it shall come'- suggesting that he died a few days or weeks before the flood came. We can imagine the ecclesia falling away one by one until it was just that old brother, the middle aged Noah, and his three faithful sons (no doubt he had other sons and daughters who he failed to influence). The small, declining size of our ecclesias and the total apathy to our preaching should not discourage us- as with all negative things, a positive message can be read into them in the light of Scripture. And the message here is that such things clearly indicate that we are in the last days. The only people to survive the temptations of these 'last days' before the flood were one family unit. As these events are so pregnant with latter day relevance, it may be that we are to perceive here a faint hint that strongly led family units are the way to survive the last days. Noah is described as "the eighth" (2 Pet. 2:5), perhaps alluding to the fact that of the eight people saved in the ark, he was "the eighth"; he put the others first. The three who escaped the judgments on Sodom, another type of the last days, were all members of the same family; possibly implying the same thing. It must surely be significant that our strongest members are often from families with other strong members.

2:5-8 There are many connections between Peter's letters and the Gospels. I calculate that once every three verses, Peter is alluding to the Lord's words. And the figure is probably higher, seeing that we don't know all the words and actions of the Lord Jesus, and probably Peter is alluding to incidents and words which aren't recorded. Like Paul, Peter's mind was saturated with the Lord Jesus. This was the secret of his spirituality, this was why he could cope with the ministry to the Gentiles which he had so boldly started being taken away from him and given to Paul, this was why he didn't slump into a life of melancholy bitterness. Some of his allusions are conscious allusions (e.g. those to the transfiguration). Others seem almost unconscious- e.g. the way he cites both Noah and Lot (2 Pet. 2:5-8) as warnings for the last generation, when the Lord had likewise used both of them together (Lk. 17:26-32).

2:6- see on 2 Tim. 2:14.

According to Gen. 18:17-19, the reason God told Abraham what He would do with Sodom was because Abraham would teach others, and his descendants would teach others. This implies that Sodom's destruction was to be a special lesson for all generations. And 2 Pet. 2:6 says the same- Sodom was to be a perpetual "example unto those that after should live ungodly"; in this sense Sodom was "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The fire was "eternal" in the sense that the example of destruction was to be to all generations. This paves the way for Sodom's destruction to be understood as a particularly significant type of the last days.

2:8 The calling of Lot out of Sodom is a type, on the Lord's authority, of our calling away to judgment. His position immediately prior to the Angels' coming must therefore connect with our situation now. Lot was in no way as spiritually strong as he ought to have been, nor as enthusiastic for the Lord's coming as his complaining about the evils of the city recorded in 2 Pet.2:7,8 might lead us to think. The very fact that he chose to live in the area whilst Abraham steered well clear of it is testimony enough to his worldliness (Gen.13:10,11). The offering of his two daughters to the Sodomites also betrays a certain unspirituality (Gen.19:8). The fact that Sodom's fate was revealed to Abraham rather than Lot may also be significant.

2 Pet.2:8 reveals how Lot "vexed (Gk. 'tortured') his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds". Seeing that he failed to influence his family to properly appreciate the sins of that city, and that he was so attached to it that he was unwilling to leave, this must be interpreted as little more than the sort of middle class, respectable 'tut-tutting' that present day Christianity abounds

with. After all, he had chosen to live there, he did not have to stay, and the record of his choice of Sodom in Gen.13 spotlights his unspiritual, worldly thinking in this regard when compared to Abraham, the stranger and sojourner. Whether this assessment of Lot's character is felt to be correct or not, it must surely be accepted that there was a serious dualism in his position which has strong similarities with ours today- vexing his soul about the sins of the surrounding world, and yet increasingly involved in it and greatly benefiting from it materially, at spiritual cost to himself and his family. Lot was effectively willing to betray his daughters to the men of Sodom, pointing forward to the Lord's prophecy of how in the holocaust to come, many will betray each other (Mt. 10:36), family life within the ecclesia will break up; a spirit of dissension will fall upon natural and spiritual families.

2:9 'The Lord' to Peter meant 'the Lord Jesus'. He comforts them that the Lord knows how to deliver the Godly out of temptation (2 Pet. 2:9). Surely he was referring back to how the Lord Jesus had prayed for him, knowing the temptation that was to come upon him in the High Priest's house, knowing Satan's desire to have him. And although it might have seemed that in the short term Peter's weakness rendered that prayer powerless, in fact in the end, his faith didn't fail, just as the Lord had prayed. And so from his own example he could comfort his readers that surely their Lord knew how to deliver from temptation, even if like Lot and like Peter those he delivers may deserve to be left to the outcome of their own words and actions.

2 Pet.2:9 comments on God's deliverance of Lot from Sodom as "The Lord (knowing) how to deliver the Godly out of temptations"- to keep Lot from the great spiritual temptation provoked within him by that city, God destroyed it. Similarly God's abhorrence of this present world which Sodom typifies is largely due to the spiritual temptation it so evidently brings upon His people.

2:10- see on Jude 14.

2:10,11 In a sense, the Angels deal with men according to men's own perceptions of themselves, and with what can only be described as a certain spiritual culture. They do not "speak evil of dignities" (2 Pet. 2:10,11), as exemplified in the way the Angelic voice from Heaven addressed the wicked Nebuchadnezzar whom they were about to depose as "O king Nebuchadnezzar" (Dan. 4:31). This isn't only an example to us of not being abrasive to people even if we know them to be seriously in the wrong. It's an example of how we should seek to deal with people within the terms of their own perceptions. It makes one wonder whether at the judgment, the Lord will address those who were known in their lives as 'Doctors' or 'Reverends'... obviously making the point, as the Angel was to Nebuchadnezzar, that human advantage means so absolutely nothing before the ultimate analysis and set of values of His judgment.

2:13 Peter speak of how these men loved "the reward of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:13), using the very same Greek phrase he had used earlier about how Judas betrayed the Lord for "the reward of iniquity" (Acts 1:18). Judas and Peter had committed in essence the same sin of denying their Lord, and at the very same time. Peter would have intensely been aware of this. And yet he holds up Judas as a prototype of all who fall, as if to say: 'And there, but for the Lord's grace, nearly went I. See the terror of it, and turn away from that road. I of all men can tell you that'. These Judas types "are carried with a tempest [in] the mist of darkness" (2 Peter 2:13). The Greek for "carried with a tempest" only occurs elsewhere in Mk. 4:37 and Lk. 8:23 in description of how Peter and the disciples, proud of their sailing ability, were driven by the storm / whirlwind in the darkness. The Greek for "tempest" is highly specific- it refers only and specifically to the whirlwind storms which can arise on Galilee. Peter clearly intends the allusion back to the night when he too was driven in a Galilee whirlwind, and had been rebuked for his lack of faith. He is really saying that he too has been a condemned man and can relate to how they feel; yet he was converted out of it, and came to gracious forgiveness. And so, he implicitly appeals, can each of you my readers be.

One wonders about the way that Peter describes the apostate believer as drunk in the day time (2 Pet. 2:13), when he had dismissed with a confident logic the claim that he was drunk at Pentecost by saying that it couldn't possibly be so, because it was early in the day and people can only get drunk at night (Acts 2:15). Could it be that his perception of sinfulness and the grossness of this present evil world had increased by the end of his life?

2:14- see on 2 Pet. 3:16.

2:16 Peter was unafraid to rebuke the high flying intellectuals who were wrecking the first century ecclesia. He likens his rebuke of them to the "dumb ass speaking with man's voice" which rebuked Balaam (2 Pet. 2:16). This was what he chose to identify himself with; that inspired donkey. There was no great trained intellect in Peter; yet his zeal for God's word puts us to shame. As the time of the end progresses, it seems that more and more of Christ's church (in the Western world) are educated people. In this I see a tremendous danger. A man who could probably not read, who probably wrote his inspired letters by dictation because he couldn't write himself, had a zeal for understanding which puts us to shame. Paul correctly made the point (and who more aware that his intellectuality could run away with him than Paul) that God has chosen the weak things to confound the mighty; He has chosen the simple of this world to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1 and 2). I get some kind of intuitive feeling that Paul had Peter at the back of his mind as he wrote this letter to working class Corinth (1 Cor. 1:26). The deep mutual respect between theologian Paul and fisherman Peter is a real working model for our ecclesias.

2:17 They will be sent to a mist of darkness (2 Pet. 2:17), as Paul walked about in a mist and darkness, not knowing where he was going (Acts 13:11). Thick darkness is associated with God's judgment (Is. 8:22; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15)- and recall how the judgment of darkness upon Egypt was so severe that human movement required 'groping' (Ex. 10:21). Perhaps there will be a literal element to this in the experience of the rejected. Be that as it may, the utter *pointlessness* of life without God will be so bitterly apparent. And yet they would not face up to it in their day of opportunity. This likening of the rejected to scavenging dogs in the rubbish tips outside Jerusalem lends further support to the suggestion that the punishment of the wicked will be associated with literal Gehenna, outside Jerusalem. 2 Sam. 23:6 speaks of how the rejected will be "thrust away" by the Lord. The Hebrew means to wander, to be chased [and is translated this way elsewhere in the AV]. Significantly in this connection, 2 Sam. 23:7 speaks of how the rejected will be consumed in "the same place" where the seed of David was to overcome wickedness. Literal Gehenna was in the same vicinity as Golgotha; and this in this sense His death was a foretaste of the future judgment, as we observe elsewhere.

2:18-21- see on Jud. 16:19.

3:1 2 Peter 3 concerns the coming of the 'day of the Lord' both in AD70 and more importantly in our last days. The allusions to the Olivet prophecy, which is similar in this respect, and the use of the word 'parousia' to describe this 'coming' of the Lord confirm this approach (see studies on these topics elsewhere). This chapter contains warnings of a major apostacy that would arise within the latter day ecclesia, and urgent exhortations as to how we should live in the last days. It is not an exaggeration to say, in the light of this, that these words were fundamentally written for our generation, living just prior to the second coming, notwithstanding any other application to earlier generations. The purpose of this chapter, in common with the whole second epistle, was to "stir up (the Greek implies suddenly, with force) your pure minds... that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy (Christian?) prophets (e.g. Paul, v.15), and of the commandment of us the apostles" (v.1,2). "Pure minds" clearly indicates that Peter's intended audience were those strong in the faith (cp. 2 Tim.3:8), the faithful remnant of the 'last days' of first and twentieth centuries, whose understanding (A.V. "minds" is the Greek for the deep intellectual element of the mind) needed to be enlarged and stirred up through the word. This would make them

appreciate the reality of the responsibilities they faced in the last days. Hopefully the readers of this exposition are in exactly that category.

3:2 The letters of Peter urge his readers to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before" (2 Peter 3:2). Yet this is evidently alluding to the frequent references to the disciples being slow to "remember" [s.w. "mindful"] the words which their Lord had "spoken before" (Lk. 24:6,8; Jn. 2:17,22; 12:16). Indeed, the same word is used about Peter 'remembering' [s.w. "be mindful"] all too late, the words which his Lord had "spoken before" to him (Mt. 26:75). So Peter was aware that his readers knew that he had not 'remembered' the words his Lord had "spoken before" to *him*- and yet, knowing that, he exhorts his readers to 'remember' or 'be mindful' [s.w.] of words which had been previously spoken. His readers likely had memorized the Gospels by heart. And yet Peter asks them to learn from his mistake, not to be as slow to remember as the disciples had been, and he especially. This is the basis of powerful exhortation- a repentant life, not an appearance of sinlessness.

3:3 The "first" or most important (Greek) thing they were to understand when it came to Bible teaching about the last days was "that there shall come in the last days scoffers" (v.3). The presence of false teachers within the ecclesia would be one of the clearest signs of the second coming. The Lord "began" His Olivet prophecy with a warning about false teachers, as if this would be the first main sign (Mk. 13:5). Likewise Paul says that it was needless for him to write to the Thessalonians about the "times and seasons" of Christ's return. "For yourselves know perfectly (clearly) that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess.5:1,2); i.e. it would be when there were unready elements within the ecclesia, to whom Christ's return would be thief-like. In similar vein, John taught that the believers could be certain they were in the 'last days' of AD70 because of the presence of false teaching (1 Jn.2:18). Connecting this with our comment on 1 Thess.5:1,2, it may well be that the 'false teaching' is not so much in terms of basic abstract doctrine, but in the encouragement of a way of life that is not alert for the second coming. As we progress through 2 Peter 3, and indeed the entire New Testament, it becomes painfully obvious that this class of people were to arise *within* the ecclesia. As there were false teachers among natural Israel, so there must be within the New Israel (2 Pet.2:1). Peter implies that this fact is a major theme in the teaching of all the apostles and Spirit-guided brethren. There are a number of connections between the descriptions of these people in 2 Pet.2, and the language of 2 Pet.3.

Such false teaching was something which Peter was prophesying: "There *shall* come... scoffers... saying..." (v.3). But now the tenses change to the present: "for (because) this they willingly *are* ignorant of...". Even then these brethren had shut their mind to Bible based reasoning, refusing to consider the power of God's word as exhibited in the Old Testament. It was therefore only a matter of time before they started speaking forth false ideas.

3:4 These "scoffers" (Gk. 'those who poke fun at') would "walk after their own lusts... saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet.3:3,4). This links up with the false teachers of 2 Pet.2 being styled "them that walk after the flesh in... lust" (2:10). Thus, as always, the motivation for the questioning of true doctrine, in this case that of the second coming, was in order to justify a fleshly way of life. There seems a connection of thought here with the Lord's reflection that the servant who felt the Lord's coming was extensively delayed would start to "eat and drink with the drunken" and beat the fellow-servants. Peter's later reference to the Lord's thief-like coming for such brethren (v.10) indicates that there is a connection here. This would show that Peter is interpreting the Lord's description of the man who thought that the Master was delaying His coming, as meaning that in reality he was questioning whether his Master would ever come. This must surely be where a disinterest in prophecy ultimately leads- in a man's heart, anyway. Note how the false teaching was expressed in the form of a question. This common characteristic of false teachers dates right back to the serpent in Eden, showing that they have the family likeness of the beast.

But then came the thrust of their argument: "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (v.4). If "the fathers" here refers to the ecclesial elders who had known Christ in the flesh (as the phrase is used in 1 Cor.4:15; 1 Jn.2:13,14), it would appear that these dishonest doubters of the first century were middle aged believers who had themselves been waiting some time for the Lord's return. Christ's parable of the wicked servant getting tired of waiting would indicate the same. In any case, a group of arrogant youngsters would be unlikely to have the impact on the ecclesia which 2 Pet.2 and 3:17 indicate that these false teachers would have.

This idea that Christ would not literally return was doubtless wrapped up in very respectable terms. We cannot overemphasize that the motivation for this false doctrine was in order to justify a fleshly lifestyle. Apostasy from the truth always has this motive. Conversely, true enthusiasm for the Lord's return is invariably associated with a spiritual way of life (cp. Rom. 13:12). 2 Thess.2:2 says that the deceiving brethren taught that the day of Christ is here" (R.V.)- presumably through the idea that the believers now are fully the Kingdom of God, that Christ's mystical presence amongst us is in fact His real and only form of existence and 'coming' to be with us, and that therefore there was no need for a doctrine of a second coming. In such an hour as the unworthy "think not", Christ will return (Mt.24:44). The Greek translated "think not" implies a very strong level of conviction that he will not return; it doesn't just imply that they will be expecting him but not very eagerly. Yet doubtless all latter day believers will claim some belief in a second coming- but in God's eyes, in their hearts they are absolutely persuaded he will never come. In like manner the Lord saw the half-committed believer as a person who actively *hates* God- although that isn't how that weak believer sees it all (Mt. 6:24). In reality, they will have convinced themselves that he will not return- either by their way of life, or their specific doctrinal beliefs. It may be in this way that there is a claim of "peace and safety" within the latter day ecclesia, seeing that "peace and safety" is very much the Old Testament language of the Kingdom (1 Chron. 22:10; Ez. 28:26; 34:25,28; 39:26; Zech.14:11). It is very difficult to achieve a balance between appreciating our high spiritual status now, and realizing that we are not yet the fullness of God's Kingdom. A true appreciation of our position should lead us to value the second coming more, to personally yearn for it, and see its vital necessity. Never will that be a dry doctrine which we just assent to.

"Where is the promise of his coming" (v. 4) has an extraordinary number of allusions to other Scriptures, which all confirm a uniform interpretation.

Ezekiel 12

The desolation of Israel by the Assyrian invasion was repeatedly foretold by the prophets. The message was continually mocked by the false prophets, who claimed inspiration from God to claim that the day of judgment had been endlessly delayed. They also belittled the predictions made by the true prophets, spreading their ideas until it became a common joke that Yahweh's prophets kept speaking of a coming day of the Lord that never came. But God's reply was clear: "What is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?... I will make this proverb to cease... say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect (fulfilment) of every vision... I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall no more be prolonged" (Ez.12:22-25). The similarities with the last days leading up to AD70 are clear. The true word of God regarding the coming day of the Lord was mocked; a belief that "the days are prolonged" led to the conclusion that "every vision faileth", as the thought that "my Lord delayeth his coming" resulted in a lack of faith in the word of promise. Our Lord's statement that "all shall be fulfilled" at His coming (Lk.21:32) matches the assurance given here that "every vision" *would* be fulfilled when the day came. Those within the ecclesia of Israel at Ezekiel's time who were expressing such doubt, were matched by those within the ecclesia of spiritual Israel (perhaps also Jews?) in the first century. Clearly they must have their latter day counterparts.

Isaiah 5

Set against the background of the imminent Assyrian invasion, this denunciation of Israel also has marked similarities with the words of 2 Pet.3. "My people... have no knowledge... that say, Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it... therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the stubble... (so) is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people" (Is.5:13,19,24,25). Peter implies that the false teachers he is referring to should have "grown in knowledge" (3:18), and that because of their mocking request for God to speed up His purpose they also would have a fiery destruction. The irony was, of course, that the apparent delay was due to God's mercy in providing them time to repent (vv.9-12).

There are several allusions in 2 Peter 3 to the Olivet prophecy. The attitude Peter is speaking of here in v.4 is related to that of the elder servant who decides that his Lord is delaying his return, and therefore he can act in a fleshly way as if the Lord will never come (Mt.24:48). The person Jesus describes did not throw off the external trappings of his faith. "*My Lord* delayeth his coming" indicates that he still spoke of Jesus as his lord, and we are therefore left to conclude that he did not say these things in a spirit of public, gross abandon to the ways of the flesh, but rather deep in his heart, or perhaps as a new form of doctrine. Our Lord spoke of the man thinking this "in his heart"; but because our thoughts always find reflection in our words (Mt.12:34), it is inevitable that Peter should speak of these people now actually saying those words. Thus the words of these false teachers had long been gestating. The following verses speak of how God's word was present in the initial creation and His subsequent re-ordering of it. In just the same way, the word of God would have a part to play in the judgment of these false teachers. This would suggest that their claim that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" refers back to that of Gen.1. However, we can expect to see in the reasoning of these men a fair degree of complexity. It is just possible that the concept of a new creation in Christ was so common in the thinking of the early believers (Rev.3:14; 2 Cor.5:17; Col.1:15,16; 3:10; Rom.8; Eph.2:10; 3:9; 4:24 etc.), that they were saying 'Since the apostles ("fathers") died, everything is going on fine since the new creation began on the cross. The spiritual graces we experience now as part of the new creation are such that there doesn't seem any need for this second coming doctrine'. Erroneous notions of the Holy Spirit have led apostate Christianity to question the true doctrine of a future Kingdom, and thereby the Biblical concept of the second coming. Emphasis is placed upon 'Christian service' in this life, rather than the hope of the future Kingdom. And yet the bottom line is that the latter day brotherhood will shy away from the second coming *in their hearts*, and doubtless each will articulate this in different ways: doctrinally, practically or simply in the attitude of their hearts.

3:6 They had willingly forgotten (R.V.) that it was through God's word of command that the earth arose out of the water at the creation, and by this same word of God the water was commanded to overflow the earth again at Noah's time, taking the world back to how it was before creation- a sphere covered in water. "*Whereby* the world... was overflowed with water" (v.6) thus refers to the word of God by which ("whereby") the present world was created, by commanding the waters to recede to let the dry land appear (Gen.1:9). Peter had previously made the point that the promised judgment of God in Noah's time was delayed in order to allow the maximum scope for repentance by that wicked world (1 Pet.3:20). The false teachers were ignorant of this fact through having forgotten what they once knew- i.e. that a similar delay was being experienced by their generation in the coming of the Lord's day. Because of this, they were now squarely matching those who mocked Noah. The times of Noah are a definite type of the 'last days' of the Jewish system leading up to AD70. "The *world* that then was... perished... the *Heaven and the earth* which are now, by the same word (of God) are... reserved unto fire" (cp. water; v.6,7). Thus Peter equates the "world" with the present "Heavens and earth", implying that a "Heavens and earth" were destroyed in Noah's time. It was "all flesh" that perished (Gen.6:11-13). This indicates a clearly figurative interpretation of "Heavens and earth" as meaning an order of things. This line of argument has yet to be answered by Pentecostals, Catholics and others, over-enthusiastic to see in these verses a destruction of God's own perfect dwelling place as well as this beautiful planet. The quotation of Is.65:17 in v.13 should

also be brought into play with such people- the new "heavens and earth" is a new system of things to come upon this (already) beautiful earth. The literal heavens and earth were hardly destroyed in Noah's time. Elements of this prophecy refer to the ending of the Jewish system in AD70; the world of Noah "perished" (v.6) as the Jewish world would. The same Greek word occurs in Heb.1:11 concerning the 'perishing' of the Jewish heavens and earth due to the unchanging ministry of Christ. This would indicate that the Law itself was in some way ended in AD70, although of course it was 'taken out of the way' on the cross (Col.2:14-17). The same word for "perish" occurs in 2 Pet.3:9 in the context of God's punishment of the wicked within the ecclesia- He is unwilling that "any (of them) should perish". Jude 11 matches this by warning the same class of how their prototypes "perished in the gainsaying of Core". It appears that the judgments which were to bring the Jewish system to a close would therefore be the same as those which would punish the false teachers. We can conclude from this that many of the first century false teachers were Jews or Judaist-influenced. It is to be expected, therefore, that the punishment of the Gentile world at the second coming will also be the means of judgment inflicted on the false teachers of the last days.

We are told by Jesus and Peter that the second coming is typified by the flood. There is therefore a similarity between the world of Noah's time, and our last days. It is easy for us to fail to appreciate the carnage of the flood; the Sunday School image of happy giraffes with extra long necks poking out of the ark really isn't on. The destruction wrought by the flood was absolute and devastating. This gives us a clue to the huge amount of change which the Lord's coming will suddenly bring on the earth. 2 Peter 3 draws a parallel between Noah's world being destroyed by water, and ours being ended by fire. The flood water changed the sea level, the climate, and totally remoulded earth's topography; whole mountain ranges were created and destroyed. We can safely assume that even *greater* physical changes will be brought about by Christ's return. Is.54:9 speaks of the latter day judgments upon Israel being "as the waters of Noah unto me: for the *mountains* shall *depart*, and the *hills* be *removed*; but my *kindness* shall not *depart* from thee, neither shall the *covenant*... be *removed*". Thus in the future, the mountains and hills *will* depart as they did at Noah's time; but God's kindness and covenant will not.

3:7 The flood was the result of God's commands to the Angels. "But the heavens and earth which are now by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement" (2 Peter 3:7). Thus when God spoke to the Angels about the flood, His commandments then also included details of the judgements at the second coming. Thus there may be a degree to which the Angels have to interpret God's word first before acting upon it, or where they can only fulfil some aspects of it at any one time.

"By the same word" of God that had caused the earth to rise from the waters and later called the waters over the earth, "the heavens and the earth which are now... are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment" (v.7). That there must be some reference here to the passing away of the Law and the Jewish system associated with it is shown by the allusion here to Mt.5:18: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled". Our Lord's fulfilment of the Law was primarily on the cross, but the fact that 2 Pet.3 speaks of the Jewish heavens and earth passing away in AD70 indicates that the finishing of the Law did not come into full effect until the destruction of the temple. This explains the many hints throughout the New Testament that the believers kept some parts of the Law prior to AD70.

2 Thess.1:8 speaks of the Lord Jesus coming "from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance" on those who had rejected the knowledge of God, and had consciously disobeyed the Gospel of Christ. This connection not only underlines the fact that both AD70 and our last days are spoken of in 2 Pet.3, but also proves that the "heavens and earth" which suffer fire are representative of individuals. Hence Peter's description of the day of "fire" as being "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men".

2 Pet.3:7 speaks of the heavens and earth being reserved unto "*the day* of judgment and perdition of ungodly men", and then goes straight on to point out that "one *day* is with the Lord as a thousand years" . Whilst the judgment seat itself may last a very short time, does this read as if *the day* or era of judgment will in some way be the 1,000 years of the Millennium, even though the wicked individuals themselves will probably die fairly quickly? The Millennium will be the period in which the earth will gradually be cleansed of the results of the sins of "ungodly men". See on Rev. 14:11.

2 Pet.3:7 uses the same Greek word for "ungodly" as in 2 Thess.1:8 to describe the false teachers; and it occurs an impressive six times in Jude's letter concerning the same people. The warning that judgment would no longer be delayed shows that "the day of judgment" which came on the Judaizers must refer to AD70. But there can be no doubt that "The day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" must refer ultimately to the second coming. The idea of punishment being "reserved" is continuing a theme of the preceding chapter. "The angels that sinned" were "*reserved*" unto judgment" (2:4), the responsible people to whom Lot preached are "*reserved*... unto the day of judgment" (3:7), and thus for the false teachers of the first century too, "the mist of darkness is *reserved* for ever" (2:17). As the first two examples received judgment in this life and also a 'reservation' of future punishment, so the sinners within the first century ecclesias would receive a punishment at the manifestation of the Lord in AD70, and also at his second coming. This explains the dual reference of 2 Pet.3 to both these periods. The theme of judgment being "reserved" adds weight to Peter's plea for his readers to realize that God was not suspending judgment indefinitely, but that despite an apparent delay in meting it out, judgment was without doubt reserved for revelation at a future date. The continued emphasis on God using the agent of His word to do this must be connected with Peter's request for us to give more careful attention to Bible study (3:12,15,16). It will be by the Word and our attitude to it that we will be judged at the last day. As the word of God would be the agent of destruction for the unworthy, so it could bring salvation to the righteous. We have earlier suggested that the language of creation used here may echo the idea of the new creation in Christ. "By the word of God the heavens were of old" suggests the account of the new creation in Col.1:17- and "the word of God" is a title of Christ. Thus as Christ had brought about the new creation, so He was capable of punishing (in AD 70) and destroying (at the second coming) those parts of it which failed to reflect His glory.

3:8 The attitude of willing ignorance by the unworthy can quite easily be adopted by us. "Beloved, be *not* ignorant (as those of v.5 were) of this one (Greek 'other') thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (v.8). In addition to being acutely aware of the fact that through the power of His word, God would certainly bring about "the day of judgment" at some time (i.e. the reasoning of v.5-7), Peter bids us be aware of one other thing- that God can collapse and expand periods of time as He wishes. Not only can one of God's "days" be a vast expanse of time to us in human terms, but also one of our brief days can be turned into a thousand years by God if He wishes. This principle is illuminated by appreciating that Peter is here quoting Ps.90:4. This prayer of Moses was bringing before God the miseries of the condemned generation in the wilderness, and pleading that God would repent of His decision to bar them from entering the land (Ps.90:12-17). After all, Moses had previously changed God's declared purpose of destroying Israel and making of him a nation; and had not God declared to him that He was willing to show Moses the fact that His purpose could be changed in accordance with human behaviour (Num.14:34 A.V.mg.)? Thus Moses had every reason to try to change God's plan again through prayer. Against this background Peter is reasoning that if Moses could try to pray for the days of punishment for Israel to be shortened and for their sin to be overlooked, then we too can find reason to pray for the shortening of the days until the Kingdom, and for God's mercy upon the sinners of the new Israel. There are a number of significant parallels between Peter's argument and Ps.90:

Psalm 90

2 Peter 3

:2	:5
:5	:8
:6	The language of 1 Pet. 1:24; Is. 40:6-8 re. the first century Jews
:7	:7,10,12
:12	:2,15,18
:13,14	:12

And for the enthusiast: Ps.90:16,17= Hab.3:2 (re. the second coming)= 2 Pet.3:12,13.

It is quite possible to translate 2 Pet.3:8 as "One day with the Lord is as a thousand" , which would suggest another Psalm allusion- this time to Ps.84:18: " A day in thy courts is better than a thousand" . In this case Peter would be saying 'By all means be aware that a day of judgment and condemnation will surely come, as outlined in v.5-7; but beloved, do be mindful too of the wonderful reward. Just 24 (12?) hours of perfect fellowship with the Lord, unmarred by our sin, is worth a thousand years of this life!'. Truly an inspiring thought, and a motivation to come to appreciate the righteousness of God.

3:9 "The Lord... is longsuffering to us-ward" of the last days. This longsuffering of Jesus suggests the parable of the persistent widow, whose continued requests should match our prayers for the second coming (the vengeance of our adversaries which she requested will only come then). "Though he bear long" (s.w. 'longsuffering') with us, "God shall avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him" (Lk. 18:7). The "us" whom Peter refers to as experiencing the Lord's longsuffering ('bearing long') are therefore to be equated with "the elect" in their fervent prayers for the second coming. The days being shortened- a strong idea in 2 Peter 3- for the elect's sake therefore refers to the hastening of the second coming on account of the elect's prayers (Mt. 24:22). In view of the later references to Mt. 24, it is not unreasonable to think that Peter is consciously alluding to Mt. 24:22 concerning the shortening of the days for the sake of the elect's prayers, through his allusion to the parable of the persistent widow of Lk.18:7.

Peter presses home the point: "The Lord (Jesus- v.15,18) is not slack concerning his promise (to return- of Jn.14:3,18,28), as some men (in the ecclesia) count slackness" , but is longsuffering (v.9). The Greek for "slack" here means 'delay'; this is assurance that God is not 'delaying' as men dilly-dally in the execution of their plans, but is rather postponing this for a good reason. Because this was a major feature of God's dealings with natural Israel previously, it is not surprising that there are a number of instructive Old Testament allusions here.

Is.30:17-19 records how Israel would suffer for their sins, but then God would wait for a certain time until they cried to Him in repentance, before bringing about a time of blessing on the earth based around the Lord's presence in Jerusalem. "One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one (Deut.28 language)... till ye be left as a tree bereft of branches (how Paul describes what happened to Israel in the first century, Rom.11)... and therefore (i.e. because you are such sinners) will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted (through your repentance), that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more (the language of Is.65:17-25, quoted in 2 Pet.3:13): He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry (of repentance): *when* He shall hear it, He will answer thee". Not only is God delaying the Kingdom until there is repentance in Israel, but such is His *mercy* that He will not bring it about until such repentance. His purpose should not be seen, therefore, just in terms of the cold equation 'Repentance in Israel= second coming', but the supreme *mercy* and *love* which this arrangement

shows should be appreciated. "And *therefore* will He be exalted" Isaiah comments- by those who understand these things. Rom.11:32-36 is a marvellous example of this.

Peter's stress on how the word of God would bring about the day of the Lord shows his realization of how the false teachers were really trying to say that the word of God was untrue, and that *it* was delaying. Perhaps he had Hab.2:3 in mind: "The vision (of the word) is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry". The context is a prophecy concerning the coming Babylonian desolation of Jerusalem. Evidently there were some in Israel who felt that the fulfilment of these words of God was 'tarrying' so long that it would never come. The next verse continues "But the just shall live by his faith", i.e. in the eventual fulfilment of the word of God. This is twice quoted in the New Testament concerning the first century believers (Rom.1:17; Heb.10:38). It is therefore in order that verse 3 concerning the coming 'day of the Lord' in the Babylonian invasion should have relevance to the same period. If 2 Peter 3 refers here, then this is indeed the case. It is noteworthy that prophecies like Jer.17:27 speak of this Babylonian invasion as a "fire" in both literal and spiritual terms- as 2 Peter 3 also employs "fire" . Reading between the lines of the New Testament epistles, it is evident that Paul often phrased things in such a way as to warn against what was presumably a common temptation- in this case, to think that the day of the Lord had been delayed so long that effectively the brethren felt that it would never come. Thus Heb.10:37 quotes Hab.2:3 which we have been considering with reference to the second coming: "He that shall come *will* come (cp. 'I am that I am'), and will *not* tarry". Rom.13:11,12 makes the same point- "*knowing* the time... now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed" .

The key to overcoming this temptation was to remember that the delay in the Lord's coming was a sign of God's mercy in granting sinners time to repent. Rather than leading to slackness of service, the delay should lead to greater diligence. "The Lord... is longsuffering to us-ward" . This longsuffering of Jesus suggests the parable of the persistent widow, whose continued requests should match our prayers for the second coming (the vengeance of our adversaries which she requested will only come then). "Though he bear long" (s.w. 'longsuffering') with us, "God shall avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him" (Lk.18:7). The "us" whom Peter refers to as experiencing the Lord's longsuffering ('bearing long') are therefore to be equated with " the elect" in their fervent prayers for the second coming. The days being shortened- a strong idea in 2 Peter 3- for the elect's sake therefore refers to the hastening of the second coming on account of the elect's prayers (Mt.24:22). In view of the later references to Mt.24, it is not unreasonable to think that Peter is consciously alluding to Mt.24:22 concerning the shortening of the days for the sake of the elect's prayers, through his allusion to the parable of the persistent widow of Lk.18:7.

This "longsuffering" is because God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (v.9). The "any" and "all" here evidently refer to those whom God has called- the responsible. The fact that millions of people throughout history have lived and died with no chance of repenting or avoiding 'perishing' through response to the Gospel, is proof enough that God is perfectly willing that many should perish and not come to repentance, as far as the world in general is concerned. But such is His desire for the *responsible* to live up to their spiritual potential, that He has delayed the coming of the Lord. Doubtless Israel deserved immediate punishment for their crucifixion of Christ- a human 'God' would certainly have reacted straight away- but judgment was deferred until AD70 in order to give them every opportunity to repent. God's judgments in the OT were often deferred because people repented (e.g. Is. 48:9; Nineveh); yet such is His supreme grace to Israel that when they unrepentantly crucified His Son, He *still* deferred judgment. The same is true in our days. What pain it must give our Father to see this time which has been allowed as extra opportunity being used irresponsibly! The bridegroom of the parable "tarried", the same Greek word translated "delay" in "my Lord *delayeth* his coming". Tragically, this resulted in the spiritual slumbering of all of the virgins rather than their greater eagerness and expectancy.

That this passage is indeed concerning the responsible is confirmed by the allusion it makes to Ez.18:23: "Have I any pleasure (Heb. " will") at all that the wicked should die...and not that He should return from His ways, and live?". The context is concerning a Jew (i.e. responsible) who had been wicked but now had repented. The 'perishing' of 2 Peter 3:9 must refer to destruction at the judgment, God is not willing that any of us ("longsuffering to usward") should be condemned then, therefore that day is delayed. Perhaps we can infer that it is because of God's particular love for our very last generation of believers that the day is delayed- perhaps by 40 years, as in the case of Israel in AD70? It is possible that there may be a "generation" of 40 years after the blossoming of the fig tree- i.e. the first signs of Jewish repentance (cp. the Jews for Jesus movement?).

The way this worked out in the first century is demonstrated by the judgment of the false teachers in the Thyatira ecclesia. I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold... I will cast her into great tribulation... I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev.2:21-23). This latter phrase clearly refers to the second coming (Mt.16:27; Rev.20:12; 22:12); but in addition to their judgment then, they were also punished in the "great tribulation" of AD70 referred to in Mt.24:21,29. As explained in 2 Pet.3, these people were 'given space to repent', but did not. Therefore judgment came. Sadly, there must be similarities with the last days. But it must ever be appreciated that God is doing all things possible to bring about that repentance; and we should likewise help these people to repent, so that the Lord's coming will be hastened. The idea of God being unwilling that any should perish but that all should repent must have some connection with the parable of the lost sheep. The efforts of the good shepherd should be replicated, so the context of the parable indicates, by the believers. Thus the parable is summarized: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt.18:17 cp. 2 Pet.3:9). The fact that there is/ will be a delay in the second coming indicates that there will be a distinct stubbornness by some to repent in the last days- perhaps the last Christian generation is the lost sheep generation, whose repentance will bring the Lord's return? "*When* the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mk.4:29).

But what exactly does 'coming to repentance' imply? "Longsuffering" on the Lord's part takes us back to 1 Pet.3:20, where we learn that God's longsuffering resulted in a delay in the flood coming, so that people had the maximum opportunity to repent and enter the ark, representing entry into Christ by baptism. The Greek for "come to" repentance has the idea of entering into a country- a one off act. A glance down a concordance under "repentance" shows that this word is associated with only two things- baptism, or a major repentance by a completely apostate believer. The delay in the second coming is for these two reasons- so that a seriously apostate group within the ecclesia can repent, and so that there can be the maximum possible allowance of time for the encouragement of people to be baptized. In addition to our prayers being able to speed the Lord's return, these two reasons for the delay involve our own effort speeding it. By repentance and encouragement of our weak brethren to repent, this really will happen; and the quicker we spread the Gospel world-wide, "baptizing all nations", the quicker the delay will end and the Lord will come (Mt.24:14). The latter day Elijah ministry will presumably be after the pattern of John the Baptist- with an emphasis, therefore, on the baptism of Jesus as a means of preparing them for Christ's coming. Our argument that God being unwilling "that any should perish" only applies to the responsible, may seem to contradict 1 Tim.2:4: "God... will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth". The same argument applies as used above- that this is just not true of "all men" literally. Note that in repentance *after* baptism, we can come to "the knowledge of the truth" - i.e. a real appreciation of the wonder of Christ. 1 Tim.2:5 continues: "For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". Our Lord only mediates between God and the believers- called here "men". Most conclusively, the preceding verses speak of praying for rulers, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness... for this is good... in the sight of God, who will have all men to be saved". "We" and "all men" are paralleled as if to say 'We know God wants us to be saved, but we must live a spiritual life in response to this. So pray that we will be given rulers that

enable us to do this without excessive temptation, which may result in our falling from God's great salvation'.

3:10 Having explained the reason for the delay, v.10 continues the description of the judgment to come: "The day of the Lord *will* come as a thief in the night". This is an evident reference to another part of the Olivet prophecy, which has reference to both AD70 and the second coming. The Jewish "house" was "broken up" by the thief-like coming of the Lord. 1 Thess.5 refers to this same passage, interpreting it as a description of how Christ will come unexpectedly to the spiritually weak within the ecclesia. It will be a time when they think they are in "peace and safety" spiritually, and will publicly teach this ("When they shall *say* peace and safety"). This is exactly the theme of 2 Peter 3- the false teachers within the ecclesia of the last days will preach that the second coming is far off; that in fact all is in peace and spiritual safety within the household. But as the thief would break the house up, so 2 Peter 3 graphically describes the total dissolution of the Jewish system ("heavens and earth"). Mt.24:43 indicates that the Lord comes as a thief to those who would be watching over the house- i.e. to the leaders of the ecclesia. The false teachers will therefore be in the leadership of the body- otherwise it would be hard for their ideas to gain the following which these prophecies indicate they did and will.

The heavens shall pass away with a great noise" (v.10) may therefore refer to the destruction of this class of leaders, the 'heavens' of the ecclesia. "A great noise" in Greek implies a whirring- perhaps referring to there being a manifestation of the cherubim at the second coming ("the sign of the son of man in Heaven"?). Jer. 30:23,24, in a decidedly latter day context, speaks of God's judgments coming as a mighty whirlwind, associated as it is with the cherubim (Ez. 1:4). "The elements shall melt with fervent heat" provides impressive evidence for the AD70 application of this chapter when it is realized that most of the occurrences of the Greek word for "elements" are concerning the Mosaic ordinances (Gal.4:3; 5:21; Col.2:8,20). "Melt" can mean 'to unloose', conjuring up the idea of the law as a burden which was now being unstrapped. The relevance of v.10 to both AD70 and the last days is evidence that just as there were false teachers then, so there must also be in the last days. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (v.10) may refer specifically to the judgments coming on the land ("earth") of Israel, and the ending of the works of the Law through the destruction of the temple in AD70. As Noah's world was destroyed with literal water, so it is not unreasonable to expect a literal aspect to the "fire" here mentioned, although this is not to question the symbolic reference of fire to the anger of God. The temple was destroyed with fire, although interestingly Dan.9:26 speaks of its end coming with a flood; fitting in perfectly with Peter's connection of the AD70 judgments on Israel with the flood.

The passing away of heaven and earth suggests another link with the Olivet prophecy: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt.24:34). The physical heavens and earth being permanent (Ecc.1:4; Is.45:18; Ps.78:69), our Lord must have been referring to the order of things which would end in both AD70 and the last days. The faithful who came through the figurative 'fire' of those times would do so through their clinging to the Lord's words. We have earlier commented that this is a theme in 2 Peter 3- by God's word the natural and spiritual creation came about, and by it too sinners can be destroyed if they fail to let it act upon them.

The detailed description of all the elements of heaven and earth being destroyed is embedded, as we have seen, in allusions to the Olivet prophecy. It is therefore to be expected that our Lord's talking there about the sun and moon being darkened, the stars falling etc. (Mt. 24:29) should also have some connection with 2 Pet. 3. The Olivet prophecy speaks of these things being obscured and affected- but 2 Peter 3 describes their complete and fundamental destruction. Sun, moon and stars have several associations with Israel (e.g. in Joseph's dream), and 'Heavens and earth' have also been symbolic of the Jews (e.g. Dt. 32:1). Mt. 24:29,30 describe how there will be signs in these things, and then the Lord would come with the clouds of heaven. 2 Peter 3 shows how this refers to the lead up to AD70, and that then the Jewish system was totally destroyed. This means that the son

of man coming with the clouds of heaven to replace the previous sun, moon etc. would have a limited reference to the system of things based around Christ and his word (Mt. 24:34) which was firmly established in AD70. But most importantly, the dissolution of these 'heavens' refers to the second coming, with the destruction it will bring upon both the Jewish and Gentile worlds, and also upon the unworthy in the ecclesia. This shows that the signs in the heavens which warn of the second coming are not just in the Jewish and Gentile world- but (even clearer) in the state of the wicked within the "heavens" of the ecclesia, who will meet their judgment in this horrendous destruction of all that is evil.

A number of images found in 2 Pet.3 also occur together in Nahum 1:4-8: "He (God) rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry (cp. the earth standing out of the water in 2 Pet. 3)... the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence ("the elements shall melt... the earth shall be burned up", 2 Pet. 3:10), yea, the world, and all that dwell therein ("the earth and the works that are therein")... His fury is poured out like fire... with an overrunning flood (cp. 2 Pet.3:6) He will make an utter end". But all this is prefaced by Nah.1:3: "The Lord is slow to anger". As God always gave ample time for repentance in His dealings with both Israel and the nations in the Old Testament, so He would with spiritual Israel (and even more so?). All God's past dealings with men, as at the flood, with Israel at the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions, in His judgments of the nations, all these will find their summation in how God will deal with us in the last days. In this fact lies the value of following up the Old Testament allusions which Peter makes. That an appreciation of all this must have a fundamentally practical effect upon our lives is something which cannot be over-emphasized.

3:11 "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and Godliness" (v.11). The logic is irresistible; all things of the world as we know it are to be dissolved; only our Godly character will survive the fire; the word which develops this will also last beyond the destruction of the heavens and earth, seeing that it is through the word that they will be destroyed (cp. Mt.24:34). By developing such a word-formed character, we are "looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God" (v.12)- a fair summary of what we have read between the lines of this chapter.

3:12 The earth being dissolved connects with Is.24:19: "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved". The previous verse alludes to the flood, as 2 Pet.3 does: "The windows from on high are open (cp. Gen.7:11) and the foundations of the earth do shake" (Is.24:18). Other writers have made the point that Is.24, especially in the Septuagint, appears to have been very much in our Lord's mind during his Olivet prophecy. 2 Pet.3 being based on the Olivet prophecy, it is to be expected that it will have connections with the same source passages. "The earth" in Is.24 meaning 'the land' (of Israel) indicates that 2 Pet.3 is also primarily concerning the troubles that came upon the land in AD70.

Frequently the Greek word translated "look for" here is used in the context of the second coming, often translated "waiting" (Jude 21; 1 Cor.1:7; Rom.8:19; Phil.3:20; Heb.9:28; Tit.2:13; 1 Thess. 1:10). Our 'waiting' for the Lord is not therefore a passive thing- it is shown by our "holy conversation", something which needs our constant active attention. All too often the impression is given that our 'waiting' is a grim, passive clinging on to a set of doctrines received at baptism. This is certainly part of it- but the quicker we take a dynamic approach to considering "what manner of persons" we ought to be, the sooner the Lord's coming will be hastened. That our spiritual effort, especially in prayer, preaching and pastoral work mentioned earlier, should hasten the coming of that great day should never cease to be a source of wonder and inspiration to us. But do we really want to see the day of Christ? Pleasures of family life, the challenge of careers, personal ambition in preaching work, a desire for a few more years to work on our character- these and many other factors lead us away from an all consuming desire to see the day of the Lord. And if we lack that, then there will be little true motivation for developing a spiritual character and doing the preaching and pastoral work, which we know between them will hasten the day. As if to provide motivation in

all this, verse 12 repeats verbatim the language of v.10 and 11 concerning the totality of destruction which awaits the present world order: "The day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved (= v.11)... and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (= v.10)". This repetition underlines the fact that every element of the present system will be destroyed- the only common link between this life and the future world order is the spirituality which we now develop. We came into this world with nothing, a naked baby; and all we can leave it with is God's record of our spiritual character. Thus it will be by our real spiritual character that we recognize and relate to each other in the Kingdom, rather than by our present physical characteristics. For this reason even the rejected will be able to recognize (in this sense) giants of faith such as Abraham entering into the Kingdom.

The coming of Christ is spoken of as being delayed (Mt. 25:5); and yet it is our spirituality which hastens the day of Christ's coming (2 Pet. 3:12). Putting these facts together shows that the day of Christ will not come when planned because the ecclesia are not as spiritual as they were 'expected' to be- or at least, that's how God wants us to see it.

3:13 Appreciating this, "We according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth *wherein dwelleth righteousness*" (v.13), as opposed to the present earth, where "the works that are *therein* shall be burnt up" (v.10). For Peter, therefore, the vision of the Kingdom was centred around the fact that goodness and righteous principles would so evidently abound, being almost physically manifested in this planet; it will be a "new earth *wherein dwelleth righteousness*". Psalm 72 stresses the abundance of righteousness in that time, showing that David's picture of that time was similar. Likewise if we truly *love* righteousness, this is how we will perceive the Kingdom- rather than as a glorified tropical holiday.

"According to His promise" shows that Peter is referring to a specific Scripture- surely Is.65:17, where a picture of the Millenium is titled "the new heavens and earth". "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens..." contrasts with the words of the mockers: "Where is the promise of his coming?" (v.4). This indicates that "the promise of his coming" was not just the simple statement of Jesus that he would return (Jn.14:3), but it included the details of the Kingdom which he would establish, as outlined in the promise of Is.65:17-25. Thus the doctrines of the literal second coming and the future Kingdom on earth are inseparable. Thus the slippery slope ran: The Lord is delaying longer than I thought; maybe it isn't important that he comes: therefore the Kingdom on earth is a pipe dream. So "the faith" was lost. There is also a connection with Is.66:22-24: The new heavens and the new earth which I will make... it shall come to pass that... they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched". These last phrases are quoted in Mk.9:44 concerning the punishment of the wicked at the judgment seat. The reference to fire fits the 2 Pet.3 context, again showing that the 'heavens and earth' which are to be destroyed with fire include the wicked believers who will be punished in Gehenna. Note that the idea of the ecclesia being ultimately purged of false teachers is presented by Peter as a *comfort* to the faithful remnant.

3:14 "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (v.14)- i.e. with sins covered through the blood of Christ. Such a condition, even for these "pure minds" (v.1), can only be achieved and maintained through much diligence. If it is our desire to be found acceptable by our bridegroom, our awareness of how near we are to meeting him will motivate us to constant self-examination so that we can be presented to him spotless.

Knowledge of the coming of judgment leads to self-examination: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come... But who may abide the day of his coming?" (Mal. 3:2 cp. Rev. 6:17). Belief in the second coming must provoke the question: "What manner of persons ought (we) to be...", as we hasten towards the day of judgment? "Wherefore, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him... without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:11,14). When Israel knew

Yahweh was going to appear, they were to prepare themselves against that day by sacrifice and atonement (Lev. 9:4). Jonah simply proclaimed that judgment would come upon Nineveh; as far as we know, he didn't appeal for repentance. But the very knowledge of judgment to come was in itself an imperative, a command, to the Ninevites to repent (Jonah 3:4,5). "Let the bed be undefiled: *for* fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4 RV). Sexual immorality is impossible if we truly believe rather than merely know... that judgment day is coming.

3:15 In these last days the times are tough now spiritually, getting tougher. Only "for the elects sake those days shall be shortened" and we will be saved by the second coming. Thus 2 Pet. 3:12,15 reminds us that by our prayers and spiritual development, the days before the second coming will be shortened. If they were not, even the elect would lose their faith (Mt. 24:22)- showing how those of us who are alive at Christ's coming will *barely* survive the spiritual traumas of the last days. The virgins were sleeping when they should have been watching; and Peter says that the righteous in the last generation (see context) will *scarcely* be saved (1 Pet. 4:18).

The fact that we are living through a period of delay should never slip our minds- "account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (i.e. the opportunity for our last generation to gain salvation): as our beloved brother Paul... hath written unto you; as also in *all* his epistles, speaking in them of these things" (v.15,16). This sounds as if Peter had in mind a particular passage of Paul, the tenor of which is repeated in all his letters. It may well be that he is referring to the idea of there being a delay in the second coming to allow repentance; however, if "these things" is the repeated warning against the false teachers of the last days, and advice on how to live in those times, then this is quite easily discernible. Moreover, there is a connection back to v.2,3 where Peter reminds us how warnings against false teachers were a major theme of all the inspired writings of the New Testament. Surely there can be no excuse, in the light of all this emphasis, to disregard such warnings? However, Peter writes as if he is referring to a particular passage in Paul's writings. A likely candidate is Rom.2:3-5, which addresses the weak (Jewish) members of the Rome ecclesia, warning them that there will be a day of judgment, and that they should not despise God's love in delaying that day so that they could repent. "Thinkest thou... that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering (cp. 2 Pet.3:15): not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (2 Pet.3:9)? But after thy... impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself (cp. "kept in store", 2 Pet.3:7) wrath against the day of wrath (cp. fire) and... righteous judgment of God" (cp. 2 Pet. 3:7). Another possibility is Eph.5:15,16: "Walk circumspectly... redeeming the time, because the days are evil". By 'buying up' the opportunities for spiritual development in the daily round of life, we are effectively "redeeming the time" in the sense of hastening the Lord's return. Paul pleads with us to see the urgency of this principle: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (v.17). *Seeing that* they could redeem the time to the second coming in this way, the exhortation is driven home: "Awake! Thou that sleepest!... and Christ shall give thee light" by His early return.

3:16 An underlying theme of Peter's argument is the supremacy of the word of God, and how through understanding of and obedience to it, a character can be developed which will pass through the judgments which that word will bring upon the world. Those who are to be destroyed at that time, such as the false teachers, will have failed to understand these things of which Peter and Paul spoke- they found them "things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest" (v.16). The Greek for "unlearned" means those 'not understanding' or 'ignorant'. But they were not unaware of Paul's epistles- they 'wrested' them through their wilful misunderstanding of them (v.5). The beginnings of this sad situation are found in Heb.5:11, where the Jewish believers are called "dull of hearing" God's word, and therefore found the exposition of Melchizedek "hard" to understand. It is to these same Jewish believers that Peter's letters are addressed. Thus a lack of sensitivity in Bible study, a laziness to work out typology and derive lessons from it, resulted eventually in a wilful misunderstanding of basic teaching concerning fundamental doctrine, e.g. the second coming. It takes real faith in the teaching of God's word here to accept that this really can

happen, and has done so. The example of the first century is there for our learning. Such wresting of the Scripture was done "unto their own destruction" (v.16), using the same word translated as "perdition" in v.7, as if their judgment was already working itself out in this life. That verse speaks of how the "ungodly" would meet their perdition in the day when the heavens and earth were destroyed by fire. Thus those within the ecclesia who were so wresting the Scriptures are the same group as those of v.3-7 who would be destroyed at "the day of judgment and perdition (s.w. "destruction") of ungodly men". Jude likewise talks of "ungodly men" who had crept into the ecclesia (v.4). The evident similarities between 2 Pet.2 and Jude are for a reason. 2 Pet.2 and 3 are a prophecy of what *would* happen in the ecclesia, whilst Jude is the record of their fulfilment; hence his use of the present tense "there *are* crept in... ungodly men". It is not difficult to imagine Peter's letter and his verbal expression of these ideas being branded 'unloving', trouble mongering, divisive etc. But within a few years Jude's letter proved the truth of his words. A glance around the latter day ecclesias indicates that there are many "pure minds" (v.2) of the type Peter wrote to; it may therefore seem out of order to suggest that soon the ecclesial situation of just before AD70 will be seen among us. But time and again in this study we have seen the dual application of 2 Pet.3 to both AD70 and our last days. Many other New Testament prophecies could be expounded likewise. The corrective is hinted at throughout all these prophecies: "Remember... be mindful of the words which were spoken before" (v.1,2), meditating on the power of God's word in the past, in creation and at the flood, correctly understanding the teachings of Paul and Peter about the last days (v.15,16), bringing our way of life into conformity with our great hope of the second coming (v.11,12), and so by all this growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.18).

Ex. 16:20 says that the manna, symbolic of God's word, "bred worms and stank" if it was not used properly. The Scriptures, we are told, can be "wrested" by those who claim to believe them, until the "unstable" 'believer' is destroyed morally (2 Pet. 3:16). The only other occurrence of the Greek for "unstable" is a few verses earlier (2 Pet. 2:14), where it is used in a sexual context. The implication is that those 'believers' who want to justify a deviant sexual lifestyle will find that they can "wrest" the Scriptures to suite them, but in so doing they will be working out their own destruction. This is the category who turn God's grace into license for sexual sin (Jude 4).

3:17- see on 2 Pet. 1:12.

In some of his very last words, facing certain death, Peter alludes to this great failure of his- his second denial of the Lord. He pleads with his sheep to hold on to the true grace of God, lest "ye *also*, being led away (s.w. Gal. 2:13 "carried away") with the error of the lawless, fall..." (2 Pet. 3:17). Ye *also* invites the connection with Peter himself, who was led away by the error of the lawyers, the legalists- whereas his sheep had the error of the lawless to contend with. The point surely is that to go the way of legalism, of denying the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is every bit as bad as going to the lawless ways of the world.

The "things" of v. 14 which the beloved look for are those spoken of in v.17: "Beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness". "These things" are therefore not just concerning the coming Kingdom, but also the warnings of the uprising of false teaching, the prophecies of their success, and the fact that the apparent delay of the Lord's return was to give the opportunity for repentance. Peter's double warning is because he knew how prone we are to forget such warnings, and to lose the reality of our love for the Lord's coming. It is as if Peter is speaking to us personally, as the last (?) generation before the full "day of the Lord". "Seeing ye know these things *before*" (v.17) is yet another Olivet allusion- "False prophets shall rise... take ye heed: behold, I have *foretold* you all things" (Mk.13:22,23) about this apostacy. "Take ye heed" is matched by "beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Pet.3:17). "The wicked" are the false teachers within the ecclesia, referred to in 2:14,18 as "beguiling unstable souls" (= 3:16) and 'alluring'. It follows therefore that the false Christs and prophets which our Lord warned of, would come, in whatever

form, from within the ecclesia. The bizarre claims of the few bogus Messiahs that have appeared are hardly much temptation to us- but how different if they are to come from within the ecclesia?

"Beware, lest ye also..." (v.17). The Greek for "beware" means 'to be isolated'; indicating that this general trend will take some standing up to. However, it cannot be stressed too highly that our duty is not to physically isolate ourselves from the problems, seeking some kind of splendid spiritual isolation, but rather through the power of the word to encourage others within the ecclesia to develop with us that "holy conversation and Godliness" which hasten "the coming of the day of God" (v.11,12).

3:18- see on 2 Pet. 1:5,6.

Peter's last words in 2 Pet. are full of the theme of knowing Christ (1:2,3,5,8; 2:20). Finally, He came to really know the man whom he thought he once knew. His very last recorded words urge us all to follow his pattern: to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour (3:18). He wrote this with awareness that he had denied the knowledge of the Lord; his very last words reflected his sense of inadequacy and shame at his failures, and yet the sure and certain knowledge that he knew the grace of the Saviour whom he believed.

At the end of Peter's recorded words in Acts, he comes to a climax of understanding in coining the phrase "the Lord Jesus Christ". In 2 Pet. 2:1 he describes Christ as "Lord" using a word which is usually used in the Gospels for God. He saw the extent of Christ's perfection, the height of His exact manifestation of the Father. He was the "Lord" who bought us through His blood, and therefore and thereby He has an almost God-like authority over us. Appreciating the true implications of the cross leads to a true sense of His Lordship. At the end of 2 Peter, Peter reaches an even greater height in the title: "Our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18). He brings together in one title all the different aspects of his Lord he had learnt and come to appreciate in the course of his life. And this should surely be the climax of every life of discipleship.

1 JOHN

1:1 The prologue of 1 Jn. is a conscious allusion to and clarification of that of Jn. 1. Consider the following links:

In the beginning was the word

The word was with God

In [the word] was life

The life was the light of men

The light shines in darkness

The word became flesh

And dwelt amongst us

and was manifested to us

We beheld his glory

Of his fullness we have all received

Through Jesus Christ

The only Son of God

What was from the beginning

The eternal life which was with [Gk. in the presence of] God

The word of life

God is light

In Him there is no darkness at all

This life was revealed

What we looked at

The fellowship which we have is with

the Father and with his son

Jesus Christ

You will note that the parallel for "the word" of Jn. 1 is 'the life' in 1 Jn. 1, the life which Jesus lived, the type of life which is lived by the Father in Heaven. That word was made flesh (Jn. 1:14) in the sense that this life was revealed to us in the life and death of Jesus. So the word becoming flesh has nothing to do with a pre-existent Jesus physically coming down from Heaven and being born of Mary. It could well be that the evident links between the prologue to John's Gospel and the prologue to his epistle are because he is correcting a misunderstanding that had arisen about the prologue to his Gospel. 1 Jn. 1:2 spells it out clearly- it was the impersonal "eternal life" which was "with the Father", and it was this which "became flesh" in a form that had been personally touched and handled by John in the personal body of the Lord Jesus. And perhaps it is in the context of incipient trinitarianism that John warns that those who deny that Jesus was "in the flesh" are actually antiChrist.

John begins his first letter with an elaborate prologue. Raymond Brown comments: "Many commentators observe that a Prologue is an extraordinary beginning for an epistle since it violates all the standards of letter format". This 'violation' appears typical of how Scripture so often appears to 'violate' contemporary usages of language. [Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1982) p. 176].

The perfect unity within the Lord Jesus, between the person He portrayed and who He really was, is reflected in much New Testament language concerning Him. Thus "life" in 1 Jn. 1:1,2 is personified as Jesus; He was the life (Jn. 11:25; 14:6; 1 Jn. 5:20). The person whom people knew, saw and touched in first century Palestine was the essence of the eternal life, the life God lives, and the life we by grace will eternally live. He wasn't acting human; He was human, genuinely human, and yet that human life which He lived was the ultimate and inner life of the Spirit.

1:2 It was so hard for the Jewish mind to conceive that a man walking down a dusty Galilee street was the awesome God of Sinai manifested in flesh. And it's hard for us too. This is why the whole struggle over the trinity has come about; people just can't find the faith to believe that a real man could have been the just as real perfect Son of God. It's our same struggle when we come to consider the cross; that a body hanging there, covered with blood, spittle, dirt and flies, an image as palatable as a hunk of meat hanging in a butcher's shop... was and is the salvation of the world, the real and ultimate way of escape for us from the guilt of our iniquity. The life the Lord Jesus lived was 'the sort of life that was in the Father's presence' (1 Jn. 1:2 Gk.). The sort of life God Almighty lives, the feelings and thoughts He has, were the life and feelings and thoughts and words and deeds of the man Jesus. This has to be reflected upon deeply before we grasp the huge import which this has. That a Man who walked home each day along the same dusty streets of Nazareth was in fact living the sort of life that was and is the life of God in Heaven.

John calls Jesus "the eternal life" (1 Jn. 1:2). The life that He lived was the quality of life which we will eternally live in the Kingdom. The personality of Jesus was the living quintessence of all that He preached- as it should be with the living witness which our lives make. To preach "Christ" was and is therefore to preach "the things concerning the Kingdom of God", because that Kingdom will be all about the manifestation of the man Christ Jesus (Acts 8:5 cp. 12). So, Jesus was "the word" in the sense that He epitomised the Gospel. This is why James 1:18 says that we are born again by the word of the Gospel, and 1 Pet. 1:23 says that the word who begets is the Lord Jesus.

1:2,3- see on Mt. 28:10.

1:3- see on Jn. 3:32; Jn. 20:18; Acts 4:20.

The Lord Jesus is called "the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 Jn. 1:3 RV). In this lies the importance of a Christ-centred life and mind; *He is the definition of eternal life*. This is what eternity will be like, John is saying: life lived as Christ lived and lives. "This is life eternal: that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ" (Jn. 17:3). Notice that eternal life isn't defined in terms of sitting under a fig tree in a perfect climate watching the animals living happily together (although we are invited to believe that by God's grace this *will* be our experience). It is the life of Christ our Lord; and that's why one of His titles is "the life, the eternal life". He shewed us what eternal life will be about, and invites us to begin that experience, however imperfectly, even now (cp. Hos. 6:3 RV). And it is in this sense alone that "we may know that we have (now) eternal life" (1 Jn. 5:13).

John exalts in the fact they touched and saw "the word of life"; the Lord Jesus personally was and is the voice of God's word. When John writes that "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 Jn. 1:3), he doesn't mean to say that he is simply giving a transcript of the Lord's spoken words. He is telling men about the person of Jesus, the man he personally knew, and in doing this he was declaring God's word to them. If the very being of the Lord Jesus was the expression of God's word, it is little to be marvelled at that the cross, being as it is the crystallisation of all He was and is, should be in an even more intense sense the voice of God to us. And the same process of the word becoming flesh must be seen in us too.

There are different levels of fellowship; as we actually know from our own experience. There are some we are 'in fellowship' with whom we don't feel so close to as others. John says that he wanted to declare to them the depths of the understanding of Christ, "that ye also may have fellowship with

us" (1 Jn. 1:3), even though they were already technically 'in fellowship'. And so it is with our communal life. A close binding together in the depths and heights of the Lord Jesus leads to ever higher experiences of fellowship. It may be that there are even different levels of fellowship between men and God. Thus God's original intention was that His presence in the Angel should go up to Canaan in the midst of Israel; but because of their weakness, He went in front of them, somewhat separate from them (Ex. 33:2,3). Likewise the glory of God progressively distanced itself from the temple and people of God in Ezekiel's time.

1:4 It's interesting to compare the Gospel of John with his epistles. Clearly, he saw himself as manifesting to his brethren what the Lord Jesus had manifested to him. John records how the Lord had said: "I have said this to you... that your joy may be fulfilled" (Jn. 15:11), but he then says of himself that "We are writing these things so that your joy may be fulfilled" (1 Jn. 1:4 RV). He saw himself as the face and mouth of Jesus to his brethren; and so are all of us who are in Christ.

Note how John repeats his Lord's use of the term "little children"; and how He appropriates the Lord's phrase "that your joy may be complete" (Jn. 16:24; 17:13) to the way *he* spoke (1 Jn. 1:4). These are just a tiny fraction of the examples possible. We are to speak, think and feel as He did; to *be* as He was and is; to be brethren in Him.

1:5 There is a negative attached to all truths; if something is true, then therefore other things or ways of life are not true. There are several Bible passages which bring out this dualism.

"God is light	and in Him there is no darkness" (1 Jn. 1:5)
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"God is faithful	and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Dt. 32:4)
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"God is righteous	and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Ps. 92:16)
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It is therefore quite valid to understand that a set of true doctrines by their very nature give rise to a set of untrue ones, to be rejected. But more personally relevant for each one of us, each truth we perceive leads to not only things we should do, but things we should not.

1:6 John writes of *doing* the Truth (Jn. 3:20,21; 1 Jn. 1:6)- the true doctrines can't exist purely in the abstract, they must be lived. In this sense Jesus was "the Truth" in His life example as well as in His doctrinal teaching. Jude says that we build up ourselves on the foundation / basis of our most holy faith- *the* doctrinal faith of the Gospel. Titus was told to shew himself "a pattern of good *works*" through "in *doctrine* shewing uncorruptness" (Tit. 2:7).

1:7 The blood of Jesus cleanses us, in the present tense, from all our sins; the Lord Jesus loves us and frees us from our sins by His blood (1 Jn. 1:7; Rev. 1:5). The cross is ongoing.

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:7,8). To refuse a brother fellowship is to imply that he is in the darkness, and that the blood of Jesus Christ is not cleansing him from sin.

1:9 I submit that repentance needs to be verbalized- it must be "confessed" (1 Jn. 1:9), which implies a verbal or written statement of the issues. It's like praying or Bible reading out loud; it makes our minds think not quite so fast. We need to get to grips with all the aspects of our sin. We must face it, in all the ugliness of what we have done.

1:10 Our experience of life, the way God works through our failures, almost overruling even (it seems to me) the *kinds* of sins we commit and their outcome, is all intended to bring us to an increasing realization of our own sinfulness. The more God's word abides in us, the more we will know our sinfulness (1 Jn. 1:10). Thus Paul speaks as if when Corinth are more obedient, he will reveal further to them the extent of their weakness (2 Cor. 10:6). On a racial level, it could be argued that over history, God has progressively revealed the sinfulness of man to him. Thus the early records of Israel's history in Egypt and in the wilderness contain very little direct criticism of them. But the prophets reveal that they were corrupt even then, taking the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20). But then in the New Testament, Stephen brings together several such prophetic mentions, combining them to produce a stunning description of Israel's ecclesial apostasy, which culminated in their rejection of the Son of God.

To just have an attitude that we haven't sinned, is read by God as stating that He is a liar (1 Jn. 1:10)- even though we would never dream of saying this. And similar examples could be multiplied.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar (1 Jn. 1:10); if we don't believe Him, we likewise "make him a liar", we slander or falsely accuse Him (1 Jn. 5:10). We may recoil at this language. But it is so – to deny our sinfulness, to disbelieve what God says about it, is to slander God.

2:1 There is a theme in all the NT passages concerning prayer and mediation. It is that they speak largely in the context of prayer for forgiveness and salvation (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1). This is what we really ought to be praying for. The passages concerning Christ as our mediator are all in the context of Him asking for our forgiveness, as the High Priest sought Israel's forgiveness on the day of Atonement.

He was there the propitiation for our sins, and yet He is that now, each time we sin (1 Jn. 2:1; 4:10). The cross is ongoing, in essence.

2:2- see on 2 Cor. 5:19.

The simple fact is that the Lord Jesus died as the antitype of the guilt offering. He died to take away guilt... and he or she who truly believes that has no need to transfer or discharge their guilt in these ways. The guilt of our iniquity was laid upon the Lord Jesus upon the cross, He there was the expiation of our sins (1 Jn. 2:2)... we don't have to vainly try to transfer it onto anyone else, or use any other way of dealing with that guilt, e.g. through repressing it deep within ourselves.

2:3 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 Jn. 2:3). What pleases God? We read the Bible daily and learn there what pleases Him. Do we do at least some things that please God? Surely we know that we do. But I don't think he meant 'If you *do* enough works, then you can be assured of salvation'. Works and keeping commandments can't earn us a place in the Kingdom; we will be there by sheer grace alone. Such a view would be contrary to the very basic spirit of the Gospel of grace. I think John had some specific commandments in mind: "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on [Gk 'into'] the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1 Jn. 3:23). We believe into the Name of Jesus when we are baptized into His Name. We "love one another" by keeping the *agape*, the love feast, the breaking of bread, with one another. If we refuse to break bread with any of our brethren, then we cannot have a good conscience. I am not saying that simply being baptized and breaking bread can save anyone. But if our self-examination reveals that we believe in what those two basic commands of the Christian life really imply, then we can have a good conscience, knowing we have kept His commandments, and are thus assured of 'being there'. The Kingdom has been promised to us. We ask for it to come, that we might be there. And we must act as if our prayers have been answered, even though physically they haven't been. And so all joy and peace will come through believing. We will feel the truth of 1 Pet. 1:9, that we are "receiving the end of

[our] faith, even the salvation of your souls...”; and of Col. 1:13, that we *have been* delivered from the power of darkness, and been in prospect “translated into the kingdom”.

2:6- see on Mt. 14:29.

John speaks of Jesus as “that one” in the Greek text of 1 Jn. 2:6; 3:5,7,16; 4:17. I.H. Marshall comments: “Christians were so used to talking about Jesus that ‘that One’ was a self-evident term”. Too often I hear fellow believers talking about their faith in terms of “I believe that... I do not believe that...”. Maybe I’m being hypercritical, but surely it ought to be a case of believing *in* the things of the personal Jesus, rather than ‘believing *that*...’. For example. I believe *in* Jesus returning to the earth, rather than ‘I believe that Jesus will return’. It’s so absolutely vital to see and believe in the Lord Jesus as a person, rather than merely a set of doctrine / teaching *about* Him.

2:8- see on 1 Jn. 3:18.

2:9 There is fair emphasis that the rejected saints will be cast into darkness (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Jude 13). Yet darkness is a common symbol of the world (Eph. 5:11; 6:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9). And those amongst us who won't love their brother are already in darkness, self-condemned even before the day arrives (1 Jn. 2:9,11).

2:11 If we hate our brother, we are blind; we lack true sight, we lack true understanding of the word (1 Jn. 2:9-11), we have gone back to the blindness. A healed blind man who wilfully returns to his blindness is a tragic picture indeed.

2:14 It is possible that 1 John 2:14 has reference to the Jewish Satan or “wicked one” trying to especially subvert young converts, both in years and spiritual maturity, just as it had tried to subvert the disciples during Christ’s ministry: “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one”.

2:15 If we are the seed of the woman, we will be in constant, aggressive conflict with the seed of the snake; the world, structured as it is around the "Lusts" of human nature. Is this Biblically compatible with preaching a social gospel? In Christ we will have peace; but in the world, we will have tribulation, even as Christ did. Our pity for the world, the good deeds we should do to all men, must not lead us to *love* the world. For if we do that, it is impossible for us to love the Father (1 Jn. 2:15). The 'devil' refers both to our own internal lusts, and the world at large. The world is in our hearts, in this sense (Ecc. 3:11). Thus "the world" is paralleled with "the lust thereof" (1 Jn. 2:17). As there is a most pronounced conflict within our own beings between flesh and spirit, so there will be between us and the world. We are not to *agape* this world, to love with the love of Christian brethren. The *agape* we have for our brethren is something very special, and must not be shared with the world; if we do so, the love of the Father is not in us, because we are declaring the world to be the ecclesia (1 Jn. 2:15). It cannot therefore be true that we ought to show the same *kind* of love to the world as we show to our brethren. See on Jn. 3:16.

2:16 That Adam is indeed set up in Scripture as 'everyman' is apparent on almost every page of the Bible through the allusions back to him. Thus Jezebel's provocation of Ahab to sin is presented in the same terms as that of Adam and Eve; Israel "like Adam have transgressed the covenant" (Hos. 6:7). John speaks of how we are tempted by "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16), alluding to the very things which were Adam and Eve's temptation in Eden. Paul sensed that as the serpent deceived Eve by his subtilty, so the minds of the Corinthian Christians were being deceived by false reasoning (2 Cor. 11:3 = Gen. 3:13). The sinner chooses or accepts the words of the "tongue of the subtle" (Job 15:5 – the same word is used about the serpent in Gen. 3:1). The frequent command: "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them.

2:19- see on Mk. 14:68; Lk. 22:31; Jude 19.

2:20 We read in 1 Jn. 2:20,27 that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father. There is some historical evidence that candidates for baptism in the early church were anointed with oil. References- uninspired of course, just for historical interest- are Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 7.1,2; and various references in the 'Didascalia', the Acts of Judas Thomas, and the Pseudo-Clementine epistles. It could be that in the house ecclesias to whom John was writing, there was already this practice in place, and the initial readers would've understood this clearly. Paul, writing to a different audience, uses a different figure when he speaks of being "sealed with that holy spirit of promise". We are after all baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So the anointing which we've received would in my view refer back to our baptism. It was the initiation of us into service, just as the priests and tabernacle parts were anointed. The question we must each sort out is, what are our specific talents, our gifts, the potential uses for which the Father and Son intend us, the paths of service they potentially mapped out for us and initiated us for at our immersions?

2:22 If we deny Christ, we deny that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn. 2:22); and yet we deny Jesus is the Christ if we don't preach Him (Mt. 10:33). It follows that if we really believe that Jesus was not just Jesus of Nazareth but the Christ of God, therefore we won't deny Him but will preach Him. This is why there is connection between confessing Jesus as Christ and preaching Him (Jn. 9:22; Acts 18:5; Phil. 2:11).

2:22-24 1 Jn. strongly links belief in Christ as the Son of God with a life of true love. They had heard from "the beginning" of their contact with the Gospel that Christ was the Son of God; and yet also the need to love one another. The "message" which they had heard from the beginning was that Christ was the Son of God (1 Jn. 2:24); and yet it was also that we should love one another (1 Jn. 3:11). This is why in the context of teaching the need for love, John warns against false teaching regarding the nature of Christ as Son of God (1 Jn. 2:22,23; 4:1-4; 2 Jn. 7-11). "The word... from the beginning" was the 'logos' of Christ (Jn. 1:1-3); and yet in John's maturer thought in his letters, the word from the beginning was that we should love each other (1 Jn. 2:7; 3:11). This is the essence of belief in Christ: love for each other. "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (3:23). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" [i.e. your brother]. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us... whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him" (4:12,15). But why is there this link between love, and belief in Jesus of Nazareth being the begotten Son of God? Theologically, it could be said that if we accept Him as God's Son, then we must likewise accept all God's other sons, begotten as they are by His Spirit. But practically, are we not being taught to see the *pure wonder* of the way in which *Almighty God had a Son* and gave that Son, so freely and so painfully, for us...? The *pure wonder* of God having a Son of our nature, a child and then a man who showed us the essence of God displayed in human flesh and temptation; and then giving Him to us... If we see this, we will naturally show love to our brethren. So it isn't just a case of thinking yes, we believe Christ was Son of God, not God the Son- and period. No. There's infinitely more to it than this. This faith and understanding can tear down every barrier between men, and provide the inspiration for a life of true, self-sacrificial love. The true *wonder* of it all simply must be meditated upon. That God's very own son should begin so small, as an ovum, "a single fertilized egg barely visible to the naked eye, an egg that would divide and redivide until a fetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager".

2:23- see on Mt. 10:32.

2:24 The Lord speaks of us abiding in His word (Jn. 8:31) and yet also of His word abiding in us, and us abiding in Him (Jn. 15:7). I suggest this refers in the first instance to the new Christian converts reciting over and over in their minds the Gospel accounts. In all situations they were to have the 'word of Jesus' hovering in their minds. To abide in Christ was and is to have His words abiding in us. Paul's evident familiarity with the Lord's words is an example of how one of our brethren lived this out in practice. We have to ask how frequently in the daily grind the words of the Master come to mind, how close they are to the surface in our subconscious... for this is the essence of Christianity. It's not so much a question of consciously memorizing His words, but so loving Him that quite naturally His words are never far from our consciousness, and frequently come out in our thinking and words. No wonder it seems the early church made new converts memorize the Gospels. Perhaps 1 Jn. 2:24 has this in mind, when we read that what the John's community of converts had heard from the beginning [i.e. the words of the Gospel of John?] was to abide in them, so that they in this manner would abide in Jesus. And perhaps too 1 Jn. 3:9 has similar reference- the seed of God [the Gospel- of John- which the converts had first heard] must abide in the convert, so that he or she doesn't [continue in] sin. The continual meditation upon the Lord's words as we

have them in the Gospels will have the same effect upon us. *This* is the real way to overcome sin and to achieve genuine spiritual mindedness, to know the mind of Christ; in this way the Lord Jesus abides in us by His Spirit (1 Jn. 3:24). Abiding in the word of Christ, His words abiding in us, abiding in love, abiding in the Father and Son (1 Jn. 4:16) are all parallel ideas.

2:28- see on Lk. 6:46.

After the rejected start to perceive the reality of rejection, there will be an ashamed slinking away from the judgment (1 Jn. 2:28 Gk.). It would appear that the wicked will argue back in protest against their rejection at the judgment ("When saw we thee?... Thou art an hard man"), and will desperately try to find acceptance. All this has to be reconciled with the silent dejection and grim acceptance of the 'goats'. 1 Jn. 2:28 speaks of them as being "ashamed from before him at his coming", the Greek suggesting the idea of slinking away in shame, after the pattern of Israel being *carried away* into captivity (2 Kings 17:6,11,23,33- Heb. 'to denude, make naked'). Another foretaste of this was in the way the condemned world of Noah's time [the flood was a clear type of the final judgment] were to 'pine away / languish' (Gen. 6:17; 7:21- AV "die"). The wicked will melt away from the Lord's presence (Ps. 68:2). Rejected Israel are described as being "ashamed away" (Joel 1:12)- the same idea. This is the idea behind Heb. 12:15 RVmg: "...man that falleth back from the grace of God". What they did in this life in slinking away from the reality of pure grace will be what is worked out in their condemnation experience. Note that Jesus Himself will be likewise ashamed of His unworthy followers (Lk. 9:26); there will be a mutuality in the natural distancing between the two parties. This is the scene of Rev. 16:15- the rejected being made naked in shame. This slinking back in shame will fulfil the prophecies of Is. 1:24,29 and Jer. 2:35,36, which speak of the rejected being made ashamed, becoming ashamed, of their idols. They will be made ashamed by the judgment process. Thus we have the picture of them initially arguing with Jesus, growing less and less forcible, giving way to a pleading with tears for a change of mind, finally followed by a silent slinking away in shame. There seems a certain similarity between this and how the combined Gospel records imply that men initially mocked Jesus on the cross, and then eventually slipped away in silence (Heb. 6:6). Adam attempted to hide from God's presence, the Hebrew implying 'to drawn oneself back'. Judas went away (Gk. he retired away) to try to hang himself, once he knew his condemnation (Mt. 27:3-5). See on Mt. 27:5.

Speechlessness is a characteristic of the rejected (Mt. 22:12); the brothers slunk away from Joseph's physical presence (Gen. 45:4), as the rejected will (1 Jn. 2:28 Gk.). This all suggests that those accepted at the judgment seat will go through all the emotions of the rejected; they will realize that rejection is what they deserve. Those who judge (condemn) themselves now in their self-examination will not be condemned then.

1 Jn. 2:28 speaks of our being able to have "confidence" at the day of judgment; but the Greek *parresia* means literally 'a saying of all'. This free telling of all will be when we list our sins to the Lord; and yet, in the greatest paradox, this will be our confidence before Him. That 'freedom of speech' in His presence will be the sign that we are accepted; and yet the freedom of speech begins with our free confession to Him of our unworthiness.

2:29 Note how 1 Jn. 2:29 and 1 Jn. 4:7 parallel love and justice; and this parallel is to be found in the Old Testament, not least in the concept of *hesed*, God's covenant love. His justice involves His love. And His love is the love of grace and salvation.

3:2 "When he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as He is" (1 Jn. 3:2 RV). Jesus was manifested upon the cross, and 'seeing' / perceiving Him there leads to a transformed life. And yet He will be manifested / appear [AV] at the Lord's return; and through seeing Him as He truly is, we will be transformed into an existence like Him. Yes, our natures will be changed in a twinkling of an eye. But have you ever asked *how* this will happen, putting meaning into words? John says that it will be through our 'seeing' of Jesus in that actual and new way which

we will then. Seeing Him as He is will mean that our very natures are changed; and this is exactly what is going on now in a moral sense as we see the essence of Him manifested in the cross. In this sense His death was a foretaste of His second coming. There in the cross was the judgment of this world, just as there will be at His return. And in our response to Him there we have a preview of how it will be to come before Him at the final judgment. As I reconstruct in my own mind His death, His demeanour there, His spirit which He breathed towards us as He bowed His head, the overwhelming impression I have is one of love and passion to save us. And I am persuaded that thus it will be as we stand before Him soon.

The idea of not being able to "see" God must be understood in the context of how John uses the word "see". It carries not only the idea of physical vision, but also of believing and understanding. If we can't love our brother, another human being who on some level we *can* comprehend; who then can we love God, who in this life we cannot comprehend? Yet John mentions in the same context that ultimately, we will see God (1 Jn. 3:2). Perhaps the implication is that seeing God in our brother and loving him, having a relationship with him, is the prelude to seeing God Himself and relating with Him eternally.

3:3 Everyone who has this hope will therefore purify himself in anticipation of its realization, and in appreciation of his current separation from the things of the present order (1 Jn. 3:3).

3:5- see on Mk. 15:20.

"He was manifested, that he might put sins away" (1 Jn. 3:5) could suggest that in His atoning death, 'He' was manifested. There God set forth Jesus in His blood, for all to see and respond to (Rom. 3:25 Gk.). There the real essence of Jesus was publicly shown forth. And there we come to know what love is (1 Jn. 3:16).

3:6 John stresses how he had 'seen' the Lord's crucifixion (Jn. 19:35), and he later says that anyone who has truly 'seen' Jesus will not commit sin (1 Jn. 3:6). Holding the vision of Him there as He was, really 'seeing' and perceiving Him, will hold us back from sinning. This is the power of the cross.

3:8 "To this end was the son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). This does not simply mean that Jesus destroyed sin on the cross. He was manifested there in such a way that the believer who sees Him there, who reconstructs Golgotha's awful scene, cannot be passive. A spirit of living and dying as He did was breathed out to us, and remains with us. There has to be a change, a radical transformation, in the person who comes into contact with the spirit of life and death which there is in Jesus. The love of God is manifested within us, in our lives, as a result of the gift of Christ on the cross (1 Jn. 4:9). Because "he laid down his life for us... we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (1 Jn. 3:16,17 RV). Responding to the death of Jesus, perceiving the meaning of the cross, the love of God as it was and is there... this brings forth a love and generosity of spirit in practice. It was in this sense that Jesus in practice destroyed the power of sin through His cross. It was something practical, not a mere theological transaction whereby an angry God was appeased by spilt blood.

3:9- see on 1 Jn. 2:24.

3:13- see on Jn. 5:28.

1 Jn. 3:13 (cp. Jn. 7:7; 15:8) teaches that *the world* will hate Christ's brethren. But in this very context, John warns about *some brethren* who hate their brethren, and who thereby abide in darkness (1 Jn. 3:15; 4:20). John's simple logic is evident: if you hate your brother, you're in the world, you've put yourself into darkness, you've condemned yourself. The place of the rejected believers is in the ranks of the world- nowhere else.

3:14 1 Jn. 3:14 states that "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren". But this is John taking his converts further in appreciating something he had earlier preached to them in his Gospel: "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (Jn. 5:24). To hear the word of Christ and believe the Gospel of God *must* issue, if it is valid and credible, in something practical- loving our brethren. It is only John who records the Lord speaking of "my word" [*logos*]. To hear Christ's word or *logos* is not merely to believe that the Bible was written by Divine inspiration, or to intellectually assent to doctrinal truth; it is to discern *Him*, to know Him as a person in truth [which will involve correct doctrinal perception, of course]. And this simply has to lead to loving the brethren. This is the real result of knowing Christ.

3:15- see on Mt. 5:22.

"Eternal life" should be read as referring more to the *quality* of that life, rather than its eternal duration being the fundamental construct behind our conception of the Kingdom. This is how the phrase "eternal life" seems to be used in John's letters (1 Jn.1:1-3; 2:24,25; 3:15; 5:11,13). We must not be like the rich young man who desperately asked: "What must *I do* that *I* may have *eternal life*?", as if he saw having eternal life as the ultimate possession to get under his own belt. Notice how our Lord's reply described 'having eternal life' as 'entering into life', 'having treasure in heaven', 'entering the Kingdom of God', rather than personally possessing eternal life (Mt.19:16-23).

3:16 The same *must* which led Him to His passion (see on Mk. 14:49; Lk. 2:49) is the very same compulsion which "behoves" us to preach that passion which we have witnessed and benefited from. In His ministry, He had taught that we *must* be born again, and in the same discourse spoke of how He *must* be lifted up in crucifixion (Jn. 3:7,14). His cross, His will to die in the way He did, must be our inspiration. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and *we ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 Jn. 3:16). We must carry the cross if we are to know His salvation. Yet we can be caught up in the spirit of a world which seeks obsessively to save its life rather than give up life. Through popping pills, exercise, healthy living...we can seek to extend our days. We use insurance to seek to cushion us against the harder knocks of life. We seek our lives to be as free as possible from hard work. And none of these things is wrong in themselves. It is quite right that we should make use of these things in the Lord's service. But we can be caught up in the spirit of life and thinking of which they are part, and *this* is the danger. For the spirit and desire that gave rise to them is that which is exactly the opposite of the sense of *must* which the Lord possessed. He knew that He *must* suffer, He *must* crucify His flesh. And so *must* we. This is a solemn and eternal compulsion. Yet we live in a world which believes that we *must not* suffer anything negative, and we *must* seek to save our lives rather than give them out for others.

If we are to show the love of God to the world, this will primarily (but not exclusively) be in terms of our spiritual help towards them, rather than a social gospel. Our response to God's love in Christ will also be expressed by laying down our lives "for the *brethren*". The next verse helps define this as material, practical help (1 Jn. 3:16,17).

3:18 The result of a good conscience is love- and love isn't inactive (1 Tim. 1:4,5); actions are a proof that we have a good conscience (1 Jn. 3:18-22). Having the cleansed conscience of sins compels us to be obedient to Governments (Rom. 13:5); thus Paul *served* God with his good conscience (2 Tim. 1:3). A good way of life and a good conscience are bracketed together in 1 Pet. 3:16.

The commandment to love, as Christ loved us, is made new "as it is made true" (1 Jn. 2:8) both in the person of Jesus, and in all who are truly in Him. This means that the principles we receive in theory are to become 'truth' in us as they were in the Lord; they are to become applied in the very person and fabric of our beings, and not remain merely part of our shadow selves. It is truth that makes us pure (1 Pet. 1:22,23), good deeds are produced by truth (1 Jn. 3:18). No amount of correct

theory can make us pure; surely the reference is to the life of transparency to God, of 'truth' in the sense that there is no divide between our inner convictions and our actual lives. Then will come true in us the connection which John perceives between truth and love (1 Jn. 3:19).

3:19 Paul appears to justify speaking about the judgment seat by saying "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord (the terror of the thought of rejection), we persuade men; but *we* are made manifest unto God" (2 Cor. 5:11). This is to say 'A healthy fear of judgment can persuade men to a better way of life- but by our complete openness to God, through self examination, we can know ourselves to be personally unworthy, but justified through Christ; and so we don't need to think of rejection in the same way as faithless men do'. We will go through a process of 'persuading' our own hearts before the judgment presence of Jesus in the last day; and we should likewise persuade ourselves of His grace and justice now (1 Jn. 3:19 Gk.).

The extent to which we are intended to be Christ-centred is reflected in how John speaks of Him as "the truth". Indeed, He appears to refer to the Name of Jesus with the same sensitivity with which a Jew would refer to the Name of God. John seems to use *aletheia*, 'the truth', as a kind of periphrasis for "Jesus"; *en aletheia*, in the truth, appears to match Paul's *en kyrio* ['in the Lord'] or *en christo* ['in Christ']. John refers to missionaries being sent out "for the sake of the name", when the other records say that they were sent out in the name of Jesus. The exalted Name of Jesus was therefore, to John, 'the truth'; the person of Jesus, which the Name encapsulates, is to be the deciding, central truth in the life of the believer.

3:20 The children of God and of the devil are manifest *now* by their behaviour; so that the future 'manifesting' of them into the children and angels of the devil and those of God is only a re-statement of the division they have already made in this life by their behaviour (1 Jn. 3:20).

3:21- see on Lk. 6:46.

3:23- see on Jn. 17:11.

If we "believe the name of... Jesus Christ", then we will love one another (1 Jn. 3:23 RVmg.). To believe the name and to love each other are "his commandment" - singular. They are one and the same thing. This is how direct is the link between truly believing in the name of Jesus, and loving each other. One cannot truly believe in Him, in all that He was, all that He stood and died for, and all that He is... and not articulate this in some form of love for the brotherhood.

3:24- see on 1 Jn. 2:24.

4:1 There were other tests of these prophets- if they didn't accept that Jesus was Lord, they didn't have the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). If they held false teaching about whether Jesus came in the flesh, and walked in hatred of the other Christians, they also were to be rejected (1 Jn. 4:1-10). When Paul says that God and the Holy Spirit witness to the truth of what he is writing, he is presumably referring to how those with the gift of discerning spirits had tested and approved what he was saying (Rom. 1:9; 9:1 cp. 2 Cor. 11:31; Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:7). What all this means is that as soon as a genuine New Testament prophet gave a prophecy, it was *immediately* recognized as such, because all these methods of 'testing the spirit' had been followed. This, by the way, explains the very 'dogmatic' and self-assured tone of some of the writers. They insist that their commands have God's authority (1 Thess. 4:2; 2 Thess. 2:15), and therefore must be obeyed (2 Thess. 3:14). They can insist that what they are saying is actually the will and command of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37); and their inspired preaching was "of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). These claims would have come over as arrogant and baseless- unless there had indeed been the process of confirmation of their words explained above. The writers can ask for their letters to be read at the gatherings of the early church- which initially would have been based around the synagogue practice of reading from the Old Testament Scriptures. Their writings were clearly accepted on a par with those writings- as soon as they were issued (1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:3). The testings of the various claims to Holy Spirit inspiration are to be found in Gal. 1, 1 Cor. 14 etc. But the letters of John, written at the end

of the New Testament period, have the most warnings about the need to test the various claims of Holy Spirit inspiration- understandably, as John was writing towards the end of the period when inspired writings were being given (1 Jn. 4:2,3; 5:6; 2 Jn. 7). See on 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Tim. 5:18.

4:1,2,6 seem to refer to two ‘spirits’, of truth and error, which could possibly refer to Angels. The “spirit of truth” in Jn. 16:13 can be seen as an allusion to the Holy Spirit- Angel which led Israel in the wilderness (see Is. 63:10). The implication could be that if there is a spirit-Angel of truth, there is also one of error. See on Ez. 14:9.

4:3- see on Jn. 12:42.

4:4 John makes such a fuss about believing that Jesus came in the flesh because he wants his brethren to have the same Spirit that was in Jesus dwelling in *their* flesh (1 Jn. 4:2,4). He wants them to see that being human, being in the flesh, is no barrier for God to dwell in. As Jesus was in the world, so are we to be in the world (1 Jn. 4:17 Gk.). *This* is why it's so important to understand that the Lord Jesus was genuinely human.

4:8- see on Jn. 3:3.

To experience God is to know Him. So often the prophets speak of ‘knowing God’ as meaning ‘to experience God’. Because God is love, to love is to know God (1 Jn. 4:8). Quite simply, how deeply we have loved [and I am speaking of ‘love’ in its Biblical sense] is how deeply we have known God- and vice versa. And that love is worked out in the very earthliness and worldliness of human life in practice.

4:10 John seems to purposefully make the point that the Lord *was sent* [as a one time act in the past] “to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:10). In His blood covered body, He was the place of propitiation, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. And yet: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: for He *is* [right now, each time we sin] the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 2:1,2). In obtaining forgiveness for us He in some way goes through again the essence of His sacrifice. It is too simplistic to say that we repent, and God forgives. He does, but only on the basis of Christ’s atoning act that must come ever before Him in the granting of forgiveness. The Mosaic offerings of blood “before Yahweh” all pointed forward to this fact. Awful as His actual physical sufferings were 2000 years ago, we should not separate them from the work He came to do- of obtaining our redemption. He worked this work in His life, on the cross, and continues it until this day. The daily morning and evening sacrifice had to be of a first year lamb without blemish- the identical specification for the Passover lamb. His death on the cross at Passover was the same as His daily life of sacrifice.

4:11 We have the witness within ourselves; for the witness is the word and life of Christ, His eternal life, which lives in us (1 Jn. 4:10,11). The Lord Jesus didn’t witness to His word by giving out bits of paper or teaching a catechism; He was, in person, the constant exhibition of the word He witnessed to. And with us too. I’m not saying don’t write books, give out literature, speak words from platforms... but the more essential witness to men is that of our lives, that witness which wells up from the word and life of Christ within us. The way God’s word is made flesh can be seen in Hosea. His going and marrying a worthless woman is prefaced with the statement that this was the beginning of the word of the Lord (Hos. 1:2). The command to go and marry her was not so much “the word of the Lord” to Israel as his marriage and example of true love to his wife. Hosea’s example in his marriage was the word of the Lord to Israel. He made the word flesh. The Lord did this to perfection, and yet like Hosea we in principle must do the same.

4:15 There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. For example, we dwell in God (Ps. 90:1), and He dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16). Thus “he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, *and God in him*” (1 Jn. 4:15,16). We work out our salvation, and God in response works in us both to will and to work (Phil. 2:12,13 RV).

4:16- see on 1 Jn. 2:24.

The fact the Lord Jesus didn't pre-exist as a person needs some meditation. The kind of thoughts that come to us as we stand alone at night, gazing into the sky. It seems evident that there must have been some kind of previous creation(s), e.g. for the creation of the Angels. God existed from infinity, and yet only 2,000 years ago did He have His only and His *begotten* Son. And that Son was a human being in order to save humans- only a few million of us (if that), who lived in a 6,000 year time span. In the specter of infinite time and space, this is wondrous. That the Only Son of God should die for a very few of us here, we who crawled on the surface of this tiny planet for such a fleeting moment of time. He died so that God could work out our salvation; and the love of God for us is likened to a young man marrying a virgin (Is. 62:5). Almighty God, who existed from eternity, is likened to a first timer, with all the intensity and joyful expectation and lack of disillusion. And more than this. The Jesus who didn't pre-exist but was like me, died for *me*, in the shameful way that He did. Our hearts and minds, with all their powers, are in the boundless prospect lost. His pure *love* for us, His condescension, should mean that we also ought to reach out into the lives of all men, never thinking they are beneath us or too insignificant or distant from us. No wonder 1 Jn. 4:15,16 describes believing that Jesus is the Son of God as believing the love that God has to us.

4:17 - see on 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Jn. 4:4.

There is a major theme in the NT: that we are living the life of Christ, and thereby His life becomes ours. In this sense we have and live the eternal life. "As he is, so are we in this world" (1 Jn. 4:17); we will be persecuted as He was persecuted (Jn. 15:20); we fellowship His sufferings, being made conformable to the image of His death, and thereby will fellowship His glory (1 Pet. 4:13; Phil. 3:10; 2 Cor. 1:7). Paul had this idea ever before him: "It is now my joy to suffer for you; for the sake of Christ's body, the church, I am completing what still remains for Christ to suffer in my own person" (Col. 1:24 REB).

In the grace of Christ, we can have a certain "boldness" in prayer (Heb. 4:16); but we will have "boldness in the day of judgment" (1 Jn. 4:17) in the sense that the attitude we have in prayer now and the experience of the Lord we know now will be that we have in the day of judgment. If He is no more than a black box in our brain we call 'God' or 'Jesus', if for all our Christianity we haven't known Him, so it will be then as we face Him.

4:18 Murderers often reveal that their psychological motivation was not merely hatred, but often fear- fear of what that person might do, or who they might show them up to be. Fear, therefore, is at the root of all lack of love and respect for our brethren. We fear the poor image of ourselves which they reveal by their actions or examples; and so slander and hatred of them in the heart [Biblical murder] develops. If only we can cast away this kind of fear, then love will take its place; for perfect love comes when fear has been cast out (1 Jn. 4:18). The Greek for 'drive out' is that used in Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30 to describe how the wicked are driven out into darkness at the last day. If we now in this life can cast out or condemn our own fear of rejection, then we will not live in fear... because fear has, or is, its own condemnation (1 Jn. 4:18 Gk.). If we are still consumed by fear, in whatever way, in this life- then this, according to John's logic, appears to be a sign that we will not be accepted in the last day. Fear as a purely nervous reaction is not what he is speaking of. Rather is it the crippling moral fear of which we have spoken.

We are saved by grace, already, we are elevated to the heights of heavenly places on account of being in Christ. A perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:16,18), fear is associated with bondage rather than the freedom of sonship which we enjoy (Rom. 8:15). Yet all this can in no way erase the very clear teaching of many other passages: that we ought to fear God, really fear Him. What's the resolution of all this? It may be that *ideally*, we are called to live a life without any fear in the sense of *phobos*- in the same way as we are asked to be perfect, even as God is (Mt. 5:48). Yet the reality is that we are not perfect. And perhaps in a similar way, we are invited to live a life without *phobos*,

but in reality, it is necessary to have it if we truly realize our weak position. We ought to be able to say with confidence that should Christ come now, we will by grace continue to be in His Kingdom. Yet in the same way as we always assume a future, so we inevitably look ahead to the possibility of our *future* apostasy; as we grow spiritually, there is an altogether finer appreciation of the purity of God's righteousness. The risk of rejection, the sense of the future we may miss, and the faint grasp of the gap between God's righteousness and our present moral achievement, will *inevitably* provoke a sense of fear in every serious believer. And yet fearing God, unlike fear on a human level, is a motivating and creative fear. Our fear of and yet confidence with God is a strange synthesis.

Psychologists suggest that there is something within the human psyche that needs to fear, that wants to fear. Just look at the huge success of terror stories, movies, images, Stephen King novels; and the way that the media realizes that their global audience laps up fear and sensationalism about terror. One common thread throughout all the pagan forerunners of the 'personal Satan' idea is that the pagan concepts all involved the generation of fear and terror. True Christianity aims to "cast out" such fear through its revelation of the ultimate love of God (1 Jn. 4:18). So many control systems have played upon fear of the Devil – to bring children into subdued obedience, flocks into submission to pastors, etc. It's now high time to realize that this is not how the true God works. "For fear has torment" (1 Jn. 4:18), and this is exactly what true understanding of the cross of Christ saves us from. God isn't a psychological manipulator, and He doesn't coax us into submission through fear. And yet it could be said that humanity is increasingly addicted to fear. People may mock fearing a Loch Ness monster, werewolves, funny sounds at night... but they still buy in big time to fearing a personal Devil. There's something in us that wants to fear something; that just loves the popular idea of a personal Satan. This is why it's hard to budge this mentality.

4:20 Our attitude to others is simply so eternally important. John's writings are characterized by seeing everything in terms of dualism, black and white, good and evil. He describes those who do not love their brethren as having not seen God, as not being a child of God. Martin Hengel has observed: "How one behaves towards a Christian brother at one's own front door is the deciding factor over faith and unbelief, life or death, light and darkness".

John perceptively foresaw that a man might say that he loves God, and yet hate his brother (1 Jn. 4:20). He demonstrates with piercing logic that hating our brother means that we hate our God. But it is so easy to adopt the position of the man whom John sets up. We can even think that our love of God is articulated in a hating of our brother, for the sake of God's Truth. It is relatively easy to love God, apparently, anyway. But it's hard to love all our brethren. And yet this means that a *true* unfeigned love of God is not quite so natural and easy as we think. 1 Jn. 5:1-3 make it clear that it is axiomatic within loving God that we love all His children. If we don't love them, we don't love Him. So if we think that loving God is easy, think again. Think who He really *is*, of the inclusive and saving and seeking grace which is so central to His character, and the imperative which there is within it to be like Him.

Biblically, it's impossible to have a relationship with God without relating with His children. This point is hammered home by John, writing as he was to ecclesias riven with factionism and accusation. The result of believing that Christ laid down His life for us, is that we lay down our lives for our brethren (3:16). All believers are the children of God. If we love God, we will love His children (5:1,2). God and His children, the believers, are inseparable. And yet within our human nature is the tendency to try to make a distinction between them. John was fully aware of this: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (4:20,21). Loving our brother is therefore the litmus test as to whether we are "of God", whether we have "passed from death unto life" (3:10,14). It is simply impossible to claim to love God but politely disregard His children. It's not that we must love God *and also* our brother. If we love God we will love our brother, by loving our brother we

love God. These things are axiomatic. The intimacy this implies between the Father and His sons is so deep. As those "in Christ", all that is true of the Son of God, Jesus our Lord, becomes true of us. We share His relationship with the Father.

4:21- see on Lk. 10:28.

5:1 - see on Jn. 3:3; 8:42.

5:4 The Devil is a deceiver, he has a fake Kingdom of God [see on Lk. 11:18]; the antiChrist appears as a false Christ. If we think that the antiChrist is the real Christ, that those who teach false doctrine about Christ are part of the body of Christ, then we have been deceived; we have been taken in by the appearance of righteousness. Sometimes, Satan or the Devil is used as a personification of the world, or a human political system, e.g. the Roman empire in the book of Revelation. This is because the world or human empires are structured around the thinking of the flesh, the real Satan. Thus overcoming the world is parallel to overcoming the devil (1 Jn. 5:4 cp. 2:13,14); "the whole world is under the control of the evil one", the Devil (1 Jn. 5:19 NIV). The lust of the flesh and eyes (the Biblical devil) are "all that is in the world" (1 Jn. 2:16). Thus our own private Satan, the lusts of our dark side, are somehow in league with the world around us. The world has been set in our heart (Ecc. 3:11).

John uses the neuter rather than the male gender to describe all believers (1 Jn. 5:4). Most contemporary writers would likely have used the male gender here. The New Testament is in fact sensitive to the gender issue.

5:5 John writes that he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be thus empowered to overcome the world (1 Jn. 5:5). It's unusual for the Lord of glory to be referred to merely as "Jesus" by the apostles. Perhaps what John is saying is that if we perceive how the real, human Jesus, the man from Nazareth, was so much more than that, He was Son of God- we too will find strength from the fact of His humanity to overcome the world. Thus later John writes that to confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, to acknowledge His true humanity, is related to walking after His commandments (2 Jn. 6,7). See on 2 Jn. 9.

5:6 1 Jn. 5:6 says that Jesus came" [past tense] in water and blood [His baptism and crucifixion?], but He still testifies by three things-His Spirit [making alive the believer], the water [baptism cleansing us] and the blood [atoning for our sins]. The choice of 'three' things doesn't refer to a trinity- rather is it the principle of Dt. 19:15, requiring two or three witnesses. And note how inanimate things are spoken of as giving witness (Gen. 31:45-48; Dt. 31:28)- the three that bear witness don't refer necessarily to three persons, as the trinity wrongly states. Those things which He enabled, witnessed through us today, provide the witness to the fact that He 'came' in the past.

The witness of the Lord and of His disciple were one and the same. The witness on earth was a reflection of that in Heaven (1 Jn. 5:6,7).

5:8- see on Rev. 1:2.

Beholding the cross and the water and blood that flowed from it, John struggled with the inadequacy of human language: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true" (Jn. 19:35). Years later he described himself, in allusion to this, as he "who bare record [in the past tense] of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:2). He had earlier commented that the Spirit, water and blood of the cross bore witness (1 Jn. 5:8). John seems to be saying that the Lord's final death which he had witnessed was the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ. And as he had been a faithful witness to this, so now he would be of that further revelation he had now seen in the Apocalypse.

5:9 This experience of an acceptive mutuality between God and man is surely at the very core of our spirituality; it should be part of an inner spiritual shell that nothing, *nothing* can shake: aggression from our brethren, disillusion with other Christians, persecution from the world, painful personal

relationships... Israel were to give their hand to God, and His hand in turn would give them a heart to follow Him further (2 Chron. 30:8 cp. 12 A.V.mg.). "This is the witness of God... He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness *in himself*... the (i.e. this) witness of God is greater" than that of men (1 Jn. 5:9,10). The ultimate proof that the Truth is the Truth is not in the witness of men- be they archaeologists, scientists, good friends or who. The real witness of God is deep in yourself. "Taste and see, that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8) is the most powerful appeal. John is using a legal word for "witness". There is, of course, something intentionally contradictory here. For a witness must be independent of yourself. You can't really be a valid witness to yourself. But the Lord said that He was a witness of Himself, and this witness was valid (Jn. 8:14-18). We, too, John is saying, can be a valid witness to ourselves that our faith is genuine. Our personal experience of the Lord Jesus *is* valid. Paul proves the resurrection of Jesus by saying that "he has risen indeed" exactly because he (Paul) has seen the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15). This is the kind of 'evidence' we tend to fight shy of. But our personal experience of the Lord Jesus *is* a valid prop to our faith, according to the passages considered.

5:10- see on 1 Jn. 1:10.

We each have the witness of the Lord's resurrection in ourselves (1 Jn. 5:10). But in a witness in a courtroom isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth or press for a verdict; but rather to simply report what actually happened in their experience. This is where I personally see little point in 'apologetics' - trying to prove there is a God or that the Bible is true. These are matters of faith in the end. We are called not to apologize for God but rather to be witnesses from ourselves of the work of the Father and Son.

If we are real witnesses, testifiers to the reality of the Lord's death and resurrection, we *must* therefore, by the very nature of our experience, be witnesses of these things to the world. The resurrection is the witness that God has given of His Son. Whoever believes that witness, will have within themselves the witness- they will be witnesses to God's witness (1 Jn. 5:10 Gk.).

The witness of the Gospel is within ourselves (1 Jn. 5:10) in the sense that it is our Christ-like life which is the essential witness to Him. Hence Peter says that a woman can win her husband to Christ "without the word", i.e. without formal, conscious preaching. Paul parallels his preaching with God 'revealing' Jesus through him (Gal. 1:9).

The souls under the altar cry out (Rev. 6:10). But those men and women of Heb. 11 are then described in Heb. 12:1 as themselves "witnesses". Who they were is their witness, the testimony which is given of them in the court of Heaven and upon which God's judgment is decided. We have the witness in ourselves (1 Jn. 5:10), and yet it is a witness which is in fact God's witness / record to us (this is the context of 1 Jn. 5:6-11). The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we really are the Sons of God (Rom. 8:16). In this sense Paul's conscience bore him witness in the Holy Spirit, i.e. his testimony was that of the Spirit (Rom. 9:1). The rejected are witnesses against themselves (Is. 44:9; Mt. 23:31).

We labour and strive in the preaching of the Gospel "because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. 4:10 RV). The certainty of our hope is the basis of our witness. "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life...he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 Jn. 5:10,11 RV). We will witness from a sense welling up within us, that we have in prospect been given eternal life. If we have ourselves believed that the good news of the Gospel really is good news, we will inevitably share that message. Good news can't be kept to oneself. News of engagement, marriage, child birth... is spread somehow and yet urgently by those affected by the events. Even the most retiring of people can find a way to communicate the good news of their first child or grandchild. Sometimes I find my e-mail clogged up with big attachments of baby photos- from people I scarcely know! But their sense of good news compelled them to make contact with me. And so it will be with us in the round of encounters and

conversations which make up our daily lives. We will get the word out, somehow. We will break barriers and boundaries in order to engage people in conversation about the one thing that really and essentially matters to us. And, believe me, passively, beneath the show of casual indifference, people *are* interested. And Bill Hybels claims from surveys that “about 25% of the adults in the US would go to church if a friend would just invite them”.

Not believing in God and not believing in His word of the Gospel are paralleled in 1 Jn. 5:10. God is His word. The word “is” God in that God is so identified with His word. David parallels trusting in God and trusting in His word (Ps. 56:3,4).

5:13- see on Mt. 16:16; Jn. 20:31; 1 Jn. 1:3.

We must go on further than just being baptized into Christ. John wrote unto them that had believed into the name of the Son of God (a reference to baptism into His Name), “that ye may believe into the name of the Son of God” (1 Jn. 5:13). He wanted them to go further; to live out in practice what they had done in status and theory by baptism into Christ.

5:14- see on Mt. 18:19; Jn. 15:27.

“These things have I written unto you... that ye may know that ye have eternal life... and this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us” (1 Jn. 5:13,14). Answered prayer is the confidence that we have eternal life. Answered prayer means that our joy will be full (Jn. 16:24).

God answers prayer as a result of the fact that we believe and as a token that we are acceptable before Him (1 Jn. 5:14 etc.). But there are examples of where God answers the prayers of those who don't believe with a full faith, and even of those who later will be condemned (Zacharias; the believers praying for Peter's release; Mt. 7:21-23). The relationship between faith and answered prayer is not so simple as it appears in some passages. God is working with us at a higher level than simply responding to our words as a token of His acceptance of our faith.

5:16 It is of course true that in some ways, we are ultimately responsible for our own salvation; our brethren can't really help us, if we wilfully chose to rebel against our calling. And yet there is reason to think that up to a certain point, our prayers and pastoral concern for our brethren can save them, whereas without our effort they would not be saved. Reflect on 1 Jn. 5:16: “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask [in prayer], and he [God] shall give him [the prayerful brother] life [eternal life, in the Johannine context] for them that sin not unto death”. This seems to be a fair paraphrase. If it isn't, what does this passage mean? James 5:15,20 say the same: “...the prayer of faith (uttered by faithful friends) shall save the sick (struck down with sickness as a result of his sin, which seems to have happened in the first century, cp. 1 Cor. 11:30; Acts 5:5)... and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed... he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”. Behold the power of freewill effort for others: For the sake of our prayers, in some cases sins of others can be forgiven when otherwise they wouldn't be. For the sake of our conversion of our erring brethren, they can be saved from eternal death and have their sins covered. The Lord's prayer says as much- we ask God to forgive us *our* sins; not ‘me my sins’. Likewise only once Israel had passed a certain level of sinfulness was Jeremiah told to cease prayer for them (Jer. 7:16 cp. 11:14). Until that point, God seems to have been willing to read Jeremiah's prayer for them as their prayer (his “cry” was seen as theirs). And Ez. 14:14,18 imply the same- Noah, Daniel and Job could have delivered Israel up to a certain point, but they were *so* hardened in sin at Ezekiel's time that even those men wouldn't have saved a nation which otherwise, for a lower level of sin as it were, they could otherwise have saved. If we have any grain of love in us, we will likewise dedicate ourselves to fervent prayer for our brethren, seeing it does have effect and validity within certain boundaries.

5:20 William Barclay (*New Testament Words*) has a very interesting section on the word *aionios*. He cites examples in contemporary literature where it is used not of indefinite continuance, but simply of that which is beyond time. "To attach eternity to the created was impossible. So He (God) made time as a moving image of eternity... the essence of the word *aionios* is that it is the word of the eternal order as contrasted with the order of this world... the word can be properly applied to no one other than God... the life of God". This helps us understand how 'eternal punishment' is not in fact punishment of unending continuance. And yet eternal punishment is set as the antithesis to eternal life (Mt. 25:46); this itself shows that "eternal" is not to be understood as unending continuance. For the wicked will not be punished for ever- they will die and cease existing. The Lord Jesus *is* eternal life (1 Jn. 5:20); this alone points us to see "eternal life" as more a description, a quality of life, rather than indefinite continuance. Those who "seek for glory, and honour, and immortality" are granted eternal life, as though "eternal life" comprehends all these things for which they seek (Rom. 2:7).

2 JOHN

:1 *Lady*- A proper noun, Kyria. 3 John is clearly a parallel letter, and this is also to a named individual, Gaius.

Her children- her converts. Kyria was a sister who had started a house church loyal to the teaching of John- for he writes to them as their "elder", their father in Christ. There is evidence in the pictures found in the catacombs that some wealthy women ran house churches in their own homes.

The truth- John's preferred title of the Lord Jesus, who called Himself "the truth".

The reference to greetings from the 'children' (converts) of Kyria's sister suggest that John was in contact with another female house church (:13), whose greetings he was relaying to Kyria's group. The term "house" in v. 10 clearly refers to Kyria's house church; but the noun *oikian* ["house"] is feminine whereas other house churches are referred to as a masculine "house" (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2). This would suggest to me that Kyria's ecclesia were mainly women.

John saw the faithful churches to whom he was writing as those who had been faithful to the Gospel he had preached to them, as outlined in the Gospel of John. He had recorded there the promise that "You will know the truth" (Jn. 8:32), and he writes in his letters to a community "who have come to know the truth" (2 Jn. 1), i.e. who had fulfilled and obeyed the Gospel of Jesus which he had preached to them initially.

Female House Churches

The New Testament speaks of households run by women: Mary (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14,40); Nympha (Col. 4:15) and Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11). These women were presumably wealthy widows or divorcees who hadn't remarried. We are left to speculate whether they were in some way the 'leaders' of the house churches which met in their homes. Women are described as ruling households in 1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:4,5. The woman of Prov. 31 clearly had autonomy within the private sphere of the household, even though the husband was the public leader. Seeing Christianity was initially a house-church, household religion, we are left to wonder how much women actually led house churches, especially seeing that the majority of early Christian members appear to have been women. The wall paintings [frescoes] found in the Christian catacombs around Rome are highly significant for our present study. The significant ones for our purposes are the catacombs of Priscilla on the Salaria Nuova, Callixtus on the via Appia Antica, and that of Domitilla on the via Ardeatine. They feature in places scenes of female Christians raising cups, with the inscription *agape* over them. Some show a woman occupying the central place in the meal, with a large cup in her hand, with the other women looking at it intently. Some of the frescoes [there are many of them] show women dressed as slaves doing this in what appears to be a wealthy home. These frescoes seem to me indicative of how groups of slave women formed house churches, and faithfully kept the breaking of bread. Some frescoes show the women sharing the bread and wine with children around the table; one shows a woman holding a scroll, as if she is reading Scripture to the others. One fresco features a woman holding a cup of wine inscribed '*nobis*'- 'for us' (1). Some frescoes show men in the group, but the woman in the centre, as if she is leading the meeting, or as the host of the household. How does one square this with New Testament teaching about brothers leading breaking of bread meetings? I came across an analogous situation some years ago in Northern Kazakhstan, shortly after the collapse of atheism and the USSR there. A zealous group of elderly sisters baptized over 300 people in a short space of time, establishing a whole set of house churches, comprised almost exclusively of women. In time, a few men became interested. They had known little of the Bible, coming from a Soviet background. They were taught by the sisters, baptized by them, and became members of the already-existing house churches. But they on their own admission felt unable to lead the meetings, as they were babes in Christ compared to those sisters. I can imagine similar situations arising in the early church. The dynamic success of those female house churches

in Northern Kazakhstan was similar to what happened in the first century; groups of sisters coming together in home situations and bonding together in Christ, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor... it would've been an amazing thing to behold. What went wrong in Kazakhstan was what went wrong in the early church; things got institutionalized, power politics entered the scene, the live, raw appeal of Christ to the world got somehow muted and made respectable. Perhaps the Lord foresaw the phenomena of female house churches when He told the parable of the woman who gathers other women together in her home to celebrate her finding of the lost coin. The unity between Christian sisters was celebrated in the *Acts Of Thecla*, where we read of sisters uniting to publically demonstrate against Thecla's condemnation to death for her refusal to marry a non-Christian. Christianity certainly had something uniquely appealing to first century women. Whilst I think some of the 'liberation theologians' have gone too far, it's true to say that Christianity spread so rapidly and radically because it was a movement of paradigm-breaking liberation, especially for women and slaves. And the 21st century is just as much enslaved and in need of radical liberation as was the Mediterranean of the 1st century. The message of true Christianity gave meaning to the individual. It wasn't a question of signing up for some religion, which required Sunday morning attendance at a certain place and a certain time. If that was what first century Christianity had been all about, it simply wouldn't have had such success amongst poor women and slaves. For it would've been impossible for them to make regular appointments given their domestic and social situations. But true Christianity appeals [as much today as back then] to the individual. We read in the *Acts Of Thecla* [Section 34] of a woman imprisoned by the demands of her husband and society... and how she baptized herself. The idea that baptism can only be administered by a certain group of "elders" was foreign to early Christianity.

Note

(1) Ample photographs of the catacomb art depicting these scenes are to be found in J. Deckers, H. Seeliger, G. Mietke *Die Katacombe 'Santi Marcellion e Pietro: Repertorio delle pitture* (Vatican City: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1987). This is a huge 3 volume production with a large number of photographs of catacomb art. The photo plates relevant to what I've written of here are numbers 30a-b; 31a-b; 19a-b; 20a-b; 33c; 58a-b.

:2 Our relationships with each other are on account of "the Truth", Jesus, He as a person, our common relationship to and in Him, has created the unique bonds which there are within Christian relationships.

:3 *Be with you*- the verb is in the future tense, these things will be with the readership. The question is, whether John's inspired statement actually gave his readers more grace, mercy etc. than they would otherwise have had if he had not written these things. For the words to have any meaning, one must surely assume that he was imparting something to them which they wouldn't otherwise have had- which raises the question as to what extent we as third parties can influence the spiritual blessings of others by our prayerful desires for them.

:4 John's greatest joy was that his converts 'walked in truth', they 'walked after [the Father's] commandments' (2 Jn. 4,6). They walked in life honest to themselves and to the Father. Walking or living 'in truth' is thus put for living a life pleasing to God. It surely doesn't mean that we simply live our lives holding on to the same intellectual understanding of doctrines which we had at our baptism. We 'keep' the commandments by 'doing' them (1 Jn. 2:3 cp. 5:2), not by merely holding to a true theoretical definition of them. There is so much more to walking in truth than this. We rightly emphasize the need for true doctrine; but the issue of this in practice is that true doctrine leads to a true life, a life true to God, to our brethren, to ourselves. John parallels walking in the light with walking in the truth (1 Jn. 1:7; 2 Jn. 4); and yet Jn. 3 defines the true light as ultimately the light of the crucified Christ. To live life self-analytically in the shadow of the cross, of Him as He was there, is the only way to walk in truth. This is the true life; to merely hold certain interpretations of Scripture in intellectual purity is not all there is to 'walking in truth' or 'in the

light'. This kind of truth sets us free (Jn. 8:31,32). Discerning the correctness of sound exposition will not of itself bring any freedom. But living a life that we know broadly corresponds to the image of the crucified Jesus will give a freedom unknown in any other sphere of human experience.

Paul likewise says that his joy in the day of judgment will be to see his brethren accepted into eternity; and that joy is right now for us as we behold the spiritual growth of those for whom we have expended effort. John says the same in 3 Jn. 3. 'Of your children' could imply 'some of' (RV "certain of")- for sadly there is never 100% response to the Gospel amongst those who initially accept it. John focused on the positive- he could've lamented that some of the children / converts had fallen away. But he sees the glass as half full rather than half empty.

John, surrounded by apostasy and a break-up mentality, could "rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth" (2 Jn. 4 RV). That at least some were holding on was a great joy to him. He focused on the positive things in ecclesial life.

:5 *one another*- Christian love for other Christians is a specific kind of love intended to be a witness to the world. Hence the addition of the otherwise redundant "one another".

Beginning- Gk. *arche*. John could mean that the arch-commandment, the most important principle of the Gospel, was to love one another. Or he could mean that "in the beginning" of their association with the Gospel, they had been taught first of all that it's all about love- and Kyria and her converts had it seems somewhat forgotten that, even though they were overall 'walking in the truth'. The Lord's letter to Ephesus had to remind them of the same thing- they had lost their first love / *agape*. It would seem therefore that there's a tendency over time to harden after the love and joy of first conversion, and to lose focus upon the simple principle of love which underpins the Gospel.

The emphasis that he is not writing a new commandment is found in 1 Jn. 2:7 too. As an inspired prophet, John would've had the power to dictate new commandments or precepts in addition to those given by the Lord Jesus. Paul draws a distinction between what he personally was teaching new by the Spirit, and those things wherein he was merely repeating what the Lord Jesus had personally taught (1 Cor. 7:12). So it seems John is making a similar distinction here- the paramount need to love one another was at the very core of the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

:6 In John's writings, "the commandment", the bottom line principle, is love (Jn. 13:34; 15:12,17; 1 Jn. 3:23; 4:21).

:7-9 *For*- the context of the preceding verses is the practical need to walk in love. The material in vv. 7-10 isn't a change of theme- it's not as if John starts talking about love and then goes on to rave about the dangers of those who teach a false theology. The language he uses to describe the false teaching speaks as if it was a moral issue- it was a "transgression" (:9). Intellectual failure, even theological failure, isn't in that sense a moral issue. It's not a sin to misunderstand or even teach that misunderstanding. It's a failure, but of another category. "Transgression" suggests a breaking of specific moral commandment. Those who commit such 'transgression' are labeled 'deceivers', a word again containing a strong moral sense- of being an impostor, seducer, knowing misleader. Those who don't confess Christ coming in the flesh are performing "evil deeds" (:11). This is clearly something practical rather than intellectual failure. The 'confessing not' the human Jesus therefore refers to a way of life rather than a mistaken theological position, arrived at perhaps partly through genuine intellectual failure in Biblical interpretation, and partly from the influence of those who disciple such a person after their first encounter with Christianity. The context in which John speaks about the refusal to 'confess' the real, human Jesus is a moral one- he has been speaking in the previous verses about the paramount importance of love, and how this emphasis had apparently been lost by Kyria and her group. The Greek more strictly bears the meaning that these people were not confessing 'Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh'. This could be read as implying that these people in their lives were not showing Jesus coming in the flesh- i.e. their own flesh. They were not manifesting Him in flesh. Again, it is a practical matter which John is addressing, rather than a

purely academic, abstract issue of theology. Those who commit the “transgression” of not confessing Christ in the flesh “have not God” (:9)- a clear allusion to what John had earlier recorded in Jn. 5:42: “You have not the love of God”. “Have not God” uses the same Greek words in both places. Not having God means not knowing or practicing His love- it’s not so much that John is here saying that if we misunderstand just something about Jesus then we have no relationship with God. ‘Having God’ and ‘abiding’ in Christ (:9) are practical matters of daily living. “Hath not God” almost sounds to be John’s version of Paul’s statement that if anyone doesn’t have “the spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom.8:9). But abiding in the Father and Son, having the spirit of Christ etc. are all practical things rather than theological concerns- they are the practical business of confessing Christ in the flesh.

I query the claim that John is battling Gnosticism; I have given evidence elsewhere that the New Testament was completed before AD70, and Gnosticism wasn’t a real threat in say the AD60s. The real problem was from Judaist infiltrators, seeking to turn the grace of God in Christ into legalism. The problem is tackled by John from a practical angle, rather than saying ‘This is theologically wrong, because it’s wrong, and therefore I shall indulge in name calling against it’. The seriousness of the matter was because it was associated with practical misbehaviour- a denial of love. The argument does, however, start to come full circle- for, by implication, confessing the human Christ leads to the love of which John has been speaking earlier. Reflection upon the humanity of Jesus, stripped of all theological fantasy, leads to love. Whereas knowledge in the sense of pseudo-intellectualizing “puffs up” and is presented as the very opposite of “love” in 1 Cor. 8:1. This kind of approach is “antiChrist”. But the Greek word *anti* doesn’t so much mean ‘against’ but ‘in place of’. The true, love-based following of the human Christ which they had heard “in the beginning” had been replaced by another form of ‘Christ’- a religion bearing the semblance of ‘Christ’ but lacking in love. And this is being exposed by John as not the real Christianity at all. “Entered into the world” uses the same Greek words as in Heb. 10:5, describing how Christ ‘entered into the world’- heightening the sense that the loveless life is not the true Christ, nor the true Christianity, but a fake imitation. We need to search our own version of Christianity to see whether love is the bottom line, the result of our faith, our theology, our understanding of Christ. Of course it would be true to say that a wrong view of the nature of Christ, a turning of Him into a Divine comet rather than a human being who lived out His perfect life “in the flesh”, is wrong- but wrong not just because it’s a misreading of Bible texts and an elevation of human theories above God’s word, but rather because it takes away the motive power of a loving life which is to be found in the life of sustained faith in and reflection upon the human Jesus.

That we can’t be secret believers is brought out by 2 Jn. 7 [Gk.]. Anyone who does not confess publicly that Jesus came in the flesh is described by John as a deceiver and even anti-Christ. The French [Segond version] is clearest: “ne declarant pas publiquement”. Whilst the passage is open to a number of interpretations, in our context the point perhaps is that to secretly believe in Christ isn’t possible- it must in some way be declared publicly or else we are “deceivers”.

We may wonder why John is at such pains to point out that Christ “came in the flesh”, and why he pronounced anathema upon those who denied that (2 Jn. 7-9). It seems to me that his converts had come up against Jewish attempts to re-interpret Jesus in terms of apostate Jewish thinking about Angels and the whole nature of existence, the kind of heresy battled against in Hebrews and Colossians. Take Jewish views of the Angels who appeared to Abraham. Josephus says they “gave him to believe that they did eat” (*Antiquities* 1.197); Philo claimed that “though they neither ate nor drank, they gave the appearance of both eating and drinking” (*Abraham* 118). The Bible states simply that they ate. And that Jesus likewise ate after His resurrection. John emphasizes that the Lord Jesus had been fully tangible, the disciples touched and felt Him (1 Jn. 1:1-4); and that His death was equally real (1 Jn. 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; 5:6-9). And he presses the point that this is what had been believed “from the beginning”, indicating that already new ideas were coming into the Christian communities about the nature of Jesus. This of itself shows that the whole issue of who

Jesus is *does* matter; that the Christ was and is the *real* Christ was for John crucially important. The inspired apostle didn't simply shrug off these new ideas as well meaning misunderstandings. He speaks against them in the toughest possible terms.

:8 Note the pronouns- *you* are to take heed lest *we* (John and his pastoral / preaching team) don't get a full reward (Gk. 'wages', 'payment') for our labour. If the pastoral work we do for others is successful, then we shall be rewarded for it eternally. That reward isn't related to salvation- that is the gift of grace which all in Christ shall receive, the "penny a day" of the parable. But the 'rewards' of e.g. ten or five cities will be proportionate to the quality of our service of the Lord in this life. Hence Paul reasons that if all the work of upbuilding which we do for others ultimately fails, in that those believers are burnt up in the last day, then we ourselves shall still be saved (1 Cor. 3:15). Yet if those we labour for do come into God's Kingdom, then they shall be for us our eternal joy and crown of reward throughout the ages of eternity (1 Thess. 2:19).

To believe in Him is described by John as a 'work' that has to be laboured at- with even more effort than that expended by the crowds who walked around the lake to get to Jesus and the free bread He appeared to be offering (Jn. 6:27; 2 Jn. 8). It is this 'labour', this hard mental effort to know Him and believe in Him, which will have a 'full reward' (2 Jn. 8). John here is alluding to the LXX of Ruth 2:12, where a 'full reward' is given to Ruth for working hard all day gleaning in the fields. It may be that this allusion was because "the elect lady" addressed by John was in fact a proselyte widow, like Ruth. But the point is, we have to *labour*, as much as one might work hard walking around a lake or gleaning in the field, in order to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

:9 John writes that to confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, to acknowledge His true humanity, is related to walking after His commandments (2 Jn. 6,7). And this perhaps is why John can say that it is a sin, a "transgression", to abide not in the doctrine of a human Jesus (2 Jn. 9). Why should it be 'sinful' to hold a theological misunderstanding? Surely God cannot hold people morally culpable for genuine misinterpretation? Perhaps the answer lies in looking at it from a different angle. The purpose of doctrine is to elicit a Godly way of life. To refuse to believe in the real, human Jesus is actually a way of justifying our wrong behaviour, of hiding away from the challenge that *His* humanity is to *us* as His fellow human beings- to transform our personalities after the pattern of His. To believe the doctrine of a human Jesus who was nonetheless God manifest in human flesh empowers us not to sin; through this real and human Christ we have forgiveness and inspiration in the life that is in Him. This is why doctrine about Him matters- because if believed properly, it empowers a Christ-like life. This perspective helps us likewise understand what is fundamental doctrine, and what isn't. Any idea or theory or interpretation that doesn't have the potential to change our lives in practice just... isn't worth arguing about. See on 1 Jn. 5:5.

:10 John doesn't say 'If anyone brings this false doctrine about not confessing Jesus in the flesh, then don't have them in your house church'. He actually says nothing about rejecting false doctrine; rather does he state that if anyone doesn't bring with them the doctrine of Christ (:9), then don't "receive" or accept such a person into your house church [this could be a technical term for 'don't let them become members']. He's saying that we should accept those who are Christ-centered, who bring the teaching of Christ- but he doesn't define what that is.

The 'bidding God speed' may refer to giving material support to itinerant missionary teachers (cp. 3 Jn. 6).

:11 *Partaker of his evil deeds* – a poor translation, which can be twisted into supporting the wrong notion of 'guilt by association'. *Koinoneo* is elsewhere translated to communicate, distribute; it's used in the specific context of sharing money and material support in Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15. By giving material support to such travelling teachers, one is only helping the spread of their "evil deeds" to others. It's not saying that we are counted as guilty of those deeds if we have the person into our home or shake hands with them etc.

2 Jn. 11 speaks of how teaching that Jesus was not truly human is associated with "evil works". Surely the implication is that good works are inspired by a true understanding of the Lord's humanity, and evil works by a refusal to accept this teaching. The tests of genuineness which John commanded centred around two simple things: Do those who come to you hold true understanding of the nature of Jesus; and do they love. The two things go together. And they are a fair test even today. For where there is no love, the true doctrine of Jesus is not truly believed, no matter how nicely it is expressed in words and writing.

:12 Paul's use of letter writing was perhaps analogous to our use of the net. He says time and again that he's writing a letter, but he sees it as a poor substitute for the face to face contact he would prefer (Rom. 15:14-33; 1 Cor. 4:14-21; Gal. 4:12-20; 1 Thess. 2:17-3:13). John hints the same (2 Jn. 12; 3 Jn. 14).

:13- see on 2 Jn. 1.

3 JOHN

:1 *Wellbeloved*- by whom? The answer may be 'by God and / or Jesus'. In his Gospel, John speaks of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John goes on to state that he loves Gaius also. This would be exemplifying what he taught elsewhere- that we are to love those whom God loves, with His love toward them flowing through us.

:2 The health and prosperity which he wishes [or, Greek, 'prays' for] must surely be the spiritual health of Gaius, according to the way he goes on in verse 3 to say how he had rejoiced at the news of the spiritual strength of Gaius. "As your soul prospers" would be a reference to the natural, material life of Gaius prospering. Not all the first century believers were therefore persecuted- Gaius was at that time prospering materially.

Above all things- to desire the spiritual strength of others more than anything else is a profoundly mature position to arrive at.

:3 *I rejoiced* - 1 Thess. 2:19 is Paul's equivalent of this- he says that he will rejoice eternally if the brethren whom he had served would be in God's Kingdom. However, that joy begins in this life, in our joy at the spiritual growth of others.

The brothers- a specific group, perhaps "the messengers of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23).

Came- the present participle suggests they kept coming and telling John.

Truth that is in you- surely a reference to Christ as "the truth", rather than Gaius maintaining a set of pure theological understandings.

Daniel speaks of repentance and obeying God's voice as being a result of 'having discernment in thy truth' (Dan. 9:13,14 RV). To grasp the endless depth and height of the fact we are in touch with ultimate truth inevitably affects our lives. 3 Jn. 3 in the AV speaks of "the truth that is in thee"; but the Greek can also mean, as in the RV, "thy truth". To really believe true doctrine leads to repentance, and to our being truthful at the very least. Our contact with God's truth results in our being truthful not only to others but to ourselves, and this, as Daniel observed, gives rise to true repentance.

Paul can speak of "the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:5) and again of "the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:5). He refers to "the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation" (Eph. 1:13). It's quite Biblical that we refer to our faith as "the truth". But truth is clearly a way of describing or summing up the way of life which the doctrines of the truth should elicit in us. Thus "the new man... is created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:24). We obey the truth in unfeigned love of our brethren (1 Pet. 1:22), not just by intellectual assent at a baptismal interview; we 'do the truth' in loving our brother (1 Jn. 1:6); if truth is in us then we walk in it (3 Jn. 3).

:4 *no greater joy*- see on 3 Jn. 3. The greatest joy we can have is the joy that others whom we have served and tried for spiritually will live eternally.

My children- implies that Gaius was one of John's personal converts.

:5 *faithfully*- RV "a faithful work". What was the relationship between Gaius's generosity towards passing visitors, and faith? Faith that really they were brethren in Christ? Faith he would be rewarded? Faith their joint work would be blessed?

the brothers- the same group as in v. 3, who kept coming [Gk.] and telling John about Gaius. It would seem there were many teachers and missionaries moving around (hence the warning of 2 Jn. 7-10 about not accepting some such visitors into a house church). Gaius faithfully supported them materially when they passed by him, and they informed John of his spiritual strength when they were next with John.

Strangers- the implication may be that Gaius supported both the Jewish “brothers” from John’s home church, and also Gentile brethren; or it could be that he not only supported the believing brethren but was hospitable to non believers too. See on v. 7.

:6 When the itinerant preaching brothers returned to John and the church that was with him, they gave a report (v. 3), and mentioned the faithfulness of Gaius.

A Godly sort- in a manner worthy of God. It may suggest that John is asking Gaius to treat his visitors as if God Himself had come to visit. Perhaps Gaius was flagging in his attitude and motivation, as anyone who’s constantly having to entertain visitors will know.

:7- see on 1 Pet. 4:14.

3 Jn. 7 refers to how the great preaching commission was obeyed: “For his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing (material help) from the Gentiles” (Gentile believers). For the excellence of knowing His Name they went forth in witness, and moreover were generous spirited, not taking material help to enable this. The knowledge of the Name of itself should inspire to active service: for the sake of the Lord’s Name the Ephesians laboured (Rev. 2:3).

“The Gentiles” is put for ‘the Gentiles who believe’ (Rom. 2:14; 3 Jn. 7). The use of the term may suggest John’s converts and audience were Jewish converts- see on v. 5.

:8 *fellowhelpers*- RV “Fellow-workers with the truth”. If “the truth” is being used as a dynamic equivalent for Jesus, the idea would be that we are workers together with Him by supporting His representatives as they go around in their missionary work for Him. The original *syn-energōs* implies a synergy between us and “the truth”. The whole picture comes together- our support for missionaries, their own efforts, and the input from God and the Lord Jesus personally all create a synergy, unto His glory. No wonder John urges us to have a part in it.

:9 *the church*- which one? 3 John is a letter to one individual, Gaius. It could well be that there was an ecclesia in his location, but because of the divisive work of Diotrephes, they didn’t accept Gaius and wouldn’t accept John’s letter to them. Verse 10 implies that when John visited Gaius he would also visit “the church” there. “Preeminence among *them*” suggests Gaius really had no part with them. In this case, Gaius would have been an outcast from his local ecclesia, yet he generously supported visiting missionary brethren, held the faith and played his part in the Divine synergy which we explained in v. 8.

:10 *The brethren*- those of verses 3,5 and 8; itinerant missionaries attached to John’s home church, whom Gaius received and supported, but whom Diotrephes said must not be received. “The church” is that of v. 9 to whom John had written in vain. Diotrephes started off with a slander campaign, “malicious words”, against John and the brethren with him; but he was not “content” with that. Once brethren start to get bitter and slanderous towards others, they can’t stop. They’re never content with that, but have to go on from there to exclude others who may peripherally support those who are the victims of their attacks. Diotrephes slandered John; refused personally to “receive” the itinerant missionaries from John’s ecclesia; forbid or hindered others who did so; and then excommunicated them. It could be that the behaviour of Diotrephes listed in v.10 is a chronological description of what happened- “not content therewith” would suggest that it is. Seeing that Gaius clearly did “receive” the “brethren” and yet was not part of the church, it follows that he was one of the victims of Diotrephes’ excommunication campaign. This kind of guilt by association mentality has ruined the body of Christ. The desire to excommunicate faithful brethren because of their support of others who are associated with those considered to be ‘in the wrong’ over something is, sadly, typical. Interestingly, Diotrephes actually excommunicated brethren for ‘receiving’ missionary brethren- verses 6-8 suggest that ‘receiving’ involved material support. And so for the good deed of supporting missionary endeavours, brethren were disfellowshipped by Diotrephes. This kind of evil behaviour is practiced to this day within the body of Christ. John’s letter appears to be telling Gaius what was happening with Diotrephes- and yet surely Gaius himself

knew all this? One possibility which arises is that Gaius wasn't fully aware of the bigger picture. Another is that John wrote knowing that the letter was inspired and would be read by others, therefore he provided the background information.

A fair case can be made that John received the Apocalypse *early*, well before AD70, and wrote his gospel and letters *afterwards*. In this case, the similarity of wording would partly be explained by the fact that the language of his Lord rubbed off almost unconsciously [as well as consciously] upon John's style of thinking, speaking and writing. Thus "If I come, I will bring up the things he is doing" (3 Jn. 10) reflects the Lord's style: "If you do not repent, I will come to you" (Rev. 2:5). There are many other examples- finding them is good homework for the enthusiast. Now the practical point is surely that we are living the essence of the Kingdom life now; we 'have eternal life' in the sense that we are experiencing the nature and quality of the spiritual life which by grace we will eternally live. And that life is the life of the Lord Jesus; in His life on earth we see a picture of the nature of the eternal life which we hope to live for evermore. Therefore understanding Him personally is to understand the good news of the future Kingdom of God.

It is God's intention that "there should be no schism in the body" (1 Cor. 12:25). If we refuse to break bread with validly baptized, good living brethren- then we are working against God. And if we then go on to disfellowship anyone who will not agree with our opinion on a brother, we are doing just what Diotrephes is condemned for doing: "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence... receiveth us not... and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, *and forbiddeth them that would, casting them out of the church*" (3 Jn. 10,11).

:11 *follow not that which is evil*- "Follow" translates *mimos*, 'to mimic'. It might seem obvious that Gaius wouldn't want to follow the example of Diotrephes who had excommunicated and spiritually abused him. But actually John's warning is totally relevant- because the typical response to such abuse is to go repeat it upon others, mimicking our abuser. This is especially pertinent in cases of spiritual abuse within churches.

he that does evil- i.e. Diotrephes. The "evil" done was the evil words of v. 10. For all his supposed defence of principle, he had not seen God. Elsewhere, John emphasizes that nobody has "seen God", so he may be using 'seeing' in the sense of believing, understanding, perceiving. Here was a man who didn't get it, who would be told by the Lord at the last day that "I never knew you"; whose aggressive 'defence of the faith' lead him out of the Kingdom rather than towards it.

If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11). To have the true knowledge of Jesus Christ means we will not be barren [Gk. 'idle'] nor unfruitful (2 Pet. 1:8). When Zacharias wanted to have grounds for faith, he was simply told: "I am Gabriel...", the man like God (Lk. 1:19). The declaration of God's Name in Ex. 34:6,7 doesn't include statements like "Trust in God! He'll help you!". Instead we read of the grace, mercy, justice and inevitable judgment of God. Knowing and experiencing these more abstract things will lead us to a practical faith in God. Because David remembered God's Name, *therefore* He kept His law (Ps. 119:55 RSV). This is why the Bible uses the idea of 'knowing' God in the sense of knowing Him by experience, not just 'knowing' the right theory. Likewise John uses 'the truth' in the sense of not just correct knowledge but the way of life it brings forth.

:12 *good report*- s.w. in verses 3 and 6, of how "the brethren" gave reports to John about brethren like Gaius. John seems to be implying that the Holy Spirit [maybe through the gift of prophecy working through other brethren and John personally] had confirmed Demetrius as a good brother. Given the slander campaigns from the likes of Diotrephes, this kind of confirmation was likely necessary. Gaius didn't know what to think of Demetrius- so John is telling Gaius about the good witness given about Demetrius, presumably through the Spirit. One basic thing we can take from this is that slander and vicious defamation within the church started right back in the 1st century.

Ye know—“You” plural. This and v. 14 (“salute the friends by name”) seem the only hints in the letter that John was writing to a group larger than Gaius—presumably others whom Diotrephes had disfellowshipped were together with Gaius.

:14 John records how the Lord called us friends (Jn. 15:5), and it is John who uses this title in addressing his brethren (3 Jn. 14). He reflected how the Lord saw him as his *friend*. And John realised that this was how he should see his brethren; and so must we. See on v. 13.

JUDE

:3 The Bible speaks of “the faith”, “the Gospel”, as a set of doctrines, a deposit of truth which has been delivered to the believer (Eph. 4:4–6) – “the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3 ASV). That truth cannot be added to nor subtracted from, as the Bible itself makes clear – especially in the appeals of Paul and Peter to maintain the purity of the one faith. This means that a vitally true doctrine cannot become ‘added’ to that body of truth. Jaroslav Pelikan correctly reflected: “What can it mean for a doctrine to ‘become’ part of the Catholic faith, which is, by definition, universal both in space and in time?”.

:4

Jude, Peter And Corinth

A case can be made that the letters of Peter and Jude were also written to Corinth. Peter visited Corinth, presumably focusing his preaching on the Jewish community, and perhaps he was writing his letters specifically to the Jewish house churches there (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5). The same concerns are apparent as in Paul's letters to Corinth: The need to distinguish between spiritual and unspiritual persons who despised others (Jude 19 = 1 Cor. 2:6 - 3:4; 8:1-3); those who perverted liberty into licence (Jude 4 = 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23), becoming slaves of sensuality (Jude 8,10,16,23 = 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 12:21); some eating and drinking abusively at the love feast (Jude 12 = 1 Cor. 11:17-33); refusing the authority of their elders (Jude 8,11 = 1 Cor. 4:8-13; 9:1-12); both Peter and Paul warn Corinth of the danger of worldly wisdom. Peter's reminder to them about the authority of Paul is very understandable in this case. However, the point of all this is to observe the tenderness of Peter and Jude in writing to the Corinthians ["my beloved..."], whilst at the same time warning them of the awesome judgment which their behaviour was preparing for them. It was the same passionate love for Christ's weak brethren which Paul showed them.

:4 Jude 4 parallels rejecting Jesus as Master and Lord with rejecting His moral demands. If He truly is Lord and Master, we simply won't live the immoral life which Jude criticizes.

:5 Jude 5 describes how many of them were destroyed during the wilderness journey: “The Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.” Israel were therefore “saved” from Egypt, as all those who are baptised are “saved” from sin. If one of those Israelites had been asked, “Are you saved?” their response could have been, “Yes”, but this would not mean that they would *ultimately* be saved.

:6- see on 2 Pet. 2:4.

There seems to be the implication in Heb. 9:23 that Christ's sacrifice somehow cleansed the Angels. We have to emphasize that there were no sinful Angels in Haven at the time of Christ's sacrifice, and probably never have been. However, we have to bear in mind that "His Angels He charged with folly" (Job 4:18); "The Heavens are not clean in His sight" (Job 15:15), and also the possibility that the "Angels that sinned" (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4) were actual Angels before the present creation. This was a view supported by John Thomas; the fact that there are such strong connections between these Angels and the princes associated with Korah's rebellion does not mean that his view is necessarily wrong. Jude's other historical examples are capable of being interpreted with reference to more than one past incident, not all of which are recorded in Scripture. Thus the dispute about the body of Moses (Jude 9) could refer to the Samaritans disputing about the people of Israel or Joshua the High Priest (see Zech. 3), or it could refer equally to Michael the Archangel, the Angel of Israel, who buried Moses' body, disputing with a group of Israelites who wanted to have Moses' body travelling with them, as those of Joseph and the patriarchs did (Acts 7:15,16 RV). Similarly Jude 14 talks of an incident concerning Enoch which is not detailed in the Bible (cp. Jannes and Jambres in 2 Tim. 3:8 too). Thus there is no reason why "the Angels which kept not their first estate" of Jude and 2 Peter should not refer to "Angels that sinned" before creation as well as to Korah's company of

Num. 16. Psalm 103 is praise for God's forgiveness and mercy to sin. David concludes it by asking the Angels especially to praise God for this (Ps. 103:19-21)- which would be fitting if they too had benefited in the past from God's mercy towards sin. The fact that the Angels had crowns when they are symbolized by the elders in Rev. 4:10 suggests that they had won them through overcoming some kind of tribulation. See on 1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 9:23.

:7 Jude warns the believers that Sodom's punishment was what awaited those of the new Israel who threw off their responsibilities. "As Sodom and Gomorrha... giving themselves over (implying this was a conscious apostasy?) to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth an example" to us (Jude 7). In passing, it should be noted that all Jude's examples of Divine punishment involve people who were responsible to God, by reason of knowing His ways. Is Sodom an exception?

:8- see on Zech. 3:1,2.

:9 Jude 9 states that the Angels speak in a soft, gentle way- they do not dare bring a "railing accusation" against the men they operate upon. Similarly the wilderness Angel that gave the Law and pronounced the blessings and curses upon Israel did not do so in a matter of fact 'obey or perish' tone of voice; He "pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt", as He will plead with them to repent in the last days too (Ez. 20:36). The Angel spoke to Moses "as a man speaketh to his friend" (Ex. 33:11)-i. e. in a relaxed, friendly way. It should be remembered that it was in this tone of voice that the "fiery Law" of Moses was given, rather than in a harsh, judgmental way as is often thought. Similarly Eliphaz had a vision in which he "heard a still voice" (Job 4:16, AV mg.); most visions being associated with Angels, it seems fair to assume this was an Angel's voice- as was the "still small voice" Elijah heard? (1 Kings 19:12).

Jude 9 gives guidance about how to deal with slander and attacks from false brethren. Jude alludes to the well known Jewish legend, *The Testament Of Moses*. In it, the 'devil' slanders Moses, accusing him of having murdered the Egyptian and therefore being worthy of condemnation, and tries to drag Moses' body down to punishment. Jude points out that in the story, the Angel Michael doesn't indulge in justification but rather says that "the Lord rebuke thee". And may this be our pattern.

Michael the Archangel's disputing with the Devil about the body of Moses could refer to the Angel that led Israel through the wilderness contending with a group of disaffected Jews (Jude 9).

The Body of Moses

Comments

1. There is no implication that "the Devil" here is an angel. Seeing that it is stressed that all the angels are united in doing God's will and are all obedient to Him (Ps. 103:19-21; 148:2; Heb. 1:14), it is not possible for there to be an argument in heaven between angels.
2. The phrases "Devil" and "Satan" can be used about ordinary men.
3. This Devil is concerned with the body of Moses not the so-called "immortal soul" of men (which is not Biblical teaching anyway).
4. There are many similarities between Jude and 2 Peter 2. Jude 9 has a parallel in 2 Peter 2:11: "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord". Peter's equivalent of "the Devil" is "them" – implying that the Devil in Jude 9 is not an individual, personal being, but a group of people. 2 Peter 2:10-12 clearly indicates that the "them" was a group of men.

5. As with Jude 6, this verse is in the context of Jude 5 – “I will therefore put you in remembrance”. Jude is therefore reminding them of incidents in Israel’s history from which they should learn lessons. Thus Jude 9 must be a reference to an historical incident recorded in Scripture. There is no such incident concerning an angel called the Devil arguing with another angel.

6. Michael the Archangel asked God to rebuke, or “forbid”, the Devil. If there is a super-human person, power or agency, called the Devil causing men to sin and creating trouble, then there is no evidence that he was ever effectively forbidden, seeing that sin and disaster are progressively increasing.

Suggested Explanations

1. The reference to the Devil here is incidental. The purpose of the passage is to show that angels speak in a gentle, humble way, even about people they know are in the wrong. They do not show personal vindictiveness, but say “The *Lord* rebuke you”. The Judaizers “speak evil of dignities; yet Michael... durst not bring against him (the Devil) a railing accusation”, i.e. he did not resort to bitter speaking as they did. Similarly Exodus 33:9–11 says that the angel spoke to Moses “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”, i.e. In a relaxed, friendly way. It should be remembered that it was with this voice that the “fiery law” of Moses was given by the angel, not in a harsh manner, as can be wrongly inferred from some parts of the narrative. Similarly the “still, small voice” that Elijah heard was probably the quiet, unassuming voice of an angel (1 Kings 19:12 cp. Job 4:16).

2. There are so many points of contact between this verse and Zechariah 3 that that chapter must surely provide an historical background to the verse, which would be appreciated by Jude’s readers:

Zechariah 3:1–2: “And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

The most evident similarities are:

<i>Zechariah 3</i>	<i>Jude</i>
The angel of the Lord	Michael the archangel
Satan	The Devil
The Lord rebuke thee	The Lord rebuke thee
A brand plucked out of the fire (vv. 1,2).	Pulling them out of the fire (vv. 9,23).

The context in Zechariah 3 was that of the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah. They were trying to rebuild the temple and re-establish a system of worship there. However, “the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building” (Ezra 4:4), i.e. they acted as Satan – adversaries – to the Jews. They are actually called “the adversaries of Judah” in Ezra 4:1. They wrote “an accusation against the (new) inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem” to the king of Persia (Ezra 4:6). The Hebrew word for “accusation” is related to that translated “Satan”; הַנִּשְׂטָן. Zechariah 3:8 clearly tells us that the characters of vs. 1 and 2 are “men of sign” (A.V. margin), i.e. we have to interpret them. So the satans – the adversaries – stood before the angel along with Joshua the High Priest, who “was clothed with filthy garments” (v. 3) – without a mitre on his head (v. 5 implies).

The implication is that the inhabitants of the land, the Satan, were complaining to God, manifested in the angel, that the new Jewish high priest was not really valid, as he did not wear the proper clothes (they had probably been lost during the captivity). The angel tells Satan, “The Lord rebuke thee”, and proceeds to clothe Joshua with a set of priestly clothes and a mitre (vs. 4,5), thus showing God’s acceptance of him. The inference behind the complaint was that God had not really chosen Jerusalem for the Jews to rebuild, and that therefore they were going ahead with their plans without God behind them. But the angel says that “the Lord...hath chosen Jerusalem”, in the same way as He had chosen Joshua to be high priest. Thus Joshua represented Jerusalem. “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” the angel asks Satan concerning Jerusalem. This is quoted in Jude 23 concerning saving repentant sinners. Thus the angel is in effect saying, “Jerusalem has repented, therefore I have plucked them out of the fire of judgment and destruction; you should not therefore be implying that Jerusalem and the Jews are so sinful that they cannot be restored to their land with Me behind them”.

Jude says that the dispute between the angel and the Devil – those opposed to the rebuilding of the temple – was “about the body of Moses”. This phrase can therefore either refer to the Jewish people generally, in the same way as the Christian church is “the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27) because we look to him for guidance, rather than being in the “body of sin” (Rom. 6:6) because we follow sin, or to Joshua the high priest. Joshua was the “body of Moses” in the sense that “body” can be a figure of speech for a “slave”, e.g. Revelation 18:13; Hebrews 10:5; Psalm 40:6; and Exodus 21:2–6, and Romans 6:6 where having a “body of sin” probably means being a “slave of sin”. The High Priest was thus the slave of Moses.

3. Another suggestion is that the “body of Moses” was Moses’ literal Body; Michael the archangel was the angel of Israel (Dan. 12:1) who led them through the wilderness in the cloud and fire (Ex. 23:20–21). The dispute may have been between the angel and a group of Jews – “the Devil” – who wanted to take the body of Moses with them. But the angel had buried Moses’ body and would not tell anyone where it was (Dt. 34:6). Remember that the body of Joseph was carried up into Canaan by the Jews (Josh. 24:32) as were the bodies of Jacob and the twelve patriarchs from Egypt (Acts 7:15–16 R.V.); and we know that the bodies of the kings of Israel were used in wrong worship rituals (Ez. 43:7); it is to be expected, therefore, that some of the Jews would also want to take the body of Moses, their great leader, with them. The Jews laid great store by having the remains of their leaders physically with them – they are condemned for keeping the corpses of their kings in the temple (Ez. 43:7–9).

:10 The path of Cain involved reviling what he did not understand (Jude 10,11). He didn’t understand, or didn’t let himself understand, the principles of sacrifice, and so he reviled his brother and God’s commands, he became a true child of the Biblical Devil – because he didn’t understand.

:11 The condemned amongst the first century ecclesias “cast themselves away through the error of Balaam” (Jude 11 RVmg.)- and yet it is the Lord who will “cast away” the bad fish in the last day. Yet those He casts away have in fact cast themselves away. Those who lay in wait for others to kill them “lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives” (Prov. 1:11,18). There is a *direct* relationship, in God’s judgment, between how we treat others and what will happen to us.

:14 saints- see on Gen. 8:1.

Jude speaks about the false teachers of the first century. He recalls how Enoch had spoken of how the wicked of his day were destroyed in the flood: “Behold the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment” (Jude 14,15 RV). And yet Jude says that “To these also [i.e. the first century false teachers] Enoch... prophesied” (Jude 14 RV). Enoch’s words were primarily addressed to his own generation, but his words ought to be taken as speaking directly to the first

century apostates. In similar vein, the Lord said that Isaiah’s words to his generation were prophesy “of you” in the first century.

Jude and the Book of Enoch

A rather detailed argument – and yet a very powerful one – that Angels don’t sin is actually provided by considering the passages in 2 Peter 2 and Jude which are used by some to prove that Angels sin. We have here what we meet many times in Holy Scripture – a series of allusions to a contemporary, uninspired, popular piece of literature in order to show that it is in fact wrong. This point may easily be lost on us, reading as we do from our distance from the original context. It’s been observed that there are “more than thirty” allusions to the popular first century BC ‘Book of Enoch’ in 2 Peter and Jude. This book claimed that 200 Angels were expelled from Heaven and then married beautiful women on earth. Peter and Jude allude to it in order to show how wrong it is. In the table below are some of the allusions:

In the Book of Enoch, it is claimed that the righteous Angel Michael brings accusation against the 200 supposedly rebellious Angels.

Jude	Book of Enoch
“Enoch the Seventh from Adam prophesied” Jude 14	Enoch 60:8
“dry springs” Jude 12	Enoch 48:1,96:6 dried up fountains
“waterless clouds” Jude 12	Enoch 18:5,41:4–5,100:11–12
“reserved for blackest darkness” Jude 13	Enoch 21:3 “darkness shall be their dwelling” Enoch 46:6
“trees without fruit” Jude 12	Enoch 80:3
“plucked up” Jude 13	Enoch 83:4
“raging waves” Jude 12	Enoch 101:3–5
“See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and convict the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done’.” (Jude 14–15)	“See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and convict the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done” (Enoch 1:9)
“reserved unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6)	Reserved unto the day of sorrow Enoch 45:2

But Peter consciously contradicts this by stressing that “angels do *not* bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord” (2 Pet. 2:11), and Jude is even more specific by saying that this is true of Michael the Archangel (Jude 9). According to the Book of Enoch, the man Enoch judges the sinful Angels, but 2 Peter 3 warns that actually Angels will come with Lord Jesus in order to judge *men*. We can now understand why Peter claims that “bold and arrogant these men (the false teachers) are not afraid to slander celestial beings” (2 Pet. 2:10) – i.e. the Angels. The Book of Enoch slandered Angels by claiming 200 of them sinned. As Jude 8 puts it, the false teachers “reject authority and slander celestial beings”. The idea that the 200 Angels had sexual encounters with enticing women was therefore a slander. We need to reflect on the implications of all this – for claiming that Angels sin is actually spoken of by Peter and Jude as if it is serious blasphemy. Those early Christians were returning to their earlier Jewish and Pagan beliefs, which according to 2 Pet. 2:22 is to be seen as a dog returning to its vomit. This is how serious the issue is.

It should be noted that the Book of Enoch and other such writings are frequently alluded to in the Apocalypse – again, to deconstruct them and show a first century readership the *real* meaning of the

terms used in the popular uninspired literature of the time. Thus the descriptions of the Heavenly "Son of man" in Enoch 47:3–7 are alluded to in the description of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 1:15–17⁽¹⁾.

Notes

(1) This and many other such allusions are to be found tabulated in Hugh Schonfield, *The Original New Testament: Revelation* (London: Firethorn Press, 1985).

:15 - see on Mt. 12:36; Lk. 13:28.

Num. 32:23 prophesied of Israel in their time of condemnation: "You will be sensible of your sin when evil overtakes you" (LXX). Truly has Ez. 6:9 prophesied of the rejected: "They shall loathe themselves for their evils which they have committed in all their abominations". Jude 15 would even suggest that the purpose of judgment being executed is to convict the rejected of *all* their ungodly deeds and hard words. Through realising their condemnation they will realize in awful detail exactly *why* this had to be. Our own self-examination now will be stimulated by realising the depth to which we *deserve* condemnation, even though by grace we are saved rather than condemned.

:19 Particularly by our attitude to our brethren can we condemn ourselves. If we hate our brother, we state we are already in darkness- the darkness to which we will be thrown in judgment day. If we go out from the fellowship of the brethren, we declare we are not of them (1 Jn. 2:19). Jude 19 speaks of those who separate themselves- those who *diakrino* themselves, judge themselves, by their separation from us. And yet this condemnation can so easily be undone by a studied application to brotherly love.

:20 Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer", although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point. *Desire* is also seen as effectively praying for something (Rom. 10:1; Col. 1:9; 2 Cor. 9:14). Weeping, desiring, waiting, meditating etc. are all acts of the mind, or 'spirit' in Biblical terminology. There is therefore a big association between our spirit or state of mind, and prayer. The spirit (disposition) of Christ which we have received leads us to *pray* "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). "Praying in the holy spirit" (Jude 20) is to be seen in this context. Prayer is part of the *atmosphere* of spiritual life, not something hived off and separate- it is an expression of our spirit. Thus there are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (Ps. 86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray *always*" in the last days likewise connects prayer with *watchfulness*, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer *in no sense* refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

:21 Jude 20,21 exhorts us: "building up yourselves... keep yourselves in the love of God". The use of the plural 'yourselves' rather than a singular 'thysself' suggests that we are to understand this as meaning that we should build up our community, keep each other in the love of God. Jude had begun by exalting that we are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved [s.w. "keep yourselves"] [by God] in Jesus Christ". His conclusion is that we are kept / preserved by God in Christ *insofar as* we, the ministers of Christ, keep / preserve each other. The Greek for 'building up' occurs in Eph. 4:16: "From [Christ] the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, *maketh increase* [builds

up] of the body unto the edifying of itself in love". The body builds itself up, *if* each part contributes. If they don't, then there is no building up. Using the same figure, 1 Cor. 3:10-14 speak of us building up God's house, the believers, on the foundation of Christ. And we will be judged for the quality of what is built- our final judgment will be a reflection of the quality of our brethren, in that their spirituality is partly determined by our efforts for them. But Col. 2:4 uses the same word to say that we are built up "in [Christ]...as [according as] ye have been taught...beware lest any man spoil you [through false teaching]. The life of fellowship with our brethren in Christ is what builds us up, if we teach each other the right things. But false teaching means that the house of believers will not be built up. This would have been especially so in ecclesias of largely illiterate members. The point is, we are all builders, each part has something to contribute, and the doing of every ecclesial service must be consciously to the end of building up one another.

:22 "Praying in the Holy Spirit... of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire" (Jude 20-23), just as the Angel had pulled Lot from the fire (Jude 7)- in this sense, Jude seems to suggest, we can do God's work for him. Likewise we must "make a difference" concerning some, just as the Angels "contended" [s.w.] for men (Jude 9 cp. 22). The fire of condemnation at the judgment is in a sense already kindled, as the Lord Himself had taught (Lk. 12:49). The weak brother condemns himself by his way of life, and falls into condemnation even now, before the judgment (James 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:6; Tit. 3:11). We see this, and have the power in some cases to save the brother by pulling him out of that fire of condemnation. Surely the point is that we can save our brother from condemnation at judgment day by what we do for him now.

:23 In the same way as the resurrection and establishment of the Kingdom have happened in prospect, so too has the judgment. "If we would judge ourselves (i.e. examine ourselves to the point of realizing we deserve condemnation at the judgment), we should not be judged" (1 Cor.11:31), i.e. condemned, at the judgment seat of Christ. Thus Jude 23 speaks of pulling a man out of the fire, i.e. saving him from condemnation in Gehenna, as if to some extent the unworthy are now experiencing their punishment, as the righteous are their reward. See on Rom. 12:20.

:23,24- see on Zech. 3:1,2.

:24- see on Eph. 1:4.

Our amazement and incomprehension at the judgment is brought out in 2 Thess. 1:10, which speaks of the saints 'admiring' Christ in that day, using a Greek word meaning 'to marvel at in incomprehension'. This praise will also be on account of our being "presented faultless" before the judgment (Jude 24). The Greek for "presented" is the same word translated "stood" in Lk. 21:36, showing that our angel is able to stand us up in the august presence of the Lord, only by reason of our faults having been totally covered by Christ's imputed righteousness. Col. 1:22 has a similar message: "...to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable (Gk. 'free from accusation') in his sight". This freedom from accusation explains why none of our bad deeds will be mentioned to us then. One wonders if Paul's appearance before the judgment seat in Acts 25 is described as it is in order to help us imagine this; he has no accusers, and therefore can be acquitted.

He can even, somehow, withhold men from sinning (Gen. 20:6), and keep us from falling (Jude 24). We should therefore have no essential objection to the idea of the Lord granting us His Spirit, in the sense of His thinking, His heart / mind.

:25 The Roman proconsuls were to be called "Saviour". But for Christians, there was only *one* Saviour, the Lord Jesus. The Caesars were frequently called "Saviour"- Josephus thus addressed Vespasian. Hence the radical import of the way that Jude 25 calls the Lord Jesus our *only* Saviour. 'Caesar is Lord' was the cry of the Roman empire. Pliny wrote that he considered refusal to make the customary gesture to the emperor's statue to be a criminal act punishable by death. But "To us there is but one Lord, Jesus" the Christ, i.e. Jesus the Messiah of the despised, weird Jewish race.

REVELATION

1:1- see on Dan. 10:21.

A great theme of Revelation is that "the time is near" - these things were about to happen. This is a major theme (1:1,3; 2:16; 3:10,11; 22:6,7,10,12,20). The relationship between the letters to the churches and the rest of Revelation cannot be overlooked; what was to happen to them in judgment was bound up with what was to come upon the land of Palestine in AD70. Mt. 21:40 parallels the coming of the Lord with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. This is exactly the sequence of events we expect in the last days, according to Zech. 14. There are many links between the trumpets, seals and the Olivet prophecy; and also many links with Josephus' descriptions of what came upon Palestine in AD66-70- e.g. 9:5 "inwardly tormented" Gk. *ebasanizonto* is used in Josephus (Wars 5.1.5).

Revelation	The Olivet Prophecy
6:1,2	Mt. 24:14
6:14	Mt. 24:35
6:3,4	Mt. 24:6,7
6:16	Lk. 23:30
6:5,6	Mt. 24:7
6:17	Lk. 21:36
6:7,8	Mt. 24:7
7:1	Mt. 24:31
6:9	Mt. 24:12
7:3	Lk. 21:18,28
6:11	Mt. 24:14
7:14	Mt. 24:19,21
6:12	Mt. 24:7
8:3	Lk. 21:36
6:13	Mt. 24:32
8:5	Mt. 24:27

It is clear enough that the Olivet Prophecy has application both to the "last days" of AD70 and also to our last days. Revelation is the Lord's expansion upon His words on Olivet- and therefore we should use this as a framework for interpreting the book. It applies to both AD70 and also our last days. The following notes trace some leading features of the AD70 interpretation. The most powerful proof is in private reading of Josephus' *Wars Of The Jews*- it reads like a running commentary on the seal and trumpet judgments upon Israel.

1:2 The apostles bore witness to the Lord Jesus (e.g. Acts 26:22; 1 Cor. 15:15 s.w.), and He in turn bore witness to the [preaching of] the word of his grace (Acts 15:8). In their witness lay His witness. Revelation begins with John witnessing / testifying to the Word [made flesh, i.e. Jesus], and concludes with Jesus testifying (Rev. 1:2 cp. 22:20 s.w.).

Beholding the cross and the water and blood that flowed from it, John struggled with the inadequacy of human language: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true" (Jn. 19:35). Years later he described himself, in allusion to this, as he "who bare record [in the past tense] of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:2). He had earlier commented that the Spirit, water and blood of the cross bore witness (1 Jn. 5:8). John seems to be saying that the Lord's final death which he had witnessed was the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ. And as he had been a faithful witness to this, so now he would be of that further revelation he had now seen in the Apocalypse. Because he had beheld the Lord's witness on the cross, he witnessed. For he was in Christ, part of Him, of His life and death. And so are each of us. Paul puts our thesis in so many words, by saying that his preaching to the Galatians had been a placarding forth of Christ crucified before their eyes (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). His witness to them had been a living out of the Lord in His time of dying.

1:3- see on Lk. 11:28.

The passage in Rev. 1:3 "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" has been misread as meaning that blessing is related to 'correctly understanding' the Revelation. The Greek word translated "readeth" doesn't *have* to mean 'correctly understands'. The obvious sense is to link it with those who *hear* the words... the message is being sent by a messenger, who was to *read* it out loud- as we know Paul's letters were thus read to a largely illiterate brotherhood- and it was then *heard* by the ecclesias. Both reader and hearer were blessed if they *kept* what the prophecy implied- which was and is an awareness of God's claims upon His people, their separation from this world, and an earnest readiness for Christ's return. The 'blessing' is elsewhere applied not to those who intellectually understand something but to those who are doing and living and saying the right things at the return of Jesus. The same Greek word for 'Blessed' is used of those who are ready at the Lord's return and doing the right things (Mt. 24:46; Lk. 12:37,38,43). Rev. 22:7 links back to 1:3, the epilogue interpreting the prologue: "Blessed is he who keeps the logos of the prophecy of this book" - the essence / logos / underlying idea of it all, which is that God's persecuted people will remain faithful to His word, will testify it to an unbelieving world, and will live lives always prepared for their Lord's return. The blessing is in the preparedness, not in the detailed understanding. If blessing depends upon holding the continuous historic view of Revelation, then the majority of God's servants aren't blessed- seeing that it couldn't possibly have been understood throughout most of the time from the 1st century until now.

The disciples expected the second coming within a generation of the Lord's death (Mt. 26:18; Lk. 21:32; Phil. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:3); and note the use of words indicating imminence: 'shortly', 'immediately', 'a little while'. Could it not be that if Israel had accepted Jesus as Son of God, the Kingdom could have come then? Even after His death, had they believed the witness of the apostles and repented for what they had done, the Kingdom could have come then. Of course God foreknew this would not happen; but the disciples looked forward to it as a distinct reality and possibility. Revelation itself seems to read as if when "Babylon" was judged and destroyed by the day of the Lord, then the Kingdom would be established on earth. It seems that it was possible that the Roman empire be destroyed by the Lord's return; but instead the prophecy was delayed, and now "Babylon" must apply to some latter day system, which had an earlier incarnation in the Roman empire which *could* have been its final fulfillment but wasn't.

1:5- see on Jn. 7:38.

It will be observed that Revelation frequently hints that it is a message specifically addressed to those under persecution. Phrases like "Jesus Christ the faithful witness" (Rev. 1:5) should be read in the context of encouraging the readers to continue *their* witness, even on pain of death, just as Jesus did (see too Rev. 13:8). For this reason, an understanding of the book of Revelation is vital for those who will experience the latter day tribulation, in whatever form we feel it will take.

1:6 Christ "hath *made* us kings and priests" (Rev.1:6) in prospect, although we will only exercise this power in the Kingdom. Frequently we read of the saints being 'made' things which we must still strive to attain (Rom.5:19; 6:18,22; 8:2; 1 Cor.12:13; Eph.1:6; 2:13). God *made* Christ a sin offering, that we might be *made* the righteousness of God (2 Cor.5:21), although our Lord still had to exercise freewill effort to be that offering, as we must too. "God... saved us (in prospect)... that... we should be *made* heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit.3:5-7).

1:7- see on Jn. 1:14; 19:37.

1:9 John saw himself as their partner rather than the one above them (Rev. 1:9); repeatedly he describes himself and all believers as fellow-slaves (Rev. 1:1; 2:20; 6:11; 7:4; 19:2,5; 22:3,6- quite some emphasis). See on 3 Jn. 14.

1:10 The radical, heretical nature of the book of Revelation needs to be appreciated against this background; it's almost a polemic against the Caesars, and to speak in this way against them was punishable by death. And Revelation speaks of the capital of the beast system (Rome) as being in the wilderness, rather than as the (perceived) centre of a chique, cosmopolitan metropolis. And of course, Rome is spoken of as a whore... the most abusive image possible! The whole vision was given "on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10)- and this appears to be an allusion to the way that there was "a day in the Roman calendar when all the Roman citizens had to go to the local temple and declare 'Caesar is Lord'". On that very day, when John was supposed to be worshipping Caesar as Lord, he was given a vision outlining how Caesar was not in fact 'Lord' at all.

1:11- see on Acts 2:46.

1:12 Our covenant relationship with God isn't just between Him and us. It demands that we are in covenant with His people; we can't love Him that begat without loving those others begotten by Him, as John puts it (1 Jn. 4:9). When John later heard the voice of Jesus and turned to see Him, instead of seeing Jesus in person as he expected, he saw instead the seven candlesticks, symbolic of the ecclesias / body of Christ (Rev. 1:12). Perhaps this was the idea behind the way that "Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people: between the king also and the people" (2 Kings 11:17).

1:13 Although the Angel Gabriel has now been replaced at God's right hand by Jesus, He still seems to represent Jesus, seeing the Angel in the midst of the candlesticks (cp. the Angel between the cherubim) was "one like the Son of man" (Rev. 1:13)- i. e. it was not the Son of man Himself. Similarly the Comforter Angel (probably the same Angel) personally represents Jesus, so much so that His presence with the disciples was to be the same as Christ's physical presence among them (hence the emphasis on the use of the personal pronoun in the Comforter passages). The vision of Rev. 1 has close links with that of Dan. 10. If the Rev. 1 vision is concerning the Angel, then so is that of Dan. 10. The context of the Daniel vision is that he had been praying for the opposition to the restoration to be overcome. He was therefore given this vision of the mighty Angel who was going to answer his prayers; Daniel describes the vision as being "of a certain man" (10:5); when the Angel comes to him to tell him that despite the opposition He was going to answer his prayers, Daniel describes him as "one like the appearance of a man" (10:18)- possibly implying that it was the same Angel he had seen in vision, although in a less awesome appearance.

1:14 To a certain degree, the acceptance or rejection which will be shown to us in the day of judgment can be visited on us in this life, in accordance with our actions. Thus the Lord Jesus appears as the judge of the seven ecclesias in Rev. 1:14, the description of him there being very similar to that in Dan. 7 and 10, where he is portrayed as the judge at the second coming. Asaph knew that God *now* judges, and therefore asks God to arise and judge openly in the earth according to those judgments (Ps. 82:1,8).

1:15- see on Jude 14.

Ezekiel's cherubim refer to God's people, as well as the Angelic hosts and the hosts of Babylon; perhaps the message was simply that God was awesomely involved- as awesome as the cherubim vision- with His people on earth. The same Angelic system that brought the hosts of Babylon upon Judah also went with Judah into captivity, and would return from there with them- if they still wished to be part of that Angelic system. And yet most of Judah opted out of it, and remained in Babylon, just as we can opt out and remain in Babylon today. In this context it's interesting that the vision of Jesus as the Son of Man in Rev. 1 has similarities with the cherubim vision of Ez. 1 (feet like brass, Ez. 1:7 = Rev. 1:15; shining face, Ez. 1:13 = Rev. 1:16; voice like many waters, Ez. 1:24 = Rev. 1:15). Perhaps this suggests that Israel's failure to identify with the cherubim led to a refulfilment of the prophecy in the person of the Lord Jesus, who was in person all that God intended Israel to have been. Thus the prophecies of Israel as "the servant of Yahweh", given in the context of the restoration, could have been fulfilled in the people of Israel, but were reapplied and fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus.

The opening vision of Rev. 1 presents the Lord in His post-resurrection glory; but elements of that description occur throughout Revelation in portraying the beasts. The point is, they are all false-Christ's. The Lord has a voice as the sound of many waters (Rev. 1:15), but the serpent, on the surface, speaks with just the same voice (Rev. 12:15). The four empire-beasts of Dan. 7, the kingdoms of this world, are a parody of the four living creatures of the cherubim (Rev. 4:6). See on Acts 12:20.

1:16- see on Lk. 12:49.

1:18 Baptism commits us to a life of sharing His death and resurrection. When John fell at the Lord's feet "as dead", the Lord responded by saying: 'I too was dead, but no more; I'm alive for evermore, and as I died with you and for you, so I live with you and for you, and you do the same for me' (Rev. 1:17,18).

1:20 There appear to be guardian Angels not only for individuals but also for groups of believers- e. g. Israel, or an ecclesia. The stars of the ecclesias in Rev. 1:20 are defined as the Angels of the ecclesias. The seven lamps are the seven spirits / Angels of God before His throne (Rev. 4:5)- yet they are clearly representative of the 7 ecclesias on earth of which Revelation has earlier spoken. There seems no reason to doubt that literal Angels are being referred to, especially as elsewhere Angels are also likened to stars-e. g. Job 38:7; and the king of Babylon "exalted (himself) above the stars" (Is. 14:13); i. e. the Angels. Hence their punishing of him, and his subsequent recognition of the Angels' power. There seems no more symbolism attached to the phrase "Angels" in Rev. 1, seeing it is in the context of the candlestick parable being interpreted: "The seven stars are the Angels of the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20). The apparent rebuke of the Angels is because they are so closely associated with their charges. However, to some degree the words of Jesus in the letters may also apply personally to the Angels- e. g. "I will. . . remove thy candlestick" (2:5) may imply God would take away the Angel's charge from his care unless the Angel repented-i. e. changed his way of dealing with the ecclesia. The frequent calls to "repent" in the letters can easily apply to the Angels changing their mind or way of dealing with the ecclesia. Thus 2:16: "I will come to you . . . and fight against them"; or "unto you (i. e. the Angel). . . I say and unto the rest" (2:24). Similarly the command to "strengthen the things (the faithful believers- strengthened spiritually by the Angel) which remain" (3:2) cannot apply to a whole ecclesia which has many apostate members.

2:1 There are so many links between the opening letters to the ecclesias, and the rest of Revelation. The wording is so similar- the themes of persecution, faithfulness, and the promised blessing of the faithful. The letters aren't just 'tacked on' to the prophecy. The dramas which the ecclesias were experiencing on earth are explained by the rest of the book, in its first century, relevant-to-its-hearers level of interpretation. Jerusalem was surrounded by her enemies, the temple was about to be destroyed. They were being persecuted by Jewish and Roman powers, and we see in the rest of the book how this looked from Heaven's perspective- the way the Angels were orchestrating and yet

also resisting all this, how God perceived the Jewish and Roman authorities as dragons, whores etc., and how the traumas of AD66-70 were in fact all in His plan and part of a larger picture. It's like the book of Daniel. The book isn't just a life of Daniel with a few prophecies thrown in. It's a life of Daniel, in captivity, awaiting revival, longing for Messiah. And the prophecies give us Heaven's perspective on it. However, Revelation has more relevance than to just the first century hearers. Just as the events of AD66-70 are typical of the last days, so Revelation likewise has its ultimate fulfilment [regardless of any others it may have had over history] in the crisis of the last days, in the final showdown between Babylon and Jerusalem, between the true Christ and the anti-Christ. The book will speak to us in the final tribulation as no other book can- because it's all about the last days.

If Timothy was the elder of the church at Ephesus, it would appear that the Lord's rebuke of the 'angel' or elder of that church in Rev. 2:1 may well have been directed at Timothy (assuming an AD66 date for the book of Revelation). This would imply that Timothy failed to follow Paul's charge to him of 2 Tim. 4, and that his initial devotion waned in some ways.

2:2 There is a marked warning throughout the letters that there will be a spirit of self-deception and hypocrisy amongst the latter-day ecclesias. Jezebel "*calleth* herself a prophetess" (2:20), some "*say* they are Jews and are not" (2:9), others "*say* they are apostles, and are not" (2:2), Sardis had "a name that thou livest" but was dead (3:1). This must be seen in the context of other NT warnings that deceivers would enter the ecclesia, appearing to have the Apostolic gifts of the Spirit.

2:3,4- see on Acts 20:34.

2:4 The letters suggest that there will be another element of the believers whose struggle to maintain purity leads them into such bitterness that they, too, will be displeasing to Christ. The spirit of Judaism and legalism which plagued the ecclesias just prior to AD70 will be seen in the last days too. Thus Ephesus could not bear "them which are evil" and "tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars... and for my name's sake hast laboured (i.e. for the defence of doctrine)... nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:2-4). The commendable works and doctrinal zeal of Ephesus indicates that leaving their "first love" does not refer to any cooling off of enthusiasm in those ways. Rather there is a rebuke that they had lost the spirit of agape-love which first characterized them. The balance between such unloving legalism and the 'anything goes' attitude, will be rarely seen in the ecclesias during the tribulation period - as it seems well nigh impossible for us to manifest that balance now. It should be noted that the Lord was pleased with their 'trying' the false apostles and open pronouncement that such people were 'liars', despite their repeated protestations that they held true doctrine. These men stated their acceptance of the doctrines, whilst simultaneously holding and teaching ideas which flatly contradicted it. There will therefore be some in the last days who will 'try' the false teachers, and perhaps openly pronounce their opinion of them.

The Lord Jesus had "somewhat against" six of the seven ecclesias in the Lycus valley. He had "somewhat against" one ecclesia because they allowed prostitution to go on within the ecclesia. But exactly the same rubric is used in the letter to Ephesus; Christ had "somewhat against" them because they had left their first *agape*, they no longer had a spirit of true love within the ecclesia as they once did- even though they were full of zeal in other ways. The similarity of the rubric is surely intended to teach us that lack of true love is just as obnoxious to the Lord Jesus as those other sins which appear so much bigger in human eyes. Indeed, sin is serious, in all its guises. See on 1 Cor. 11:18.

2:5- see on 3 Jn. 10; Rev. 1:20.

In the same way as the earthly tabernacle was a pattern of the Heavenly system (Heb. 9:24), so it would appear that each of us has an Angelic representative in Heaven, appearing before the presence of God's glory in what we are invited to see as the court of Heaven. Angels can also

represent a whole group – e.g., an ecclesia (Rev. 1:20). So closely identified with their charges are these Angels, that they themselves are rebuked (e.g. Rev. 2:5) – not that they sinned, of course, but because they represented those ecclesias in the Heavenly court.

The ecclesias, groups of believers, are lampstands (Rev. 2:5 cp. Ps. 18:28). The purpose of the ecclesia is to provide an environment for the individual to burn openly and usefully to others.

Rev. 2:5 does not tell the sound members of the ecclesias to disfellowship those who had not done "the first works". The "first works" of Ephesus were her "first love" (*agape*). Christ is using "works" here (as often in the New Testament) to refer to attitudes- Ephesus were doing all the right actions, but the "work" of a loving mind was missing. Note a selection of passages where "works" refers to abstract spiritual fruits like faith, rather than to physical actions: Jn. 6:29; 8:39; Prov. 12:22 LXX; Rom. 2:15; Col. 1:10,11; 2 Jn. 11,7; Rev. 2:6 cp. 15.

Notice the end-time language found throughout the letters to the seven Ecclesias:

Ephesus: repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly. (2:5)

Pergamos: Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (2:16)

Thyatira: Behold, I will cast her [Jezebel] into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. (2:22, 25)

Sardis: If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (3:3)

Philadelphia: Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly. (3:10-11)

Laodicea: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. (3:20)

Rev. 2& 3 are primarily speaking of the state of the ecclesias before AD 70 . However is it not also a prophecy of the end time condition of the ecclesia?

2:9

The Synagogue of Satan

Comments

1. "Satan" often refers to the Jewish and Roman adversaries of the church in the first century. There is no indication here that there was a super-human being working through those Roman and Jewish systems. If it is argued that those systems received power and direction from the Devil in the sense of a super-human being to persecute the church, it must be remembered that Jesus told the Roman governor: "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above", i.e. from God (Jn. 19:11). Thus it is God, not the Devil, who gives power to human governments to persecute His people, as He gave them power to do so to His Son.

2. Daniel 4:32: "The most high rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will". Thus God was the power behind the Roman Satan, or system, that was persecuting the Christians in the first century.

3. The Devil that gave the ecclesia at Smyrna "tribulation ten days" was clearly the Romans. It was only they who could cast them into prison. The casting into prison (place of punishment), tribulation and afterwards being honoured (physical reward), recalls the experiences of Joseph and Daniel who were persecuted by the civil powers of Egypt and Babylon, as those at Smyrna were by the civil powers of the Roman "Devil". It has been shown that there were several ten-year periods of special persecutions of Christians in the Smyrna area: under Domitian, A.D. 81–91; under Trajan, 107–117 and under Diocletian, 303–313. The Septuagint in places uses the term *diabolos*,

false accuser, to translate the Hebrew ‘Satan’. ‘Satan’ therefore carried the sense of both an adversary and also a false accuser. “The synagogue of Satan” in Smyrna may well refer to not only Jewish adversarial opposition to the Christians, but also that they falsely accused them to the Roman authorities. There could also be the suggestion that the Jewish synagogue in Smyrna was in fact working with the ‘Satan’, the Roman empire, against the Christians. Kraybill considers that the phrase “synagogue of Satan” is “a way of highlighting commercial or political relationships some Jews had with Rome”. He also gives evidence that Jews in the provinces of the empire cooperated with the Roman government in order to ensure that they continued benefiting from the Roman legislation that exempted Jews from doing military service and paying taxes to the imperial cult ⁽¹⁾. In Domitian’s time, a tax was levied to support the emperor and the imperial cult. Jews were exempted from this, and Christians refused to pay it. The “synagogue of Satan” in Smyrna loudly “say they are Jews” (Rev. 2:9), in order to avoid this tax and get benefits from the Roman empire at the time; but probably denounced the Christians to the Roman ‘Satan’ because of their refusal to pay that tax. So “synagogue of Satan... who say they are Jews but are not” was an appropriate description of them ⁽²⁾.

4. Pergamos being “where Satan’s seat (throne) is”, shows that the Satan referred to is not a personal super-human being. If it is, then his throne was literally at Pergamos, for all to see. It has been shown that the Roman administration of the area was based here, thus Jesus commends the ecclesia for holding to the Truth, despite being in close proximity to the source of persecution. Thus “Satan” again refers to the Roman authorities. It is also significant that a huge throne dedicated to the Greek gods has been discovered there.

5. “The depths of Satan as they speak”, refers to the false teaching of the Judaizers, the Jewish Satan, who were pretending to offer deeper spiritual understanding through their false doctrine. They spoke evil about deep spiritual things which they did not understand (Jude 10), speaking words which seemed superficially impressive spiritually (Jude 16). The Judaizers’ reasonings about keeping the law and worshipping angels, “intruding into those things which he hath not seen” (Col. 2:18; i.e. “which they know not”, cp. Jude 10), had “a shew of (deep, spiritual) wisdom” (Col. 2:23). There are many other such examples.

6. It’s significant that Pergamon is the city described as having “Satan’s throne” (Rev. 2:13). I.T. Beckwith claims that Pergamon was the first city in Asia to have a temple devoted to emperor worship ⁽³⁾.

However it must also be noted that Pergamon was a centre for snake worship associated with the shrine of Asclepius ⁽⁴⁾. Revelation speaks of ‘Satan’, the adversary, as being characterized by the serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). “Satan’s throne” may also be a reference to the altar of Zeus in Pergamon, or the special throne-seat of Dionysus in the theatre there. “The city featured various Pagan sites of worship, including a monumental altar to Zeus, and a temple dedicated to Augustus and Rome, which served as the centre of the cult of the Roman Emperor in Asia Minor. Pergamum was in fact the capital of the Roman Province of Asia” ⁽⁵⁾.

Notes

(1) J. Nelson Kraybill, *The Imperial Cult and Commerce in John’s Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) pp. 170, 186.

(2) This whole matter is discussed in some detail in Mark Bredin, ‘The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9’, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* Vol. 28 No. 4 (Winter 1999) pp. 160–164.

(3) I.T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) p. 456.

(4) J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1976) p. 228.

2:9 These pseudo-seed of Abraham will be "the synagogue of satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). "Synagogue" carrying a similar idea as 'ecclesia' (see James 2:2 A.V. mg.) could suggest that these people emanate from whole fake ecclesias which the 'satan' have planted amongst Christianity- or from ecclesias which have become completely corrupted by the new wave of tolerance. The faithful group who existed "even where satan's seat is" (Rev. 2:13) may indicate the existence of an ecclesia at the very headquarters of the Arab satan/beast. Our suggestion elsewhere that some faithful natural Jews would be taken to such a place, e.g. a rebuilt 'Babylon', would make this possible.

2:10 The Devil and Satan in the New Testament often refer to the political and social power of the Jewish or Roman systems. Thus we read of the Devil throwing believers into prison (Rev. 2:10), referring to the Roman authorities imprisoning believers. In this same context we read of the church in Pergamos being situated where Satan's throne, was – i.e. the place of governorship for a Roman colony in Pergamos, where there was also a group of believers. We cannot say that Satan himself, if he exists, personally had a throne in Pergamos. The Bible repeatedly stresses that human political authority, civil authorities etc. are God given, deriving their power from Him (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17); never are they said to derive their authority from 'Satan'. Yet they can be called 'Satan' in that they are adversarial at times to His people.

The horn of Dan. 7:21 "prevailed against" the saints. "Prevailed" here can mean 'could prevail' implying that this persecution could be avoided (cp. "Ye may have tribulation", Rev.2:10 R.V.mg.). Likewise the Hebrew for "make war" can mean 'approached to make war'. Thus it may be possible for the saints to avoid the persecution in some way, e.g. by their "holy conversation" (2 Pet.3:8) shortening the days of tribulation. The fact that the prophecies speak as if there will be persecution may suggest that there will not be sufficient effort in this direction for all the saints to be saved from this. See on Rev. 3:10.

"The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried" (Rev. 2:10) is alluding to Luke 21:12 concerning the latter-day tribulation. "Some of you" may correspond to "some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Luke 21:16), seeing that Rev. 2:10 exhorts them to be "faithful unto death". The prison tribulation would be for "ten days... and I will give unto thee a crown". This points back to Daniel's 'trial' of ten days (Dan. 1:12), and his later going into prison and emerging to receive a crown. Daniel's 'devil' was Arab Babylon, and the 'devil' of Rev. 2:10 refers to a like power in the last days. The idea of ten days of affliction suggests the 10 days of self-examination and affliction of souls before the day of Atonement- as if the purpose of the holocaust is to evoke self-examination and repentance in preparation for the High Priest's appearing on the Day of Atonement.

There is the possibility that some may be preserved from the holocaust: "Ye *may* have tribulation ten days" (Rev. 2:10, R.V. mg.). This will be "because thou hast kept the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10). Others will suffer, and even die, but are assured of salvation if they respond to the trials properly. There may be a similar meaning behind Is.26:20: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee (i.e. pray intensely- 2 Kings 4:33): hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast". However, this primarily refers to the deliverance of Israel from Assyria in Hezekiah's time; and the hiding in chambers in Jerusalem while surrounded by the terrifying Assyrian army was hardly the quiet get out we might imagine this verse offers. However, it seems from the Olivet prophecy that the household *will* go through this time of trouble. The fact it is in some sense not required if we are spiritual enough indicates that the household will be weak in the last days- and therefore we will need it.

2:13- see on 1 Cor. 15:10.

2:14 Twice it is emphasized that the false teachers will lead spiritual Israel into the worship of idols, after the pattern of Balaam and Jezebel (Rev. 2:14,20). Both of these advocated the use of the idols of the surrounding Arab nations for political purposes, whilst apparently supporting the true worship of Yahweh at the same time. We have given several reasons in previous studies for thinking that the Arab powers will impose the worship of Islam upon natural Israel, and may use their oil stranglehold to make the rest of the world persecute any pro-Jewish religions who will not offer a nominal acceptance of Islam. A few statements from the Pope in support of this would certainly ease the way; the on-going Roman Catholic endeavour to down-play the difference between Islam and Christianity may well enjoy dramatic success within the next few years.

2:16- see on Rev. 1:20.

There are clear connections between the rod and the word of God. Ez.21:9,10 equates the sword with the rod of Christ: "A sword is sharpened... it is the rod of My Son" (AVmg.). The sword is a clear symbol of the word (Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12; Rev.19:21). Is.11:4 confirms this link between Christ's word and His rod: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked". Ps.2:9 shows the power of this word/rod: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel". Similarly "feed Thy people with thy rod" (Mic.7:14) must refer to Christ's instruction of Israel- when He will "feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer.3:15). Ps.110:2 describes the rod of Christ's strength being sent out of Zion to enable Him to rule the world; Is.2:3 describes the word of the Lord going out from Zion. However, in all these cases the rod does not just mean spoken words and mental understanding, but also refers to the physical punishments to be seen in the last days. Thus Micah pleads with Israel to see that God's Hand was behind their present distresses, which were effectively God's word spoken to them: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city... *hear* ye the rod, and who hath appointed it" (Mic.6:9). Christ warned Pergamos that unless they repented- i.e. obeyed His word- He would "come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev.2:16). This fighting was not just verbal reasoning but by physical distress (cp. Rev.2:22,23).

There is a significant amount of language used in the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 which has unmistakable reference to the 'coming' of the Lord. It must at least be conceded by all students that this must have some application to the second coming, and/or A.D. 70. This means that the letters must also be indicative of the state of the latter-day ecclesias. No less than eight times in the letters do we read of Christ 'coming' to the believers (Rev. 2:5,16,25; 3:3 (twice), 10,11,20). "I will come unto thee quickly... I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (2:5,23) is language found in Mt. 16:27 and Rev. 22:12, unquestionably concerning the second coming: "I come quickly...to give every man according as his work shall be". Christ's coming "unto *thee* quickly" (Rev. 2:5,16 cp. Isa. 11:4) has particular aptness when this is understood as being addressed to believers living on the brink of the second coming.

2:17- see on Jn. 1:14; 1 Tim. 6:19.

Another example of allusion to Jewish legend is in Rev. 2:17, where the Lord Jesus speaks of giving His people "of the hidden manna" – referring to the myth that Jeremiah had hidden a golden jar of manna in the Holy of Holies at the destruction of the temple in 586 BC, which then ascended to Heaven and is to return with Messiah. Jesus doesn't correct that myth – He as it were runs with it and uses it as a symbol to describe the reward He will bring. He adds no footnote to the effect 'Now do understand, this is myth, that jar never really ascended to Heaven nor will it come floating back through the skies one day'. Perhaps this is why the New Testament often quotes the Septuagint text, even where it incorrectly renders the Hebrew original – because God is not so paranoid as to feel bound to only deal in the language of strictly literal truths. If first century people were familiar with the Septuagint, even if is a poor translation of the Hebrew original in places – well OK, God was willing to run with that *in order to engage with people in their language*.

He promised the faithful that their reward in the Kingdom would be like a stone with a name written in it which nobody else knew, except themselves and their Lord, who gave it (Rev. 2:17). It has been suggested that this refers to a custom of writing a name on a stone, breaking the stone in half at random, and each friend keeping one half. The half stone would only fit exactly with the other half stone, and when the friends met in the future, they would fit the stones together as proof of their earlier relationship. Relationships in the Kingdom of God will be in that sense private and unenterable. Bible characters often have epithets in God's record of them- Judas who betrayed, Jeroboam who made Israel sin. We will be given such a name / summation of our relationship with the Lord in the Kingdom. Nobody else knows / understands / appreciates this name. This is a clear statement that other believers cannot enter into the personal relationship between a man and his God. Likewise, none of us can know the name which was written on the Lord Jesus (Rev. 19:12). None of us will ever quite be able to enter into the nature of the relationship between Father and Son. If we could, He would not be our Lord. Paul possibly expresses the same idea of an unenterable relationship in 1 Cor. 2:15: "He that is spiritual discerneth all things (about God), yet he himself is discerned of no man" (AVmg.). Our real spiritual being is a "hidden man" (1 Pet. 3:4).

Rev. 2:17 suggests that eating the hidden manna is to be paralleled with being given the stone. The context implies this will be done at the day of judgment. According to a number of commentators, a white stone was laid down by the judge as a sign of acquittal and acceptance. The Lord would therefore be implying that after our encounter at the judgment, there will be an ongoing relationship in the Kingdom of God between us, a locking together of stones which no-one else possesses. The white stone is also parallel to the white, stone-looking manna of the wilderness years (Ex. 16:14,23; Num. 11:7). The reward we will be given in the Kingdom will be our spiritual food, to be eaten 'daily' throughout the Kingdom. Israel were to eat on the seventh day (a type of the Kingdom) the manna which they had gathered and prepared on the sixth day. The manna is a symbol of God's word as expressed in Christ (Jn. 6). Biblically, a name refers to personality and character. The new name which no one else knows thus refers to the reward "prepared" for us individually, the new personality which we will be in the Kingdom, the room in the Father's house prepared for each of us (Jn. 14:1). This latter idea alludes to the way that there were chambers around the temple named after individuals (e.g. Ezra 10:6). We will *each* have our own chamber, in this figure. This new personality will be written on the manna / stone, it will be the result of our own very personal distilling of the essence of God's word. The concept of a name written on a stone sends the mind back to the way in which the names of the tribes of Israel were written on the stones of the breastplate, each reflecting a different aspect of the light of God's glory (Ex. 28:17). We will do this through our personal understanding of God's word. It is a comforting yet sobering thought that the Lord sees us as 'names'; not just as people. Biblically, the name speaks of the character. When He says He will confess us before the Father (Mt. 10:32), He means He will confess our name before God (Rev. 3:5); He knows us according to our names / characters. He speaks of ecclesial members as "names" in Rev. 3:4; He calls His own sheep by name, and they each know His voice, responding to His word *individually*. The call to one sheep will only be recognized by that sheep; the others won't respond (Jn. 10:3). He will take individual note of each sheep, treating them accordingly, as the shepherd leads more gently those that are with young (Is. 40:11). It seems that even now, we each have our own individual name with the Father and Son, encompassing their understanding of our essential character. It may even be that in the record of Scripture, God inspired the writers to record the names of individuals according to His judgment of them (or at least, how the faithful viewed them at the time), rather than by the names they actually went under. What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil, Num. 1:15), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names.

We will relate to each other in terms of our spiritual characteristics. We will each have a name or character which is individual to us (Rev.2:17). We will relate to each other not by names as pieces

of language, but by reason of the characteristics which they speak of. To relate to each other for ever as we do now, in human terms, would be totally unfulfilling. There is an urgent need for us to develop a spiritual aspect to our relationships now, especially between husbands and wives, parents and children.

Compare the engraving on the stone "which no man knoweth" with the Urim and Thummim stones; the engraving upon them would not have been known to anyone except the High Priest, who perhaps saw them once per year in the Most Holy. Rev. 2:17 earlier speaks of the "hidden manna", hidden in the Most Holy. It would fit the context if the "white stone" refers to the Urim and Thummim. Alternatively, the reference may be to the "white stone" of the tables of the covenant. The new name written upon them would then connect with the covenant which God writes on the believer's heart as part of the new covenant: "I will put my law in their inward (cp. "hidden") parts, and write it on their hearts" (Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3). Whilst the terms of the covenant are the same for each believer, the personal promise of the Kingdom is something which no other person can enter into. So we should never be 'bored' with hearing about the basic Gospel, the promises which comprise that covenant.

2:18 The cherubim visions of Ez. 1,9 and 10 are applied in the New Testament to the glorified Christ (Rev. 2:18; 1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Pet. 2:4-9). This surely implies that they were ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah; and perhaps we are to understand that they could have had fulfilment in a Messiah figure at the time of the restoration.

2:20 "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith... patience... and thy works, and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel... to teach and to seduce my servants" (Rev. 2:19,20). This group will maintain the commendable attributes of love, faith and patience in the last days, and yet the implication is that they will misapply them, with the result that false teaching is tolerated, and the flock ravaged. The R.V. mg. speaks of "Thy wife Jezebel", likening this element of the ecclesia to weak-willed Ahab.

Rev. 2:20 speaks of "that woman Jezebel" being within the latter day ecclesia, teaching brethren to commit fornication. Later in Revelation, this is the language used concerning Babylon: a prostitute encouraging fornication. This connection suggests that the false teachers within the latter day ecclesia will be connected with political 'Babylon' and the beast. The similarities between the "man of sin" within the ecclesia and the beast / little horn teach the same thing.

As Balaam and Jezebel taught Israel idolatry, so the false teachers in the latter day ecclesia will also teach fornication (Rev. 2:14,20). Israel were on the very borders of entering the land when they succumbed to Balaam's false teaching, and the new Israel of the last days, on the brink of the Kingdom, will face and may fail a like temptation. As Balaam well understood, the way to break the strength of a fundamentalist religious movement is to morally corrupt them. The spirit of sexual permissiveness which is in this Sodom-like world of the last days, is evidently affecting the brotherhood. A few false teachers refusing to oppose this, and suggesting that personal relationships are not a spiritual indicator, would vastly speed up this infiltration. Already many ecclesial elders, notably in the third world, have recognized that fornication and other sexual malpractices are amongst the greatest problems found among the flock. Those guilty will be given "space to repent of... fornication", but they will not take up the offer (Rev. 2:21). This "space" is interpreted by John Thomas as the 1260-day period, which would appear reasonable. We have earlier applied this to the holocaust period. The inference is that the state of fornication exists within the ecclesias *before* the holocaust begins, and that the tribulation of that period is designed to bring about repentance.

2:21 Particular tribulation will come upon the most deeply apostate believers in order to encourage their repentance: "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not... I will cast

her into... great tribulation, except they repent" (Rev. 2:21,22). Thus they will be given a period to repent, the beginning of which will be at the time when the saints first realize that the Lord is about to return (cp. the virgins starting to go forth, Mt. 25:1).

2:22 If God says He will punish someone for their sins after they have had space for repentance, then He will. In Rev. 2:21,22 Jezebel was given space to repent but didn't, therefore judgment was pronounced; but even then, *if* she repented, she wouldn't be punished. This is simply the eagerness of God for human repentance.

2:23 "I *am* he which searcheth the reins and hearts (in this life): and I *will* give unto every one of you according to your works" at the day of judgment (Rev. 2:23 cp. 22:12). And He is *now* (Gk.) ordained as judge of living and dead (Acts 10:42)- and we should preach Him as such. He *is* now the judge of the dead in the sense that His very being and victory is in itself the judgment of all men. Those who reject our message right now are judging themselves.

2:24 the rest- see on Rev. 1:20.

The faithful element at Thyatira were told that they had "none other burden" than to keep themselves separate from "the depths of satan" taught by the false teachers among them (Rev. 2:24). The absence of any command to immediately withdraw fellowship from these people in the run up to AD70, but rather to concentrate upon one's own continuing to hold true doctrine, fits in with our earlier interpretation of the parable of the tares. "The *depths* of satan" indicates that the pressure on the faithful will be subtle; there will be a distinctly academic and sophisticated edge to the wrong teachings that will circulate within the ecclesia.

It seems that it is God's especial wish that a man conquer some specific human weakness in his life. If he succeeds in this, God may make concessions to his other areas of human weakness. It seems that the Thyatiran believers had none other burden put upon them than to resist the teaching and practice of the "woman Jezebel" amongst them (Rev. 2:24)- although it would seem there were other 'burdens' which the Lord *could* have put on them.

2:26 Rev. 2:26 has a specifically last days relevance: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto *the end*, to him will I give power over the nations" – "the end" being the second coming. Surely the Lord is referring back to his comment that in the final tribulation period, he who endures to "the end" of the period will be saved (Mt. 10:22)- as the one who comes to the end of the days in Dan. 12 is blessed. Enduring to the end therefore means keeping (guarding, doctrinally) the works of Christ- holding on to the One Faith until the end. This evidently won't be as simple as it sounds.

The world will be broken to shivers, "as the vessels of a potter" (Rev. 2:26). But this is in fact quoting Jeremiah's words concerning the breaking of the individual believer who is rejected at the last day (Jer. 18:4-6; 19:11). The point of the Lord's quotation is surely that those He rejects will share the world's condemnation.

2:27 Psalm 2 is clearly about the future Kingdom: "The uttermost parts of the earth" for Christ's possession, v.8; v.9= Rev.2:27 and Dan.2:35 concerning the Kingdom. Yet it is given a first century fulfilment in Acts 4:24-28.

As He will rule the world with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) and brake the nations to powder at His return (Dan. 2:44), so will each of those in Him (Rev. 2:27). And notice how Ps. 2:1,2, a prophecy about opposition to Jesus personally, is appropriated to those who preach Him, because they are in Him (Acts 4:25,26). Dan. 2:44 describes how the kingdoms of this world will be broken and scattered as the chaff before the wind. Yet this is exactly the language of Jer. 13:24 concerning Israel's latter destruction. They will be "dashed" (Jer. 13:14) as the nations of the world will be (Ps. 2:9). The same verse says they will be destroyed by brother being dashed against brother- again, the picture of the world's final destruction (Zech. 14:13). Rev. 2:27 speaks of the unfaithful in the ecclesia likewise being dashed to pieces. The Lord's coming will be a stone that grinds them to powder (Mt.

21:44). The structure of the book of Revelation reflects this theme- the first series of visions are of judgments on God's people Israel, whilst the second part of the book is judgments upon the Gentile powers of Rome / Babylon [however we wish to interpret them]. Likewise the plagues upon Egypt recorded in Ex. 7-10 are frequently alluded to in later Scripture concerning the judgments upon the apostate people of God. Quite simply, God's rejected people suffer the judgments of this world.

The Lord Jesus will rule, or shepherd (Gk.) His enemies with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:27). He can somehow both shepherd and crush at the same time. Our relationship with Him is a reflection of these two aspects of His character. Perhaps the idea here is that His punishment of sinners is even then an attempt to shepherd them to be His sheep.

3:1 Our Lord's words "These things saith he (Jesus) that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars (both Angelic symbols), I know thy works" (Rev. 3:1) suggest that He is so closely united with the Angels that it is through their presence everywhere and reporting back to him that He is able to know all our ways. Rev. 3:5 follows on in the context of the Angels and Jesus uniting to declare our verdict at the judgment: "I will confess his name before my Father, and before His Angels".

3:2 – see on Rev. 1:20.

The Olivet prophecy, like the Lord's letters, gives a huge emphasis on the need to watch (e.g. Mk. 13:5,9,23,33,35,37). The watching is for the safety of the house against the 'thieves' of false teachers; we are each the porter, with the responsibility for the rest of the household on our shoulders (Mk. 13:34,35). Throughout the Lord's letters there is this same pointed emphasis upon the need to watch. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die" spiritually (3:2 cp. 3:1), immediately suggests the parable of the virgins, whom we have portrayed as struggling to keep the flame of real faith from dying away. Seeing that the majority of Sardis are pronounced as "dead" (3:1), this encouragement to keep alive what was about to die can be read as a call to each of the faithful in the last days to not only keep their own faith alive, but to make every effort to keep alive those who appear fatally ill. This command presumes that it will be evident to the faithful what constitutes spiritual life and death. As our experience of the last days goes on, the difference between wheat and tares becomes increasingly marked - without having to anticipate the separation that will come at harvest. "Be watchful" is in the context of strengthening what remains (Rev. 3:2), providing further proof that the command to watch in the last days fundamentally concerns watching over the state of the ecclesia and one's own faith, rather than 'watching' the political state of the world. It seems that for generations, we have thought that 'watching' meant reading 'Signs of the times' articles which were actually no more than a running commentary on the state of the world. The Hebrew word translated "watch" is also rendered "to take heed to oneself". Thus David spoke of his *soul* watching (Ps. 130:5,6). Habbakuk 'watched' for what God's word really said (Hab. 2:1); God watches over things in the sense of being sensitive to them (Jer. 31:28 Heb.). This Old Testament background to the idea of watching carries through to the NT. It's because we *don't* know the time that we are commanded to watch- not 'signs of the times', because we don't know the time; but rather, to watch ourselves. Thus Acts 20:31 speaks of watching in the sense of being aware of the possibility of personal and collective apostacy. In 1 Cor. 16:31, watching means to stand fast in the One Faith; in Eph. 6:18 and 1 Thess. 5:6,11 it refers to praying for each other spiritually. In the last days, many brethren will turn away, Paul warned Timothy, but by contrast "watch *thou*" (2 Tim. 4:5). If we watch, both ourselves and others, the Lord's return will not be like a thief for us (Rev. 3:3). Thus watching is a sign of our acceptance by the Lord (Lk. 12:37). Yet *watching* our doctrine and way of life, realizing the real danger of mass latter day apostacy, is increasingly unpopular.

3:3- see on Jud. 16:20.

"I will come on thee as a thief" (Rev. 3:3) is an evident allusion to 1 Thess. 5:2 concerning the thief-like coming of Christ to the unworthy in the latter-day ecclesia. "Thou shalt not know what

hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3) implies that they *should* have 'known the hour'. This probably continues the allusions to 1 Thess. 5 - this time to v. 1: "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you (faithful ones). For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night".

1 Thess. 5:1,2 alludes to Mt. 24:43 (R.V.): "But this ye know" that "the goodman of the house" would have watched if he knew when the thief would come. The wise at Thessalonica 'knowing' the times and seasons of the thief's coming therefore implies that their 'knowledge' was in terms of appreciating what the spiritual trials of the last days would be like. Rev. 3:3 brings all these strands together in warning the apostate members of the latter-day ecclesias: "If thou wilt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know (appreciate) what hour I will come". Not watching is equated by the Lord with not knowing the time (Rev. 3:3). The evident allusion to the disciples not watching (Mk. 14:37) suggests that if we don't know the time, we will be like them- unprepared when we ought to be on the tiptoe of expectancy. The connection with the disciples also hints that when the Lord told them that they didn't know the time, he was in some sense rebuking them rather than making a general statement about the impossibility of *ever* knowing the time of his return.

3:4- see on Rev. 2:17.

The "few" in Sardis who had not defiled their clothes attended an apostate ecclesia; and yet they are *not* seen as "defiled" by the Lord Jesus (Rev. 3:4). This is proof positive that there is no such thing as guilt by association with erring members of an ecclesia. Those faithful members were not rebuked for not disfellowshipping the others. The Lord's criticism of the ecclesias seems to be that they had allowed false teaching to develop, rather than the fact they hadn't separated from it. Smyrna was an ecclesia which received no criticism at all from the Lord; they weren't rebuked for not disfellowshipping the other local ecclesias who were apostate (Rev. 2:8-11). The elders at Sardis, an ecclesia holding many false teachers, were told to strengthen what remained (the Greek is usually used regarding people)- they were to strengthen the faithful minority, but nothing was said about withdrawing from them because they fellowshipped weak brethren.

3:5- see on Rev. 2:17.

Confessed- see on 1 Cor. 4:9.

We'll all be like Moses was at the end, in essence; we'll share his finest hours. Our names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5), as Moses' wasn't (Ex. 32:32).

3:9 Some now in the ecclesia will be dashed to pieces by Him (Rev. 2:27). Mal. 4:3 speaks of them being ashes under the soles of *our* feet, as if the faithful will play a part in the destruction of their faithless brethren. After our judgment, *we* "will return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Mal. 3:18). Then in our own understanding the Kingdom of God will be likened to wise and foolish virgins; then we will see the tares clearly. Then the apostate brethren in Philadelphia will worship before the feet of their faithful brethren (Rev. 3:9). It may be in this sense that we will judge Angels / ecclesial elders (1 Cor. 6:3 cp. Rev. 2:1 etc.). Or it could be that the rejected will destroy each other. The surrounding world with whom they will then be associated will destroy themselves, brother against brother (Zech. 14:13); and they will have a part in this destruction. If we bite and devour each other, we may be consumed by each other (Gal. 5:15)- this is the same idea of brethren killing brethren.

3:10 The Lord told the Philadelphians that He had set before them an open door, which elsewhere is a figure for an opportunity to preach (Rev. 3:8 = Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). He parallels such preaching with keeping His word and not denying His Name. For those who do these two things, i.e. respond to the open door preaching opportunities of the pre-tribulation period, "I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation [tribulation] which is to come" (Rev. 3:10). If we preach now, and the door is open as never before, then perhaps we will be saved from the

tribulation. For one of its aims, as in the first century, will be to inspire us to witness as we ought to have been doing. See on Rev. 2:10.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from temptation". It may be that this just applies to the faithful natural Jews in the land, seeing that this "temptation" is designed "to try them that dwell upon the earth" /land - of Israel (Rev. 3:10).

3:12 Pillar- see on Gal. 2:9.

It is not surprising that Jesus, as the Son of God and His supreme manifestation to men, should also carry God's name. He could say "I am come in my Father's name" (Jn. 5:43). Because of his obedience, Jesus ascended to heaven and God "gave him a name which is above every name" - the name of Yahweh, of God Himself (Phil. 2:9). So this is why we read Jesus saying in Rev. 3:12: "I will write upon him (the believer) the name of my God... and I will write upon him my new name". At the judgment Jesus will give us God's name; we then will fully carry the name of God. He calls this name, "My new name". Remember, Jesus gave the book of Revelation some years after his ascension into heaven and after he had been given God's name, as explained in Phil. 2:9. So he can call God's name "My new name"; the name he had recently been given. We can now properly understand Is. 9:6, where concerning Jesus we are told, "His name (note that) shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father...". This is a prophecy that Jesus would carry all the name of God - that he would be the total manifestation or revelation of God to us. It was in this sense that he was called 'Emmanuel', meaning, 'God is with us', although He personally was not God. Thus the prophecy of Joel 2 that men would call on the name of Yahweh was fulfilled by people being baptised into the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21 cf. 38). This also explains why the command to baptize into the name of the Father was fulfilled, as detailed in the Acts record, by baptism into the name of Jesus.

3:16 There is no third way. We may as well realize this. The Lord Jesus *hates* the fact that some think there is a third road; He would that we recognized, as He does, that there is really no 'lukewarm' position- only hot or cold. He seems to ask us to realize this: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt" (Mt. 12:33).

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" . We know that from God's perspective, we *are* either cold or hot. We either serve Him or mammon. We are either on the road to the Kingdom or to death. So surely the Lord is speaking from *our* viewpoint; He wished that those believers would have the attitude that they were either cold or hot, rather than thinking there was a middle course. In essence, their weakness is ours; for time and again, we hide behind the philosophy of 'balance' in order to justify a "neither cold nor hot" attitude. Our lack of serious devotion, both individually and as a community, rests in this sophistry of 'balance'; lukewarmness has become respectable, both in the brotherhood and in the world; total commitment is branded as fanaticism and dogmatism.

3:17 The Laodiceans reasoned, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (3:17). There are grounds for thinking that the wealth and sufficiency which they felt was in spiritual terms; they were unaware that spiritually they were poverty-stricken and naked, needing to develop the riches of faith and clothing of righteousness. It seems to follow that their feeling of being spiritually rich and needing nothing was fuelled by being "increased with goods" - as if the material prosperity of the very last days will lead some to interpret this as God's blessing upon them, and a sure sign of their acceptability. Such presumption upon God's mercy is not absent from our community today. "I am rich..." is alluding to Hos. 12:8, where Israel's wealth was associated with a feeling that they were therefore without sin: "Ephraim said, I am rich...in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin".

The apostate brethren will fail to realize that "*Thou art the wretched one*" (Rev. 3:17 R.V.), implying that they will accuse those faithful ones who refuse their ideas of being spiritually weak. This sort of spiritual and intellectual elitism can already be seen developing amongst us. The description of them as wealthy but naked is taken straight out of Ez. 16:7 about natural Israel. The implication is that both natural and spiritual Israel will be purged together in the tribulation.

The unfaithful now walk naked (Rev. 3:17); but they will do so in the final condemnation of Rev. 16:15. They can walk naked *now* and repent, clothe themselves so as to cover the nakedness of condemnation which they now have; but not then.

3:18 Because of their refusal to repent, some will then have a final tribulation at the end of the holocaust period. There is the suggestion that this group may choose not to suffer the initial stages of the holocaust, in that Rev. 3:18 implies that they are only *counselled* to buy the golden faith that is produced by the fiery trial of the holocaust. Thus as with offering the pinch of incense to Caesar, there will be opportunity to avoid the holocaust by some apparently tokenistic obedience to the beast. By doing this they will waste "the space" given "to repent of her fornication", and will experience a final tribulation.

The brotherhood will be able to avoid suffering and persecution by not standing up for the one faith in its entirety, particularly concerning the Jewish aspect of our Hope. Those who fall to this temptation will remain prosperous materially (Rev. 3:17,18) and will mock their suffering and impoverished brethren. These apostates will receive a final tribulation and judgment at the end of the holocaust period.

They could cover their shame now (Rev. 3:18)- but they chose not to. And yet, unknown to them, in God's eyes these people foam out their own shame (Jude 13).

3:20- see on Mt. 24:15.

The Lord stresses, with apparently needless repetition, that to the man who responds to His word, "I will sup with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). There is something very touching in the picture of a man living alone (unusual in the first century), presumably due to old age or persecution, with no wife (either dead or left him); and the Lord of all knocks at his door. He lets him in (i.e. responds to the word of Christ), and "I... sup with him, and he with me". Two men, eating a man's meal, earnestly bent together over the table. It's a fine picture of the mutuality between the Lord and the believer. Even in failure and weak moments, that mutuality is still there.

The Lord knocking on the door and 'coming' when the believer opens, hints at His second coming once the ecclesia shows a suitable level of spiritual response (Rev. 3:20). In the same letter to Laodicea, the ecclesia being "rich and increased with goods" (3:17) recalls the days of Lot and Noah, both typical of the second coming, and the unworthy walking naked is a figure picked up in 16:15 concerning judgment day.

Our attitude and response in the split second when we know 'He's back' will effectively be our judgment. When the Lord speaks about knocking on the door of our hearts and our response (Rev. 3:20), He is picking up the language of the Song of Solomon 5:2-8, where the bridegroom (cp. Jesus) knocks at the door of the bride. But notice the sequence there:

While she sleeps at night, the bridegroom comes and knocks [unworthy virgins sleeping instead of being awake; the Lord Jesus comes]

She replies that she's not dressed properly, makes excuses about her feet, she can't come and open [the unworthy don't respond immediately]

He tries to open the door from the outside, putting his hand through the latch-hole [by grace, after the pattern of Lot being encouraged to leave Sodom when he hesitated, the Lord will be patient even with sleepy virgins in His desire for their salvation]

Her heart is moved with desire for him [the rejected still call Jesus 'Lord, Lord'; they love Him emotionally]

She starts dressing herself up, and then is overtaken by desire and rushes to the door, her hands dripping all kinds of perfume and make up over the lock as she opens it [cp. the virgins going to buy oil, the unworthy trying to prepare themselves all too late, not trusting that their Lord loves them as they are at the moment of His coming]

But he's gone, he *withdraws himself* [all too late, the door is shut, He never knew them]

Her soul fails [the shock of rejection]

She seeks him but doesn't find him, calls but he doesn't answer [Prov. 1:28; the rejected call, but aren't answered; they seek the Lord early, but don't find Him. Hos. 5:6 is likewise relevant: "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to *seek* the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath *withdrawn himself* from them".]

She feels tired of her relationship with him ("sick of love").

She is persecuted by the world around her ["condemned with the world"]

The basic point is that if we don't immediately respond to the Lord's knock, we show ourselves to not love Him enough. If we don't open immediately, it's as if we didn't open at all. The Lord wants us as we are, bleary eyed and without our make up, but with a basic overriding love of Him, and faith in the depth of His love, which will lead us to immediately go out to meet Him.

3:21- see on Mk. 10:37.

The descriptions of the faithful in the Kingdom use language which is surely exaggerated to show how they are counted as righteous by grace; they overcame *even as* the Lord overcame (Rev. 3:21). They are described as clothed in white linen, just as was the Victorious Saviour straight after His death (Mt. 27:59). A comparison of our struggles with the Lord in Gethsemane, let alone the cross, reveal that we do not overcome as He did. We have not resisted unto blood in striving against our own sin. We will have the right to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14); yet our salvation is by pure grace alone.

Strong defines 'Israel' as meaning 'he who will rule as God'. This would therefore be the basis of Rev. 3:21, which promises that he who overcomes (also translated "prevail") will be a ruler with God, on His throne. It seems that the Lord has his mind back in Gen. 32, and he saw all who would attain His Kingdom as going through that same process of prevailing with God, overcoming, and being made rulers with Him.

3:22 "Let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. 3:22 etc.)- the primary speaker of the letters to the churches was the Angel-the Angel Gabriel? But they were actually from Christ, "The Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17 RV). The one special Angel in the midst of the Cherubim in the Old Testament visions of Ezekiel 1 would then represent the Son of Man ("The Lord the Spirit") in the midst of the lightstands (Rev. 1:13) and the lamb on the throne surrounded by Angels in the four living creatures of Rev. 4 and 5. The Lord Jesus didn't personally pre-exist, but the idea of Him was perhaps represented in Old Testament times by an Angel.

4:4 I am of the view that the seals and vials of Revelation have such strong connection with both the Olivet prophecy and the actual events in the land in AD66-70 that it is impossible to discount the application of Revelation to this period. This means that it would have been written some time before AD70. A major theme is the need to resist the Caesar worship and maintain their separation from the world around them. Indeed, the whole of Revelation can be read, in its AD70 application, as an account of the struggle between Christ and Caesar. Such strong imagery is used in order to emphasise that there could be no third road. It was one or the other. Thus Rev. 4,5 presents a picture

of the throne of Heaven, but it is replete with reference to the imperial ceremonial court. Consider the points of contact and contrast:

- Greco-Roman kings were considered to be divine, and their courtrooms were arranged in concentric circles centring upon the Caesar / King- just as with the true throne room
- Their attendants were often arranged in groups of 7s and 12s- after the supposed seven planetary spheres and the 12 signs of the zodiac. Compare this with the 7s, 12s and 24s [2 x 12] in Revelation (4:4,5,10; 5:6-10).
- These attendants sung hymns of praise to the Caesar (cp. 4:8-11; 5:9-14)
- The Caesar dispersed justice to the empire / kingdom, symbolised by a scroll (cp. 5:1-8).
- Language such as God, Son of God, Lord's day, saviour of the world was used in the imperial cult.

Suffice it to say that today just as much as in the 1st century, there is a radical clash of cultures and belief systems between us and this present world. The radical nature of the conflict cannot be overstated.

4:5 - see on Rev. 1:20; Jer. 1:11,12.

The 24 elders of Rev. 4:5 represent rather than symbolize the believers, whose guardians they are. These Angels represent the saints in the court of Heaven. In this lies the practical meaning of all this; that we, our 'case', our thoughts and deeds, are represented in none less than the court of Heaven; and there they are judged, discussed, and responded to.

4:6 There are evident similarities between Ezekiel's cherubim, and the four living creatures of Rev. 4. They are both described as "full of eyes" (Ez. 1:18 = Rev. 4:6), with four very similar faces (lion, calf, man, eagle in Rev. 4:7 = lion, ox, man, eagle in Ez. 1:10); and both have wings (Rev. 4:8 = Ez. 1:8). Yet the living creatures of Revelation speak of being redeemed by the blood of Christ and made king-priests in God's Kingdom (Rev. 5:8-10)- as if they are the redeemed people of God. The four faces are likely to be connected with the four standards of the tribes of Israel (Lion = Judah, Man = Reuben, Ox = Ephraim, Eagle = Dan). Each of those tribes had two other tribes assigned to them in the encampment procedures of Num. 2. There is extra-Biblical tradition that the cherubim in Solomon's temple had the same four faces which Ezekiel saw on the cherubim- lion, ox, man and eagle. Those to whom Ezekiel related his vision would have immediately understood the point- that the earthly sanctuary was a reflection of the Heavenly, and that above that was a huge Angelic system operating, which also represented God's people- them. But that huge system was to remove to Babylon, and then the final visions of Ezekiel show that glory returning. Ezekiel, as the representative "son of man" as he's so often styled, was caught up within that system and transported at ease between Babylon and Jerusalem- and those who wanted to opt in with God and His Angels could likewise be taken to Babylon and returned. Those who chose to remain in Babylon were therefore resisting being part of an awesome system of God manifestation and Angelic operation. We have that same choice in things great and small today.

4:9- see on Rev. 5:6.

4:10 Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. They will cast their crowns before the enthroned Lord, as if to resign their reward as inappropriate for them (Rev. 4:10). Indeed, they shouldn't be in the Kingdom. The righteous are "scarcely saved" (1 Pet. 4:18). The righteous remnant who spoke often to one another about Yahweh will only be "spared" by God's grace (Mal. 3:17).

Because it is by God's will that we are created, because He is from everlasting to everlasting, because God is creator, we cast our crowns of 'reward' before His throne in a sense of unworthiness (Rev. 4:10,11), just as David in Ps. 8 had the overawing sense of 'Who am I...?' when he reflected upon God's creation.

4:11 Paul wrote of the God "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, (who) has quickened us together with Christ (by grace are you saved)

...that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us" (Eph. 2:4-8). God created us for His pleasure (Rev. 4:11)- and His pleasure is to pour out grace, to give us eternity (Jn. 6:40).

4:16- see on 1 Jn. 4:17.

5:1 Note parallels with Ezekiel- the 4 living creatures, a throne scene, a scroll- with judgments against Israel on it, to be fulfilled in a Babylonian invasion. This similarity with Ezekiel would explain the correspondence between the cherubim vision of Ez. 1:22-28 and that of Rev. 4:2-6.

5:3-5 Weeping because no man could open- note the similarities with Israel's inability to find a champion against Goliath. Goliath, representing the seed of the serpent, a personification of sin (i.e. the Biblical devil), needed a man to fight him (17:8,9). The men of Israel cowered in fear, wishing they could only have the strength and courage necessary, but looking one on another helplessly as the invincible giant made his boast. How to overcome him and the evil intent of this man against God's people was what the men's conversation revolved around: "Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up". They also discussed the glorious reward being offered: "It shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and make his father's house free in Israel" - and throw in his daughter for good measure too (17:25). But "all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (17:24). Now what more precise description could we wish for of our feelings in the struggle against sin? There seems a similarity here with men and Angels weeping because no man was found worthy to look upon or open the book of life (Rev. 5:3-5)- until our Lord prevailed on the cross.

5:5 The concept of conditional prophecy opens up a significant window into the tension facing the Lord Jesus as He approached the cross- indeed, throughout His ministry. So much depended upon Him. If He had failed, so much would simply not have come true as God intended. Rev. 5:5 stresses how the Lamb alone, through His sacrificial death [hence the figure of a lamb] was able to open the seals, and thus enable history as God intended to unfold. Indeed, the sealed scroll can also be understood as the book of life, whose opening was only made possible by the Lord's death. This had as it's basis the language of Dan. 12:4, where Daniel sealed the book. Rudolf Rijkeboer comments: "Daniel's prophecy of the seventy year-weeks takes us to the time of the Messiah, but not really beyond. How things would continue would depend on the Saviour, if He was victorious. That he would be victorious was... by no means a foregone conclusion. It depended totally on the Saviour's own free will... while the scroll remains sealed... that particular future is not going to happen at all!". In this sense we understand that through the cross, the pleasure or 'intention' of God would be furthered by Messiah's 'hand' through His crucifixion (Is. 53:10).

5:6- see on Jer. 1:11,12.

The marks of His sufferings will be in Him eternally, and thereby we will be eternally reminded of the things we now only dimly appreciate (Rev. 5:6; Zech. 13:6). See on Mk. 9:47.

Rev. 4:9 alludes to the Isaiah 6 vision, and applies it to the future judgment. Yet silhouetted within the vision of the judgment throne is a slain lamb (Rev. 5:6), as if before the judgment, all will be aware of the Lord's sacrifice. The accepted will utter praise immediately after realising the wonderful verdict pronounced for them- in terms of praising the Lord Jesus for his sacrifice, and recognising their eternal debt to the blood of His cross (Rev. 5:9). The cross and the judgment and reward are connected. This is why the Sephardim called the Day of Atonement, with all its typology of the cross, "the day of judgment". To come before the cross is to have a foretaste of judgment; there and then was the judgment of this world.

5:6

The Chronology And Structure Of Revelation

I suggest that the key to the interpretation of Revelation is in understanding how its structure is linked to its interpretation. This doesn't mean that interpretations which ignore the structure are wrong; the book is open to multiple fulfilments, as most Bible prophecies are. The New Testament often quotes the Old Testament out of context- phrases and verses are taken up and given an interpretation which can't be extended to the surrounding context of the Old Testament passage. And so it's surely legitimate to likewise interpret Bible prophecy in a similar piecemeal manner. However, this doesn't preclude a hermeneutic [scheme of interpretation] which takes an entire book and seeks to make sense of it from start to finish.

Throughout latter day Bible prophecy, there is mention of a 1260 day / 42 month / three and a half year period of final tribulation. The Jews had a three and a half year reading cycle, similar in principle to the annual *Bible Companion*, whereby there were specific readings from the Pentateuch and prophets, with a Psalm read every Sabbath. This system was based around the feasts. The book of Revelation is likewise based around the feasts. It should be noted that the Gospel of John, which appears so similar in style to Revelation, was likewise based around the Jewish feasts; and a case can be made that it was intended to be read over a three and a half year cycle along with the Jewish lectionary readings (1). Hence John's account of events seeks to place them all within the period of the various feasts; and his material can be seen as a kind of exposition of the Old Testament 'readings for the day' according to the Jewish triennial reading cycle.

There are many connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation	Feast	Allusions
5	Passover	Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13
7	Tabernacles	Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:16-20
8,9	Day Of Atonement	Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker, <i>Revelation: A Biblical Approach</i> pp. 104,105.
11	Dedication & Purim	The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 7 and Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 11:10 = Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5
12	Pentecost & Passover	The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall I reap?"
14	Tabernacles	
15 + 16	Atonement & Passover	Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm
19	Passover	Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms
21,22	Tabernacles	

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:

Chapter 5: Passover
6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles

Chapters 8& 9: Atonement and Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)

Chapter 11: Purim
Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost
Chapter 14: Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 15: Atonement
Chapter 16 & 19: Passover
Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles

1 year

The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between chapters 9 and 11.

Not all prophecy has to be predictive. The Lord Jesus spoke of His future sufferings and commented that once those things happened, the disciples would be able to make sense of them *at that time* because of His previously spoken words about them (Jn. 8:28; 13:19; 14:29; Acts 11:16). And so it may be futile to try to work out precisely how things will be before they actually happen; but as we pass through the final three and a half years, those who understand will be amazingly encouraged as they see everything falling into place. It will be the most amazing, detailed and practically encouraging fulfilling of prophecy that anyone has ever lived through. And given the whole nature of the tribulation, it will be encouragement that the faithful will sorely need.

Notes

(1) Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel And Jewish Worship* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1960).

5:8 Rev. 5:8 shows each of the Angels (again notice how all of them are involved) having golden vials in which are our prayers, and that with them in hand they bow down to Jesus. So it would appear that our prayers go first to them, then to Jesus, and then to God Himself, who then gives His answer to the Angel before His throne to go forth and execute. See on Is. 6:7.

Revelation describes Angels rushing in response to human prayers, vials of judgment being poured out on earth as a result of the incense of prayer accumulating... this is the power of prayer. If prayer is like incense, we must give Dt. 33:10 RVmg. its full weight- that incense would come up "in your nostrils". This is how intimately we are invited to see our prayers being received by God; this is the power of prayer. The golden vials full of prayers of Rev. 5:8 become the vials of judgments which are poured out on the land in Rev. 8:5- so close is the connection between the events that mould history, and the incense of prayer.

5:9 Rev. 5:9 presents us with the picture of men and women redeemed from *every* kindred [tribe / clan], tongue [*glossa*- language], people [a group of people not necessarily of the same ethnicity] and nation [*ethnos*- ethnic group, lit. 'those of the same customs']. This means that not only redeemed 'Yugoslavs' will stand before the throne in the end; but Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrans, Bosnians...every ethnic group, with every custom, will have representatives who will have believed the Truth and been saved. This idea is confirmed by considering how 70 bullocks had to be sacrificed at the feast of ingathering (Num. 29), prophetic as it was of the final ingathering of the redeemed. But 70 is the number of all Gentile nations found in Gen. 10. And it is written: "When he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Dt. 32:8). A total of 70 went down with Jacob into Egypt; and thus 70 seems an appropriate number to connect with the entire Gentile world. And representatives of *all* of them will be finally ingathered. It seems highly doubtful to me that over the past 2,000 years, the Truth has been taken to every *ethnos*, tribe, clan, custom and language,

especially in Africa and Asia. So it follows that only once *we* have done it in our generation will this come true. The brethren in those parts especially have work to do yet, it seems to me. And we should all support them as best we can. I have a real belief that given the current rate of progress in preaching, the current generation *could* witness literally world-wide representation by those who understand true Christian doctrine- *if we all* do our bit. It is very difficult for me to reproduce in writing the kind of picture I have in my mind. But it is a thrilling and all consuming, all-demanding vision.

Is. 42:9,10 says that we sing the “new song” now, because we sing / meditate of the “new things” which will be in the Kingdom. In that day, we will “sing a new song” (Rev. 5:9; 14:3). And yet this is undoubtedly picking up on the way in which we can *now* sing the ‘new song’, every morning (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1).

A true appreciation of the Lord's work on the cross, a real ability to say that the Son of God loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*, will reflect itself in our attitude to materialism. The Lord gave His blood in order to purchase our body and our spirit for himself (1 Cor. 6:19,20; Rev. 5:9 RV). *Therefore* we must surrender our body and spirit, all that we have, to Him. We are not our own. To hold *anything* back is to deny the cross; to deny the Lord what He paid so terribly to possess: our lives, our hearts, our bodies.

5:9,10 The very close association of the Angels with their charges is shown by the Angels identifying themselves with their charges by saying that Christ had “redeemed us” out of every nation, and given them the hope of being king-priests in the future Kingdom (Rev. 5:9,10). Unto the Angels the world to come has not been put in subjection, nor do they belong to specific nations, but because they identify so closely with us they can speak in this way. Rev. 5:9 RVmg. speaks of the Angels praising God that He had purchased men unto Himself “and madest them to be [AV “made us”] ... a kingdom... and they [AV “we”] shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9,10). If the RV is correct, we have a picture here of our Angels thanking God in advance for the salvation which He has prepared for us their charges. It would seem from this that our 'guardian' Angel changes according to what we are trying to achieve for God. Similarly the great Angel of the Exodus appears to have been Moses' personal guardian because Moses and the Angel were working for the same ends.

5:10- see on Rev. 6:9.

“Kings and priests” is a poor translation; we will be both kings and priests, after the order of Melchizedek, rather than some of us being kings and others priests. If we can gain a clear picture of God's intended roles for the priests under the Law, we will have further insight into our future work as king-priests. Through what He achieved for us on the cross, we have been made *now* king-priests, with the future hope of reigning on earth (Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

5:13 Ps.69:34 speaks of how *everything* in the sea, heavens and on earth should praise God. This cannot refer to believers in all those places. Rev.5:13 uses similar language to describe how every creature in the sea, under the earth and on the earth and in Heaven, all praised God for Christ's ascension into Heaven. The dead do not praise God. The impression is given that the whole natural creation did in some way render praise to God.

6 The typology of the invasions recorded in Judges as well as those of Babylon and Assyria teaches that the latter day Arab incursions during the period of prolonged downtreading will have consciously aimed to destroy the agriculture and even the physical structure of the land of Israel. Dt. 28 and Lev. 26, which have a specific application to the latter-day curses upon Israel, emphasize this curse of famine and its related problems of disease and death. This is exactly the language of the seal, trumpet and vial judgments of Rev. 6,9 and 16, largely falling upon the earth/land of Israel. Our Lord's prophecy of famines at the time of the end had its primary fulfilment in the land of Israel around A.D. 70 - and its secondary reference is fundamentally to the land of Israel too (Lk.

21:11), although this does not rule out this prophecy's partial reference to famines in the surrounding world also.

It should be noted that the record of the curses in Lev. 26 splits them up into six sections, each introduced by a phrase like, "If ye will not for this hearken unto me... then..." more curses would come (Lev. 26:14,18,21,23,27,36). It is tempting to associate this with the series of six judgments to be poured upon Israel and the Arabs as outlined in the six seals (Rev. 6) and six vials (Rev. 16), leading up to the seventh period, of Israel's repentance and Christ's Kingdom. There are many other points of contact between the curses and the language of the seals and vials. The implication of this is that there are at least six periods of God's appeal to Israel to repent through their trials, which they will refuse to accept. "If ye will not for all this *hearken* unto me" (Lev. 26:18) may suggest that God's word will be spoken to Israel along with the trials. This again indicates that the Elijah ministry will operate within Israel during their period of Arab downtreading. "If ye will not be *reformed* by me" (Lev. 26:23) uses a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to teach', defined by Strong as 'to chastise by words'. This provides further confirmation of the idea.

The Seals And The Olivet Prophecy

The vital key to interpreting the seals is found in the clear links between them and the Olivet prophecy. The connections are so copious that it must surely be admitted that consideration of them is important in coming to an understanding of the seals. Consider the following summary of the links:

Revelation	Olivet Prophecy		
6:1,2	Mt. 24:14	:14	Mt. 24:35
:3,4	:6,7	:16	Lk. 23:30
:5,6	:7	:17	Lk. 21:36
:7,8	:7	7:1	Mt. 24:31
:9	:12	:3	Lk. 21:18,28
:11	:14	:14	Mt. 24:19,21
:12	:7	8:3	Lk. 21:36
:13	:32	:5	Mt. 24:27

John was told that the events of the seals "must take place"- *dei genesthai*. The Olivet prophecy uses the same phrase (Mt. 24:6; Lk. 21:9). We have seen that the Olivet prophecy describes the events of both AD70 and our present last days, with special reference to the tribulation of God's people, both natural and spiritual. The connections between the Olivet prophecy and the seals would therefore indicate that the seals, and therefore much of Revelation, has reference to these same two time periods. Fairly conclusive evidence for a pre-AD70 date for Revelation has now been published. In any case, the connections with the Olivet prophecy cannot be shrugged off as incidental. The seals, then, can be applied to our latter day tribulation. There seems no reason to insist that they should be interpreted chronologically; they can quite comfortably be seen as describing different aspects of the same period. This is how series of judgments described in the prophets often have their fulfillment (notably in Isaiah), rather than being a chronological prophecy of events. Zech.12:3-11 is a passage which contains seven occurrences of the phrase "In that day...". The passage does not have to be interpreted chronologically; this is a list of events which will occur around the same time, "in that day". They are snapshots of the same scene from different angles. The seals and the repeated

references to a 3.5 year tribulation period can be understood likewise; they do not necessarily refer to chronologically different events, but are giving different aspects of information about the same basic scene. The lack of strict chronological sequence in prophecy is a major feature of the Old Testament; thus a consideration of the phrase "in that day..." in Isaiah reveals that the context 'jumps around' all over the place, from the first coming of Christ to the Babylonian invasion to the Kingdom. There is no reason to think that Revelation is any different.

The sixth seal concludes with the great day of the Lamb coming, with the fig tree casting her immature figs (cp. the fig tree parable), and great changes in Heaven and earth. This must have some reference to the second coming. If it does not, then where is the principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture? This sixth seal appears to be an extension of the fifth seal, where persecuted believers plead for vengeance to be shown against their persecutors. They are assured of their salvation (by being given white robes), and rest "for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (6:11). Once these brethren were killed, the Lord would take vengeance- by His second coming. It follows that this violent persecution of brethren is going on before the second coming. Perhaps the "little season" refers to the three and a half year period? The persecuted souls under the altar would then describe the early sufferers in the persecution. It should be noted that once a set number of believers have been slain, then the Lord will come (Rev. 6:11 Gk. and modern versions). This must mean that there will be violent slaying of believers going on right up until the Lord's return (so the Greek for "killed" implies); which suggests that we have yet to see violent persecution before the second coming.

A further indication that the fifth seal concerns the last days is in the obvious connection between the altar scene and the parable of the widow crying for vengeance on her persecuting adversary; she would be avenged "when the Son of man cometh" (Lk. 18:8). Thus the intense prayers of the persecuted saints of the last days are what prompt the second coming; at least, this is how God wishes us to see it. If our prayers were that fervent now, perhaps the tribulation could be avoided. Revelation 7 then describes how the 144,000 are sealed to ultimately survive the persecution, and due to the accumulated intense prayer of the persecuted believers, the seventh seal of judgment is poured out on the world (8:3,4), resulting finally in the establishment of the Kingdom.

6:1 The description of the rider on the white horse going out to conquer (Rev. 6:1,2) is intended to be linked with the description of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 19:11. Yet the rider of Rev. 6:1,2 is the ecclesia, going forth to powerfully convert the world in the run up to AD 70 (and also in the last days). Yet in doing so, they were effectively Christ to the world; His triumphant victories over men and women were theirs, and theirs were His. The witness of the Lord and of His disciple were one and the same

6:2 Horse riders- see on Zech. 6:5.

6:2,3 The rider on the white horse "bent on conquest"- the victorious Roman march towards Jerusalem in Spring 67. The rider takes peace from the earth (cp. Mt. 24:6,7)- the disruption of the pax Romana. "Caesar has obtained for us a profound peace. There are neither wars nor battles" (Epictetus, Discourses 3:13:9). The riders on the black and pale horses = famine and death resulting from the Jewish war.

6:9- see on Lk. 18:7.

The believer's death is a pouring out of blood on the altar (Phil. 2:17 Gk; Rev. 6:9), which is language highly appropriate to the Lord's death. It follows from this that the death of one in Christ is the pinnacle of their spiritual maturity, as the Lord's death was the pinnacle of His. It is a spiritual victory, more than the temporal domination of the flesh which it can appear.

John saw under the altar "the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God" (Rev. 6:9). Seeing that there is no conscious survival of death, could this not refer to the guardian Angels of the

former martyrs, crying out for the blood of their charges to be avenged? They are *so* closely identified with them that they can ask for “our blood” to be avenged. It’s apparent enough that this is not the people themselves speaking- for they are dead. Surely then it refers to their Angels, who identify so strongly with them? Perhaps in the same way, Rev. 5:10 has guardian Angels thanking Jesus for making “us” king-priests to reign on earth. And when the believers are finally glorified, there is an ecstatic voice in Heaven, exalting that the Lamb’s wife has made herself ready (Rev. 19:6). Surely this must refer to the Angels rejoicing that their charges have finally made it to salvation? We, for whom they laboured perhaps for centuries, preparing our genetic pool [note how the Angels “prepared” Edom unto destruction long before it happened, Ez. 35:6], and the myriad of circumstances we would meet which were designed to bring us towards the Kingdom. No wonder they will be so ecstatic. Or in another figure, the blood of the dead believers cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith (Rev. 6:9). To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain (Gen. 4:10). After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given “white robes” and being told to rest a bit longer (Rev. 6:11). Yet the white robe is given at baptism; a man may cast off Christ, but the prodigal is given again the robe if he returns (Lk. 15:22 s.w.); we are given white robes in this life through our acceptance of the blood of Christ and living in response to that redemption (Rev. 7:13,14; 22:14 Gk.). God giving believers white robes after their death can surely only be understood as His remembrance of how in their lives they had put on those robes. But His view of time is different, and He sees them as doing it again and again, as He considers how they had died for His cause and how thereby He will surely raise them. This is just as we would relive in our own minds the baptism of one of our children who has died. We know of course that there is no immortal soul, and that we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, lives on in the memory of a loving Father.

The martyrs crying for vengeance cp. Lk. 18:6-8.

6:9,10 souls- See on Dan. 5:23; Rom. 14:8,9.

6:10 Rev. 6:10; 13:15; 14:9 describe the persecuted Christian remnant of the last days in the language of Daniel. The conclusion is that they (we?) will find strength to endure through the understanding of prophecy. Daniel's spirit of "How long...?" is so exactly reflective of the attitude of all God's children down the years that it is hard to deny that Daniel is being framed as the representative of all the saints. Indeed, these very words are quoted in Rev. 6:10 concerning the attitude of the slain saints of the last days.

Ez. 32:30, Rev. 6:10 and some other passages give the impression that the dead are somehow alive. And yet we know from an impregnable array of Bible passages that the dead are unconscious. These 'difficult passages' are surely giving us a window on God's timeless perspective. Apart from the death state, there are other examples of where future things are spoken of as having already happened (e.g. Ez. 39:29). God's future actions are simply spoken of as having already happened (e.g. Ez. 32:18). Living believers are called "martyrs" even before they are killed, because God foresees that they will be killed (Rev. 11:7).

6:11- see on Mk. 13:13.

After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given “white robes” and being told to rest a bit longer (Rev. 6:11). Yet the white robe is given at baptism; a man may cast off Christ, but the prodigal is given again the robe if he returns (Lk. 15:22 s.w.); we are given white robes in this life through our acceptance of the blood of Christ and living in response to that redemption (Rev. 7:13,14; 22:14 Gk.). God giving believers white robes after their death can surely only be understood as His remembrance of how in their lives they had put on those robes. But His view of time is different, and He sees them as doing it again and again, as He considers how they

had died for His cause and how thereby He will surely raise them. This is just as we would relive in our own minds the baptism of a child who has died. We know of course that there is no immortal soul, and that we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, lives on in the memory of a loving Father.

6:14 every mountain removed = Roman legions flattening the approach roads: "[Vespasian] sent both footmen and horsemen to level the road, which was mountainous and rocky" (Wars 3.7.3). Having outlined the mountainous setting of Jotapata, Josephus says that Vespasian decided "to raise a bank against that part of the wall which was practicable" (Wars 3.7.8).

6:15,16 hiding in caves, wishing the rocks to fall on them - the Jews hid underground in the 67-70 war. "On the following days [the Romans] searched the hiding places, and fell upon those that were underground and in the caverns" (Wars 3.7.36). The Lord had told the women who watched His death that they would ask the mountains and hills to fall upon them to cover them (Lk. 23:29,30 cp. Mt. 24:1,2,19,34).

6:16 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Who He was then, as He walked around Palestine 2000 years ago, the lamb for sinners slain, is who He will essentially be at His second coming and judgment. It's not quite so that He was once a meek lamb but will roar back as an angry aggressive lion of Judah. Revelation brings out the paradox of "the wrath of *the lamb*" - not the roaring lion. Even in condemning men, His basic passion for humanity, His pain for the lost, comes out. Thus He will call those whom He rejects "Friend", just as He addressed even Judas, a man not fit to breathe the same air as He did. And in any case, it was in His role as the lion of Judah that He opened the seals through His death, not at His return. In His mortality He was the one who served rather than the one who sat at meat; and when He returns He will again come forth and serve us, His Divine nature notwithstanding. He so earnestly desired that even the wicked children of Jerusalem who did Him to death should be gathered together into His Kingdom. As He was, so He will be, and so He is even now.

6:17 God's character is not just partly severe, partly gracious. His grace and His judgment of sin are wonderfully interconnected within His character. Thus destruction comes from Shaddai, the fruitful, blessing one (Is. 13:6); and the meek, harmless Lamb has great wrath (Rev. 6:16,17).

7:1 When we come to Revelation, especially bearing in mind its' constant allusions to the Old Testament, the 'earth' can generally be understood as the land of Israel. All the weight of Biblical evidence is in this direction. There are undeniable similarities between the events of the seals and vials, and what happened in the land in AD66-70. The whole idea of pouring out judgment upon the 'earth' refers to the OT images of such judgments being poured out upon the land. Consider too how Rev. 7:1: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth...". If the earth has corners, it can't really be the globe, rather, an area such as the land.

It's been observed that the tribe of Dan is excluded from the list of the redeemed tribes in Rev. 7. Dan didn't take possession of their inheritance; they despised it. And so they excluded themselves, rather than being excluded for e.g. bad behaviour. The other tribes all had their moments of terrible failures; but these didn't exclude them. The only one excluded was the one who didn't want to be there.

There seems to be an association between the "four winds", the four "living creatures" and the four "beasts" mentioned at various points in Scripture. It is suggested that these all refer, even if indirectly, to a literal four cherubic Angels. Rev. 7:1 is the clearest evidence: "I saw four Angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth". The stress is on "the four winds". Dan. 7:2,3 connects the winds and the beasts: "Behold, the four winds of Heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea". The "four winds" may refer to Angels- God makes His Angels spirits or winds.

7:4 It is worth noting that two thirds of the Jews within the land are to be “cut off” in the holocaust, meaning that a third survive it (Zech. 13:8,9). Having spoken of this period in Rev. 6, Rev. 7:4 speaks of 144,000 Jews as surviving it. A third of the Jews in Israel is about 1.4 million people; it may be that only a tenth of those will ultimately be found worthy. The 144,000 are sealed so that they avoid God’s judgments, which would fit the idea of the righteous remnant miraculously surviving in an Arab occupied Jerusalem.

7:9 Think of the misunderstood Jesus, welcomed by the crowds with palm fronds in hope of an immediate Messianic Kingdom. Surely John intends us to think back to that when we read in Rev. 7:9 that the Lord will be welcomed by another large crowd, from every nation, carrying palm fronds and calling out praise to Him for dying on the cross and redeeming them. Here are those who truly understand Him. The Lord had in mind this contrast between the crowd and those who would truly understand Him when He said that “Now is the son of man glorified” in the things of the cross (Jn. 12:23) in contrast to the crowds who were shouting “Glory in the highest!” at the prospect of Him there and then inaugurating the Messianic Kingdom (Lk. 19:38). See on Jn. 5:23.

7:13- see on Rev. 6:9.

7:14 The 144,000 are redeemed from all the tribes of Jewry in the last days, and they wash their robes [through baptism] in the blood of Jesus as a result of “the great tribulation” (Rev. 7:14 RV) which they pass through. This great multitude are Jews yet out of every nation and language (Rev. 7:9)- for as Ron Abel shows in *Wrested Scriptures*, the great multitude and the 144,000 are to be read as identical. The witness to them will thus be world-wide. This “great tribulation” is one of many links discernible between Revelation and the Olivet prophecy. The Lord had prophesied that the “great tribulation” such as never was for Israel will occur in the very last days before the return (Mt. 24:21). It is only for the sake of “the elect” that the days of the great tribulation are shortened. This elect are surely the 144,000 of Rev. 7- Jewish brethren in Christ, converted during the very last days. It is this “elect” which is to be gathered from “the four winds” (Mt. 24:31) by the Angels. This suggests that they are not just Jews in the land who are converted, but those throughout the world-wide Diaspora. For the time of Jacob’s trouble, worse than anything they have ever experienced (including the holocaust) must affect all Jewry world-wide. And this includes the USA and other apparently pro-Jewish or tolerant nations.

7:15 There is maybe the suggestion in Rev. 7:15 that after the judgment process, the Lord will come down off His throne and mix with us, after the pattern of Joseph reassuring his brethren.

7:17 – see on Lk. 13:15.

Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. When we read that the Lord will “wipe away” tears from our eyes (Rev. 7:17), this is the same word used in Acts 3:19 to describe how our sins will be “blotted out” when the Lord returns. The conclusion seems to be, therefore, that the Lord Himself will comfort us with the reality that our sins and being unworthy of the Kingdom is all truly forgiven. The judgment will have achieved its end for us- a true realization of our sinfulness.

Rev. 7:17 speaks of the Lord Jesus as a lamb on a throne being the shepherd / ruler. For connection between shepherding and rulership, see on Mt. 2:6. We see here in Rev. 7:17 the connection between rulership and shepherding; and also the continuity of theme between lamb and shepherd- because Jesus was a lamb and had been shepherded as we are by God, He is able to rule as a shepherd; He is the lamb who turns into a shepherd.

8-11

The trumpets of Rev. 8-11 are clearly based upon the plagues of Ex. 7-12. Yet those plagues were each one designed to induce repentance in Egypt; there were various possible futures and outcomes related to each of them. If, e.g., after plague eight, Pharaoh had truly repented- then the other

plagues wouldn't have happened. And perhaps it will be the same with the trumpets of the last days. See on Rev. 16:12.

8:1 The run up to the final tribulation will provoke a "praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy... to stand before the Son of man" (Lk. 21:36). Perhaps this intense latter day praying of the faithful is what Rev. 8:1 refers to, in speaking of "silence in heaven" when the seventh seal was opened- for this is one of Revelation's continual allusions to the temple service: "In the Temple, when the incense was offered, the people retired from the court and prostrated themselves in silent prayer".

8:3 Rev. 8:3 describes one Angel being given much incense- i. e. prayers- presumably by the individual guardian Angels. He then offers this up on the altar (Christ) to God, and the response from God comes in the form of the Angels sounding their trumpets. It is interesting to note that actually these Angels had already been prepared for what they were going to do (Rev. 8:2) when they had been earlier before the throne of God. God knows our prayers before we say them . He knew what the prayers of the people at that time would be, and had earlier prepared the Angels to answer them, and this was unleashed by their cumulative prayer. But without that prayer- that human part of the equation- the prepared answer would not have been put into action. The prayers were offered up by one Angel- this either means there is one Angel with overall responsibility for offering up prayers to Christ (the altar), or that there is one Angel who collects together the prayers from one period of time or about one particular subject and then offers them up to Christ. The fact "much incense" is mentioned presumably means that there was much prayer made at this time, and this was added to the "prayers of all saints" (v. 3) which had already been made about this.

The sky, the trillions of kilometers between Heaven and earth, are in fact no ultimate distance. That's the simplest message of those visions. In Revelation we see the incense of human prayers arising into Heaven, resulting in Angels coming to earth, pouring out bowls, blowing trumpets, and major events happening on earth (Rev. 5:8; 8:3). Prayer is noticed; it brings forth quite out of proportion responses.

8:3-5 Rev. 8:3-5 as well as Rev. 11:6 certainly allude to Elijah as a pattern for our latter day witnessing. Much incense of latter day prayer is added to the existing incense, resulting in fire being brought down on earth after the pattern of Elijah (Rev. 8:3-5 RV). The especially intense prayers of the latter day remnant are added to the cumulative prayers of former generations, and result in the second coming and the beginning of the final judgments.

8:5- see on Rev. 5:8.

8:7 One reason why there are such similarities between the seven vials and the seven trumpets could be that the vials refer largely to the judgments to come upon the world, and the trumpets to the latter day tribulation of the saints. See on Rev. 11:3.

Seven Vials	Seven trumpets
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16:2	8:7
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16:3	8:8
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16:4	8:10
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16:8	8:12
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16:10	9:1
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16:12	9:13
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16:17-21	11:15
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8:8 In Rev. 8:8 we have an Angel casting a mountain into the sea. This must surely connect with the Lord's encouragement that we can cast mountains into the sea by our faith (Mk. 11:23). Therefore...

it surely follows that our prayers have a direct effect upon the Angels. They throw mountains around because of our faithful prayer... Inevitably we see a connection with Ps. 46:2, which comforts us not to fear when mountains are cast into sea. Surely the point is that we shouldn't be scared when we perceive the awesomeness of the power of prayer and its influence upon Angels. It's all too easy to ask for things without perceiving how it would really be if that prayer were answered. We need to have specific and focused faith in what we ask for, realizing that legions of Angels are potentially able to operationalize what we ask for. See on Is. 6:7.

Jer. 51:25 calls Babylon a "destroying mountain" which is to be judged by fire to become "a burnt mountain". The use of identical language in Rev. 8:8 must make that passage have some reference to the fall of latter-day Babylon. "Destroying mountain" is the language of Dan. 2:44 concerning the little stone destroying the image and growing into a mountain, symbolizing God's Kingdom. Jer. 51:20-23 stresses no less than nine times how 'Babylon' is to be "broken in pieces", which is another connection with Dan. 2:44 concerning the breaking in pieces of the nations who are confederate with 'Babylon', the head of gold.

8:12- see on Rev. 18:8.

9:1 If the physical movement of Angels from Heaven to earth to perform certain tasks can be taken literally, Rev. 9:1,11 and certain other passages taken on a more literal slant: "I saw a star (symbolic of an Angel) fall from Heaven unto the earth: and to Him was given the key of the bottomless pit. . . the Angel of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 9:1,11). It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

9:5 There are many links between the trumpets, seals and the Olivet prophecy; and also many links with Josephus' descriptions of what came upon Palestine in AD66-70- e.g. 9:5 "inwardly tormented" Gk. *ebasanizonto* is used in Josephus (Wars 5.1.5).

Job is being shown to represent "those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (Rev.9:4). The idea of sealing is associated with being justified by faith rather than by the Law in Rom.4:11. If "the earth" in Rev. 9 is read as "the land" and the chapter given a Jewish interpretation, the allusions to Job as representative of unsealed Jewry still depending on the Law become even more relevant. Note the clear connections between Rev. 9 and Job:

Rev.9

Job

:5 "To them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented"

Satan could not kill Job, but was given power to torment him.

:6 "Men (shall) seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them"

Job said he was one of them "which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures" (3:21,22)

The marauding Saracen bands

The Sabeian bands

:11 "A king over them, which is the Angel.."

The satan/Angel of Job?

:11 "A king... Abaddon... Apollyon"

"The king of terrors" attacking Job's tents

('Destroyer').

(18:14)

:11 "The bottomless pit"

"Hell is naked before Him, and destruction (cp.'Abaddon') hath no covering" (26:6).

9:6 Those who in that day will "seek death" (Rev. 9:6) are those whose materialistic behaviour in this life was effectively a seeking of death (Prov. 21:6). They were and are living out the condemnation experience right now. See on 1 Cor. 10:13.

9:10- see on Mt. 24:37; Mk. 13:20.

A Possible Chronology Of The Tribulation

There is a repeated mention of a three and a half year period of tribulation for natural and spiritual Israel in the last days. This is described as a period of 1260 literal days. A period of 2300 days is also mentioned (Dan. 8:14). Periods of 1290 and 1335 days are mentioned in Dan. 12:11,12. Additionally, the events of the flood are clearly typical of the latter day judgments. Noah entered the ark for 7 days, and the duration of the flood was 5 months, connecting with the five months final tribulation spoken of in Rev. 9:5,10. Significantly, John the Baptist (type of the Elijah prophet) was five months older than Jesus (Lk. 1:24)- hinting that something significant will be happening in the Elijah ministry during this same period? The *total* period which the flood affected the earth was 339 days- from the rain coming down to the earth being dry, i.e. having totally recovered from the effects of God's judgments. Putting all these things together leads us to an uncanny result: nearly all these time periods will start or finish on a Mosaic feast day. It is not without relevance that the period of the last days is described often as "the day of the Lord"- but "the day of the Lord" is a phrase very commonly used to describe the Jewish feast days. Good cases can be constructed for thinking that the Lord will return on Jewish feast days; but the whole period of the last days may well be based around significant events which occur on each of the feast days. If this proves nothing else, it shows that it is quite legitimate to view the time periods as literal days. We have shown that in the last days, knowledge of the prophetic word will be greatly increased. We have also shown that in the very last days, the faithful will know for absolute certain when the Lord will come. It seems to me that they will understand from the prophecies a chronology similar in outline terms at least to the kind of thing I offer below. I'm quite aware that what I offer is hopelessly flawed, but I offer it as an example of the sort of thing that may be revealed to the faithful remnant in the very last days.

(i) The total period of downtreading of the "host" of Israel is given as 2300 days in Dan. 8:13. Yet the far more common period is 1260 days, 42 months, time times and a half (three and a half years) etc. It seems that the 2300 is the period from the beginning of the holocaust until the time when the abomination is ended. Perhaps the days of the elect's tribulation are shortened from 2300 to 1260 (Mt. 24:22).

(ii) This point seems to be the start of the abomination that will be in place for 1290 days. 1290 days back from a Passover brings us to half way through Elul, the end (significantly) of the Jewish year, the time when the Jews under Nehemiah were being sorely persecuted by the Arabs (cp. Neh. 6:15).

(iii) Noah entering the ark may be the basis of Is. 26:20: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and *shut thy doors* (cp. the ark) about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past". Not only is this verse in a latter day context; "the indignation" frequently describes the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions of Israel, typical as they are of those of the last days (Is. 10:5,25; 13:5; Lam. 2:6; Ez. 22:31; Dan. 8:13; Zech. 1:12). As the faithful remnant were kept safe within Jerusalem at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, so in the last days it seems that the faithful will somehow be taken away. Is. 57:1 in the same Sennacherib context speaks of

how the righteous are gathered (Heb.) from the evil that is to come, so that they can lay in peace upon their beds (surely an idiom) in the midst of the tribulation of invasion. According to our suggested chronology, this will happen towards the end of the three and a half year tribulation. This would fit the type of Israel in Egypt: suffering some of the plagues, and then miraculously separated from them.

Tabernacles is very much associated with the idea of "ingathering" and the gathering together of God's people. It may be that some of the faithful are ingathered at this time.

(iv) The end of the 1260 days of tribulation at Purim. Jerusalem no longer trodden down (Rev. 11:2).

(v) The abomination ends after 1290 days. Passover was associated in Jewish thought with the latter rains. James 5:7 speaks of being patient "unto the coming of the Lord", i.e. until the early and latter rains have come. It may be that this is one of those passages which will open up in the very last days; it may be teaching that the Lord's coming will be after that last Passover at the end of the 1290 days, when the abomination ends. Only 45 days later, according to our chronology, Daniel will stand in his lot. And yet James has to warn that last generation not to grumble and be bitter against each other (AV "grudge") within the ecclesia in these final few days. All the significant events happening but *still* no second coming may lead some to give up their hope of the Lord's return, at least in their heart, and become bitter with each other. Such is the strength of our tendency towards friction within the ecclesia: even in the very very last few days before the Lord comes, this sort of thing will not only be likely to be going on, but will even be *increasing*. The parable of the servant beating the fellow-servant on the eve of the Lord's return (and many other such indications) fit in with this all too well.

(vi) Daniel stands in his (priestly) lot- he inherits the priestly "lot" in Israel which was his, but which he never received in his mortal life. The exact timing of Pentecost depends on the state of the harvest- it wasn't therefore exactly 50 days after Passover. There are two feasts of Pentecost or harvest in our chronology- one just before the tribulation begins in earnest and one at the very end. There may be a connection here with the two latter day harvests described in Rev. 14:14-20. It may be that those who don't need to go through the tribulation are taken away, or 'harvested' and somehow the intervening time gap is collapsed for them, so that finally all the faithful are judged and immortalized together, at the same moment. Should this happen, it would be a sure sign that the understanding of the remnant was absolutely on the right track. Once the effects of the latter day judgments will have finally cleared up, the Passover will be kept which will signal the beginning of the Kingdom and the celebration of the complete victory of God over His enemies.

9:11 Often, Angels are described in terms of the men, empires or armies they control- the frequent descriptions of human armies in language which refers to Angels too provides proof of this (e. g. Is. 66:15; Ez. 26:7,10; Joel 2:5; Nahum 2:3,4,13). Rev. 9:11 is another example: "They (the Arabs?) had a king over them, which IS the Angel of the bottomless pit". This Angel is both a Heavenly Angel and the earthly leader over which the Angel has charge. Rev. 9:16 says that "the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand"- cp. "thousand thousands" of Angels in Dan. 7:10. Rev. 9:17 continues: "horses. . . and them that sat on them". Horses and riders in Rev. 6 and Zechariah have clear Angelic connections (Chapter 11); "the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions"- lions and Angels are linked in Rev. 9:17; 10:1,3.

There are also several word plays upon and indirect allusions to Caesar worship in Revelation. Rev. 9:11 is an example- the condemned King of the bottomless pit is called "Apollyon", which G.B. Caird takes to be an allusion to Domitian, "who liked to be regarded as Apollo incarnate".

9:13- see on Jn. 16:23.

9:13-15- see on Job 4:18

Rev. 9:13-15 horns- Horns are connected with Angels in Zech. 1:18; Hab. 3:4, and by the four horns on the altar suggesting reference to the Angel cherubim.

Rev. 9:13-15: "I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar (i. e. from the mighty Angel that dwelt there?). . . saying to the sixth Angel. . . loose the four Angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four Angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day. . . ". There seems no reason to doubt that these, along with most other mentions of 'Angels' in Revelation, can be taken as literal Angels. The fact that they were "loosed" implies a possible restraint from action- as if the action they desired to take was held back by another ("the sixth") Angel "preparing" or 'adjusting' (Greek) them for a certain period.

9:13,14 God Himself has a close interest in and control of the work of His Angels; thus in Rev. 9:13,14 we read of the sixth Angel sounding, wanting to bring about certain things on the earth. The response to this was "a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth Angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four Angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates". This voice was probably either from Christ (the altar), as the head of the Angels, or God Himself; or maybe a mighty Angel representing God or Christ. It instructed the Angel how to bring about His intention by bringing other Angels into operation which this sixth Angel presumably had in its control- hence they were to be "loosed" by Him.

9:14 Rev. 9:14 commands: "Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates" (R.V.). They then eagerly go forward to prepare the way for the second coming. The implication is surely that those Angels were geographically bound / limited in the scope of their work by the Euphrates River- and yet in their eagerness to progress the timetable of events leading to the last day, they yearned to go beyond that limitation. The reference to "the Angel of the waters" likewise suggests that an Angel was operative in one geographical area. It could be that as the future elohim we likewise will have areas of geographical influence in the age to come- the "cities" over which we are given dominion.

The latter day invasion from the Euphrates (i.e. geographical Babylon) will result in men being killed by fire, smoke and brimstone (Rev. 9:14,18)- nuclear language?

9:14- see on Ps. 78:49; Lk. 1:10,11.

9:16 Rev. 9:14-18 describes how 200,000,000 horsemen came from just beyond the Euphrates (i.e. Babylon/Assyria), using "fire and smoke and brimstone" to punish God's apostate people. "By these three was the third part of men killed", suggesting that this invading army has three aspects to its work. The huge number of horsemen must allude to the "great company" of horsemen of Ez. 38:4, which is rooted in the Assyrian invasion. The 200,000,000 horsemen of Rev. 9:16 may correspond to the fact that secular history records the strength of the Assyrian army which came against Jerusalem as being 200,000 men. See on Rev. 16:16.

9:20 We should not think that the majority of Israel will repent: only a tiny minority will (Is. 6:13). The plagues on the earth / land prophesied in Revelation suggest that despite so much horrendous tribulation, "the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders... sorceries... fornication... thefts" (Rev. 9:20,21). There are at least 10 references here back to the sins of Israel in Old Testament times. The suggestion therefore is that as Israel failed to heed God's pleading with them in the past, both through prophets and judgments, neither will they (generally) in Jacob's final time of trouble. There is, however, the definite Biblical teaching that a remnant will repent.

10:1 It is quite possible that the Angel of Rev. 10:1 who descends from Heaven in a cloud with a face like the sun, holding the books of judgement is referring to Christ's second coming in person. Christ is called "The messenger (Heb. 'malak', the Angel) of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1).

10:9- see on Rev. 11:3.

11:1 Rev. 11:1 speaks of a command to measure the temple- and immediately our minds are sent back to the temple being measured in such detail in Ez. 40:10, 21,22 etc. Is this to be read as a sign that we are about to receive another conditional prophecy? Assuming that Revelation was given just prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70, we could read the ensuing prophecy in Rev. 11 as saying that although Jerusalem and the outer court would fall to the Romans, the zealots in the inner sanctuary would be preserved, and a command to repentance would be issued by two prophets. Now of course, this didn't happen; but perhaps it could've done, potentially? Consider the possibility- both here and in so many other Bible passages.

A case can even be made that the compilation of Luke's Gospel record of the Olivet prophecy, as well as sections of Revelation, were released throughout the period of Titus' encirclement of Jerusalem in the lead up to AD70. The encouragement to flee Jerusalem whilst it was still possible (Lk. 21:20,21) would have been urgent commands to be fulfilled immediately upon receipt. And then Rev. 11:1 could imply that by the time of the prophecy's release, the Roman attack on the outer court of the temple had already begun. A lot of work remains to be done in working out how this mass of Scripture could have been received by the faithful within Jerusalem in AD67-70, and read as directly relevant to them, requiring immediate response.

11:2 The holy city [Jerusalem] to be trampled for 42 months = Lk. 21:24 "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". The "times of the Gentiles" are therefore the 42 months. "From Spring of 67 to August of 70, the time of formal imperial engagement against Jerusalem is a period of 42 months". John "measures" the inner temple, altar and worshippers - for protection (Ez. 22:26; Zech. 2:1-5). Thus the external temple perishes but the spiritual reality- the true worshippers, the new Israel- are preserved. This is what happened in AD70.

11:3

The Two Witnesses

The context of this vision is set by 10:9, where John eats the little book. This must refer back to Jeremiah's enthusiastic 'eating' of the book of the Law when it was found (2 Chron.34:18). He later reflected upon this: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jer. 15:16) by enthusiastically studying and preaching them. The words John ate were the "seven thunders" which he was told not to record in words (Rev. 10:4), presumably because the final tribulation they described was not to be understood by any generation except the very last one. The taste of the word to John was like honey- indicating the joy and exaltation of spirit which comes from receiving an understanding of the word; yet in reality it was bitter (Rev. 11:10), due to his having to "Prophecy (preach) again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (v.11). The reluctance of John, representing us in the last days, to get involved in this world-wide witnessing is hinted at by "Thou *must* prophecy...". Such language recalls Jeremiah and the prophets (often initially unwilling also) spreading their message to nations and kings, and also the spirit of first century apostolic preaching. Both these groups did so amidst great persecution; as we will too? John's eating of the book also looks back to Ez.2:8, where Ezekiel had to do this at the beginning of his preaching ministry to an apostate Israel in captivity. This may hint that our latter day preaching to all nations will especially focus upon the Jews among them, and those persecuted Jews within the land itself.

The vision of the two witnesses carries straight on, describing in more detail what 10:8-11 has summarized. The downtreading of the Holy City (literal Jerusalem) will be for 42 months. During

that time, the witnesses prophecy for a parallel period of 1,260 days- both periods equivalent to three and a half years (Rev. 11:2,3). The two witnesses may either represent the Jews and the Christians, or two individual leaders of the saints who each concentrate respectively on preaching to Jews or Gentiles. "Fire proceedeth out of their mouth... they have power to shut Heaven... and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues" (11:6). These descriptions have clear reference back to Elijah and Moses- both of whom spoke the word of God during time of great persecution of God's true witnesses.

We have seen that other Scriptures describe a three and a half year period of persecution by the beast. This is matched in Rev. 11 by the three and a half year witnessing in sackcloth, with the power to bring plagues on their enemies. This would equate the witnesses with Moses and the faithful Israelites in Egypt undergoing persecution, at a time when Egypt (cp. the latter day world) was very prosperous (treasure cities etc.). The sackcloth suggests fasting and prayer- for their deliverance through the Lord's return. It has been suggested elsewhere that the second coming is dependent on the intensity of our prayers. To allow the Lord's return to happen, it seems we need this tribulation to vitalize our community's prayer life. In the last days, God's faithful people will be given a mouth and wisdom which their persecutors will be unable to gainsay nor resist (Lk. 21:15). This evidently alludes to how Moses before Pharaoh was given such a 'mouth' (Ex. 4:15). Moses at that time was a type of the faithful remnant of their last days, in their witness against the world during the tribulation. Hence Rev. 11 describes their witness in terms of Moses doing miracles before Pharaoh.

"When they shall have finished their (three and a half year) testimony, the beast... shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them" (11:7)- a final, furious bout of persecution which brings about the destruction of the beast. It is because of this latter day orgy of killing the saints that the woman riding the beast was "drunken with the blood of the saints (the latter day true Christian community?), and (also) with the blood of the martyrs (witnesses- the two particular ones of Rev.11?) of Jesus" (17:6). The witnesses 'testifying' suggests association with their prototype John, who was persecuted for his obedience to and preaching of "the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev.1:2,9) in the last days before the Lord's 'coming' in AD70. John was encouraged in his tribulation by being given such a deep understanding of prophecy; and his latter day counterparts may be blessed likewise. The "souls under the altar" which we have previously considered were "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (6:9), which cements the link between them and the apostle John's descriptions of his sufferings.

The dragon/ beast made war with the seed of the woman "which keep the commandments (word) of God, and have the testimony (i.e. preaching) of Jesus" (12:17); it was because of "the word of their testimony (i.e. preaching) (that) they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11), indicating that Rev.12 also has reference to this last day persecution. Interestingly, the Angel says that he is a fellowservant and brother of them "that have the testimony (preaching) of Jesus" (19:10), i.e. the witnesses- as if the Angels who are with the witnesses in the tribulation are so near us that they almost feel our sufferings.

It would seem that the murder of these two witnesses takes place in Jerusalem, which is spiritual Sodom (Is.1:10; 3:1,9; Jer.23:14; Lam.4:6; Ez.16:46-56; Amos 4:11) and Egypt (Ez.23:19-22). This point is clinched by its description as "where also our Lord was crucified". "They of the people (of Israel?) and kindreds and tongues and nations (those preached to in 10:11) shall see their dead bodies three days (literal ones?) and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves" (11:9). This seems a designed contrast to Stephen, the first martyr for preaching the Christian Gospel, whose body was also stared upon, but who was allowed to be buried. There are a number of similarities in Rev.11 with the events in Sodom. "The God of the earth" of v.4 clearly connects with "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" in Gen.18:25. The two Angels (cp. the two Angel-supported witnesses) were warned not to abide in the street (cp. Rev.11:8) for fear of

violence being done to them; the city is spiritually called Sodom (11:8). These references to Sodom and Egypt, both types of the last days, confirm that Rev.11 also has a latter day application.

The persecution period in which the dead bodies lie in the street lasts three and a half days; this may indicate a final persecution at the end of the three and a half years. This is followed by the resurrection of the witnesses, after a brief period of rejoicing by the world that these people whose Spirit gifts had plagued them were now no more (by all means compare this with the rejoicing of the world in the three days in which Christ lay dead). The witnesses then hear a great voice, and ascend to Heaven in a cloud in the sight of their enemies (11:12). This surely connects with the transporting of the saints through the clouds to meet the Lord, as detailed in 1 Thess.4:15-17. There are also links with Rev.1:7- a shout (cp. 1 Thess.4:16), a cloud, being seen by enemies. We know that Rev.1:7 is concerning the second coming. It is tempting to interpret the great earthquake and repentance of a remnant in 11:13 as referring also to the Lord's coming, accompanied as it will be by a literal earthquake which affects Jerusalem (Zech.14:1-4), heralding the repentance of the Jewish remnant as described in Rom.11. The seventh Angel then sounds, declaring that the Kingdom has come (n.b. "are become- now- the Kingdoms of our Lord").

There seem a number of points of contact in Rev.11 with our Lord's sufferings. The great fear that fell upon them who saw the resurrected witnesses recalls the fear of those who saw the risen Lord (Mt. 28:4,5,8). Had it not been for Nicodemus' bold request, the Lord's body would have been thrown into Gehenna. Compare this with the bodies being unburied in 11:9, as if to imply they had been crucified. Thus in our sufferings we will really feel crucified with Christ, and therefore have great peace from knowing that if we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him.

The plaguing of our persecutors as Moses and Aaron plagued Egypt further strengthens the impression that Israel's experience in Egypt is the prototype for the coming tribulation. The world's brief rejoicing at the apparent death of the witnesses corresponds to Egypt's glee that Israel had left and were trapped at the Red Sea. The rejoicing over the slaughtered saints by the nations of the beast in 11:10 is echoed later by the holy apostles and prophets rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon (18:20)- as if the sufferings of the saints are later brought upon their persecutors. This may be the reason why there are such similarities between the seven vials and the seven trumpets, if the vials refer largely to the judgments to come upon the world, and the trumpets to the latter day tribulation of the saints. See on Rev. 8:7.

11:3 Rev. 11:3 give power- the Angels often give evidence to men that they are at work; thus the Angel of Rev. 11:3 says "I will give power unto My two witnesses". The witnesses here are witnesses to the work of the Angel, not to the Truth. This overcomes the problem of the "witnesses" mentioned by traditional expositors not holding the full truth. God- the Angels- do not leave themselves without witness to the pagan world, but send them rain and seasons (Acts 14:17). Job and other Scriptures stress how rain and seasons especially are the work of the Angels.

The two witnesses of Rev. 11:3 make their witness [and will make it during the latter day tribulation?] "clothed in sackcloth"- a symbol of repentance and recognition of sin (Gen. 37:34; Jer 4:8; Jonah 3:5; Mk. 2:20). Their own personal repentance and acceptance of God's gracious forgiveness was the basis of their appeal to others. And is it going too far to understand that if these "two witnesses" do indeed represent the latter day witness of true Christianity, it will be made on the basis of a genuine repentance by us, brought about by the experiences of the holocaust to come?

11:4 Zech. 4 contained a vision of Joshua and Zerubbabel, likened to two olive trees which emptied their oil into the seven branched candlestick, representing the ecclesia of Judah. They represented the kingly and priestly offices. The whole 'lightstand' depended upon these two anointed ones, these providers of oil, and the fact they both in various ways failed to deliver true faith and spirituality meant that the victory over the world which the vision also prophesied could not come about; the final fulfilment had to come through the Lord Jesus, who was the ultimate Priest (cp.

Joshua-Jesus) and Prince of Judah (cp. Zerubbabel). This prophecy could have been fulfilled at the restoration; but when we read in Rev. 11:4 that "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks", is the Lord not saying that now He has redefined and rescheduled the fulfilment of that vision in a latter day context?

11:5 The two witnesses of Rev. 11:5,6 have power to shut heaven and bring fire upon their enemies - clearly alluding to Elijah. His bringing down fire was against people of his own Jewish race who were persecuting him (2 Kings 1:9-12), suggesting that the Elijah ministry will be bitterly opposed by many Jews, after the pattern of Jeremiah's persecution during the Babylonian invasion.

11:7- see on Rev. 6:10.

11:8 Rev. 11:8 speaks of the dead bodies of these latter day witnesses lying dead in the streets of spiritual Sodom- indicating that some will die during this great appeal (cp. Lk. 21:6)? The dead bodies of the latter day witnesses are left in the street of the city "where *also our Lord* was crucified" (Rev. 11:8)- see on Mk. 13:13.

The city called Sodom and Egypt = Jerusalem, in line with OT imagery. Note too how Israel's judgments in Rev. 8 are based on the plagues that came upon Egypt.

11:11 There is a general, outline theme throughout Revelation that the righteous are gathered *after* they go through the judgments, implying we will experience them, although it would be possible, were we more spiritual, that we could be spared them (Rev. 7:9-17; 11:11,12; 14:13-16; 19:1-10). Thus although the types of Israel in Egypt, the faithful in Hezekiah's Jerusalem, Noah shut in the ark etc. suggest that the faithful will be spared the judgments, the fact is they will *need* the experience of the judgments to make them more spiritual, and therefore ultimately these types may not come true: they will only speak of what was possible. Evidently the latter day ecclesia will not be as strong as God would wish it to be.

11:12- see on 1 Thess. 4:17.

11:15 Satan's Kingdom has members, those he is king over [see on Lk. 11:18]. His Kingdom is the people of this world, those dominated by the fleshly mind. When the Kingdoms of this world become those of God at the second coming (Rev. 11:15), this is more than a physical handover of political authority. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). The political power in the world is ultimately God's even now (Rom. 13:1-4). The idea of a handover of the Kingdoms of this world to God must therefore refer to the end of Satan's power; no longer will the world be structured around the desires of the flesh, but around the principles of God. Satan's Kingdom is not a political Kingdom, but an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. The Kingdom of God is the antithesis of Satan's Kingdom. The fact Satan's Kingdom exists now and is the antithesis of the true Kingdom is proof enough that in some sense the Kingdom of God exists in some non-political sense now, although of course this will be politically manifested at the Lord's return. God's Kingdom exists in the same sense as Satan's; as an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. This is why the Lord's parables describing the Kingdom of God refer not to the political Kingdom, but to His ways and principles as they should operate in our lives today. The Kingdom of God in this non-political sense was taken from the Jews and given to us, so that we might bring forth the fruits of the Kingdom (Mt. 21:43). The political Kingdom had already been taken from Israel (Ez. 21:27).

11:17 This said, let me outline the thesis: God can do anything, He is omnipotent. But He chooses to limit His omnipotence in order to allow man total freewill. Therefore effectively, how far God will fulfil His purpose depends upon how far we are obedient to Him. Thus Israel limited the Holy One of Israel (Ps. 78:41). Only at the return of the Lord Jesus will God 'take to Himself His great power' (Rev. 11:17)- which language of itself suggests that God has chosen to limit His omnipotence for

the moment. Of course, God can act quite independently of us; He has the sovereign right and ability to act as He likes, and achieve His objectives how He likes. But it seems that God chooses to limit His ability to do this. We have complete freewill, and God works with us individually in proportion as we work with Him. We have genuine choice, not only as to whether to serve God, but *how* and on what level and to what extent we serve Him, within the salvation we experience in Christ.

11:18 The nations will be angry, and the wrath of God also will rise (Rev. 11:18). When their iniquity has reached a certain level, then judgment will fall (cp. Sodom and the Amorites, Gen. 15:16).

11:19 That the throne of God is represented by the ark of the covenant is shown by comparing Rev. 11:19 and 4:1-5:

Rev. 11:19	Rev. 4:1-5
"The temple of God was opened in Heaven"	"A door was opened in Heaven"
"There was seen in the temple the ark of His testament"	"A throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the throne. . . there was a rainbow round about the throne".
"There were lightnings, and voices and thunderings"	"Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices"

The throne in Rev. 4 was surrounded by cherubim, as was the "throne" of the ark of the covenant.

12:1 A woman clothed connects with the later descriptions in Revelation of the church as the virgin bride of Christ clothed in His righteousness. But this woman is different- she is presented as more mature and about to give birth. God sees and speaks about the completed ecclesia in its mature form. "The sun" would then refer to the Lord Jesus, in whom the church is clothed. However, the Old Testament symbology of a woman, sun, moon and stars all point to Israel. This would explain the difference in image with the virgin bride of Christ, which refers to the church. The events outlined in chapter 12 therefore could perhaps refer to what God had potentially enabled for the "Israel" of the first century [either natural Israel or the Jewish-Christian community of believers]- but because prophecy isn't so much prediction of the future as a sharing with us of some of the possibilities prepared in the Divine throneroom, we don't necessarily have to expect that these things all came true. They could have done potentially.

Note how God's people have one head [a reference to the Lord Jesus?] with one crown on, whereas the system of flesh has many heads with different crowns (:3). We have a single clear focus, defined aim, principles, command and control to live under. And that focus and head is clearly the Lord Jesus personally.

12:2-5 The seals and vials have many connections with the Olivet prophecy; and therefore the idea of a woman in labour pains would connect with Mt. 24:8 speaking of the beginning of birth pains coming in the lead up to the 'last day' of AD70 and also the final last day of the Lord's return. The question is, who or what is the child to be brought forth? It could be that the Lord's return could have been in AD70, which would explain the language of both Jesus and the apostles in expecting His return in the first century. So it could be that God's intention was that the Christian community could have given birth to the Kingdom community, which would have ultimately established the Kingdom of God on earth and they would then have ruled with "a rod of iron" (:5), as representatives of Christ. The Roman dragon would then have persecuted this new community, but after a period of struggle, all opposition would have been destroyed and the cry would have gone up

“Now is come salvation and the Kingdom of our God” (:10). All the sufferings of this new community are framed here in terms of the sufferings of Jesus personally- for the powers of this world were eager to destroy Him as soon as He was born, His mother fled etc. All that was and is true of the Lord Jesus personally in some way becomes true of the community which are “in Christ”. God certainly did set up a three and a half year (1260 day) tribulation period in the run up to AD70- this period is repeated in chapter 13, where the beast wars with the saints for 42 months- Nero's persecution (Nov. 64 - June 68). This should have resulted in Israel and the believers victorious. But it didn't- because the Jews sought a human Kingdom, rather than the Kingdom of God under their crucified King Jesus. They were given space to repent in the generation between the crucifixion of Jesus and AD70- but they for the most part didn't grasp it, and indeed persecuted the Christians. The fulfillment of the prophecy has therefore been deferred until our last days.

12:3 *Ten horns*- Ten administrative provinces of the Roman Empire under Augustus?

12:4 The stars may refer to Abraham's seed; either the natural or spiritual Jews. In the tribulation foreseen here, a third of them were to be “cast down”, maybe meaning they would be slain. This throwing down of the stars may be what happened during the 1260 days struggle in “Heaven” in verses 6-10. This may refer to three and a half years tribulation before the final destruction of the temple in AD70.

The allusion is to the Egyptians trying to destroy Israel's firstborn and Herod trying to destroy God's Son.

12:5 Mary was who the people of Israel were intended to be, and thus she becomes our representative. Peter Watkins in his excellent book *Exploring The Apocalypse* sees the woman of Revelation 12 as a symbol of the church expressed in terms of Mary- for it was her who gave birth to “the man child” Jesus, who is to subdue the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5 = 2:27; 19:15). The stars around her head would, if we let Scripture interpret Scripture, refer to Israel (Gen. 37). There are many links between Revelation and John's Gospel, and thus it may be significant that in Jn. 19:25-27 Jesus calls Mary “Woman” and then in Revelation, He uses the same title for the “woman” who bears the man child. Yet the point of Revelation 12 is surely to show us from Heaven's point of view the huge disruption in the universe caused by the birth of Jesus that night in Bethlehem. A baby's birth, brought about by the quiet faith and indefatigable ambition of a teenage girl, shattered the whole cosmos. This is really what happens when we perform acts of faith based on slowly developed spiritual understanding. We do things which have cosmic consequences. See on Lk. 1:28.

Caught up- the same Greek words in 1 Thess. 4:17, where Paul seems to have envisaged his generation of believers in the first century (“we which are alive and remain”) being caught up to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. Perhaps this was something which potentially could have happened; Rev. 12 is outlining how Roman power could have been overcome and God's Kingdom established. But God's people Israel wanted to do it in their own strength, to have their Kingdom and not God's Kingdom on the ruins of Rome, and so all this potential which God had set up didn't happen when it could've done in the first century, but instead has been deferred to our last days. Although this dramatic catching up of the early church out of the grips of Roman persecution didn't happen, we can note the level of anger of that system against the new Christian community which is implied in :4-6. The view has been articulated that the Roman empire looked positively on the Christian movement at this stage, but the New Testament contains constant affronts to the empire and Caesar worship; my own take is that true Christianity and the Roman empire were in radical conflict. The description here of Rome's anger against the new Christian community would support that. If historically there wasn't that anger and opposition, it would only have been because the early Christians too soon learnt to compromise and seek worldly acceptance.

“Adela Yarbro Collins has shown how Revelation 12 reworks ancient forms of the so called “Combat Myth,” in which order is re-established through the subjugation of a chaos monster. The closest pagan form of the myth to John’s description relates the birth of Apollo to Leto, despite the threats to his pregnant mother from the dragon Python. This would have been a familiar story to the first recipients of the Apocalypse, living in cities in western Asia Minor, not far from Apollo’s shrine at Didyma. Patmos in John’s day was also steeped in the cult and mythology of Apollo and his sister Artemis. In Revelation’s radical retelling of the ancient myth, informed by Old Testament antecedents, peace and order are brought about not by Apollo but by Jesus Christ. First century Christian readers would have further detected political implications in Revelation 12, since the Apollo–Leto myth was used by the imperial propaganda machine. Nero, for one, presented himself as an Apollo figure and was likened by his troops to Pythian Apollo. According to such propaganda, the emperor would be the woman’s male child, the Savior who establishes peace through slaying the chaos monster. The Apocalypse radically subverts this mythology by identifying the male child as Christ and placing the emperor on the wrong side of the order/chaos divide, associating him with the Satanic dragon (13:3; 17:9 – 11). It exploits the irony that a victim of Rome’s tyranny, the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, is the true victor over the powers of evil and injustice” (Ian Boxall).

12:6 *Place prepared*- the same words as in Jn. 14:2, where through His death the Lord Jesus prepares a place in God’s temple for each of His people.

They should feed her- as Elijah was fed by the ravens whilst being similarly hidden from persecution.

During the final tribulation it seems that God’s people will be somehow hidden, as predicted in Is. 26:20. Yet there are other indications that some of them will perish during the persecution.

12:7 The war in Heaven here can be interpreted as a change over in power between one group of Angels and another when the Mosaic system was finally ended in AD70- full documentation in “Angels” sections 12-7 and 12-8- see http://www.aletheiacollege.net/angels/angels12_7.htm and http://www.aletheiacollege.net/angels/angels12_8.htm

And there was war- following the story line through from v. 5, this conflict began because the son of the woman arrived in Heaven. This feature doesn’t sit well with the traditional view of all this happening in Eden, before the time of Mary and the birth of Jesus. The implication could be that the commotion in ‘heaven’, the power struggle, the war or *polemos* [polemic] began once Jesus ascended to Heaven; because this was when He was given all authority in Heaven and earth.

Michael and the Great Dragon

Comments

1. Angels cannot sin and that there can be no rebellion in heaven. Thus this passage – which is the only one of its kind – must be interpreted in a way that does not involve angels sinning or there being sinful angels making people sin on earth, seeing that sin comes from within us, not from outside of us (Mk. 7:20–23).

2. The serpent is cast out of heaven, implying it was originally there. But the literal serpent in Eden was created by God out of the dust of the earth (Gen. 1:24–25). There is no implication that the Devil came down from heaven and got inside the serpent. The language of “cast down” and “cast out” does not require literal downwards movement – Babylon is “thrown down” in Rev. 18:21. The O.T. basis of “cast out” is in the nations / beasts being cast out from God’s presence in the land of Israel. In Rev. 12 we have another woman in the wilderness, who enters the Kingdom [cp. The land] once the beast is cast out. In Dan. 7:9 the thrones of the beast / kingdoms are “cast down” before God’s Kingdom is established on earth, just as the beast is cast down before the establishment of the

Kingdom in Rev. 12. The idea of being cast out of Heaven was and is common in Semitic languages and even wider culture for a loss of power – thus Cicero comments about Mark Anthony: “You have hurled your colleagues down from heaven”.

3. Note carefully that there is no reference here to angels sinning or rebelling against God, only to a war in heaven.

4. After the drama of vv. 7–9, v. 10 says that there was “a loud voice saying in heaven, *now* is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night”. If vv. 7–9 occurred at the beginning of the world, before the time of Adam and Eve, how could it be said that after Satan’s fall there came salvation and the kingdom of God? After Adam’s sin, mankind began his sad history of slavery to sin and failure – a state hardly to be described as “salvation” and the kingdom of God. There is rejoicing that the Devil – the accuser – has been cast down to earth. Why should there be rejoicing if his coming to earth was the start of sin and disaster for man? If a fall from heaven to earth is understood figuratively rather than literally, as representing a fall from authority (as Is. 14:12; Jer. 51:53; Lam. 2:1; Mt. 11:23), much more sense can be made of all this. If all this happened before the time of Adam, or at least before the fall of man, how could the Devil have been accusing “our brethren”, seeing they did not then exist?

5. There is nothing indicating that all this happened in the Garden of Eden. A vital point is made in Revelation 1:1 and 4:1 – that the Revelation is a prophecy of “things which must shortly come to pass”. It is not therefore a description of what happened in Eden, but a prophecy of things to happen at some time after the first century, when the Revelation was given by Jesus. Any who are truly humble to the Word will see that this argument alone precludes all attempts to refer Revelation 12 to the Garden of Eden. The question has also to be answered as to why the identity of the Devil and information about what happened in Eden should be reserved until the end of the Bible before being revealed.

6. “The great dragon was... that old serpent” (Rev. 12:9). The dragon had “seven heads and ten horns” (v. 3), therefore it was not literally the serpent. It being called “that old serpent” shows that it had the characteristics of that serpent in Eden, in the sense of being a deceiver, as the serpent was. Thus the Devil is not literally the serpent. If it is, then the dragon is the snake. But the dragon is a political power, manifesting sin (satan). Pharaoh is likened to a great dragon (Ez. 32:2) but we can’t reason that therefore he was a literal dragon. Similarly, “the sting of death is sin” (1 Cor. 15:56), but that does not mean that death is a literal snake. It has the characteristics of the snake, through its association with sin.

7. The Devil was cast down onto the earth and was extremely aggressive “because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (v. 12). If the Devil was cast down in Eden, he has had the opportunity to torment man throughout his long history – which is hardly having only “a short time” in which to wreak havoc.

8. How could the Devil have deceived “the whole world” (v. 9) before he was thrown out of heaven seeing that there was no one in the world before Adam?

9. Verse 4 says that the dragon drew a third of the stars of heaven to the earth with his tail. If this is read literally – and Revelation 12 has to be read literally to support the Popular Interpretation – the sheer size of the dragon is immense – a third of the whole universe (or solar system at least) could be contained just on his tail. There is no way the planet earth would be big enough to contain such huge creature sprawling over it. Most of the stars of the solar system are bigger than our earth – how

then could a third of them land on earth? And remember that all this happened, or will happen, after the first century A.D., when this prophecy was given.

10. In view of this and many other things in Revelation 12 (and the whole prophecy) which are just incapable of any literal fulfilment, it is not surprising that we are told first of all (Rev. 1:1) that this is a message that has been “signified” – i.e. put into sign language, or symbol. As if to emphasize this in the context of Revelation 12, Revelation 12:1 describes the subsequent action as “a great sign” (A.V. margin).

11. In reading of what the Devil does when he is on the earth, there is no description of him causing people to sin; indeed, vs. 12–16 show that the Devil was unsuccessful in his attempts to cause trouble on earth once he arrived there. This contradicts the popular interpretation.

12. One of the key questions in understanding whether this passage supports the idea of a literal war in heaven, is whether the “heaven” spoken of here is literal or figurative. We explained earlier that “heaven” can figuratively refer to a place of authority (see “Suggested Explanation” No. 7 of Eph. 6:11–13). Revelation being such a symbolic book, we would expect this to be the case here.

13. In their eagerness to show that Rev. 12:7–9 refers to fallen angels at the beginning of the world, apologists for a personal Satan have rather overlooked the context of the passage. A woman in Heaven, in the agony of childbirth and resting her feet on the moon, is faced by a dragon, whose tail throws down a third of the stars of Heaven to earth (Rev. 12:4). She gives birth, and the child “was caught up unto God, and to his throne” (Rev. 12:5). Clearly enough the “heaven” where all this occurs isn’t the “heaven” where God lives and where His throne is. Next we read of a power struggle “in heaven”, and the dragon and his angels are “cast out” (Rev. 12:9). The dragon throws one third of the stars of Heaven to earth – are these Angels? If so, how come the dragon and not God casts them to earth? That’s quite the opposite of the scenario painted in *Paradise Lost*. How can a literalistic reading of this passage cope with the *two* episodes of Angels being cast down to earth? At the very least, care in thought and exposition is clearly lacking in the orthodox reading of this passage. The woman, who is never recorded as leaving “Heaven”, then flees “into the wilderness” (Rev. 12:6). Once the dragon is cast to the earth, then he starts persecuting the woman by hissing huge volumes of water at her (Rev. 12:13). The earth opens and swallows this water (Rev. 12:16) – even though the woman is never recorded as losing her “in heaven” status. All this is reason enough to not interpret “heaven” and “earth” in this passage in any literal manner. The appearance of the woman and dragon “in heaven” is described as a *semeion*, a “sign”, something that needs to be interpreted, rather than a literal fact (Rev. 12:1,3).

14. When we read that the Devil–dragon “deceives” people, this is defined more specifically in Rev. 19:20 as referring to deceiving people in the very last days by false miracles worked in conjunction with the “false prophet”. Thus the deceit is not to be understood as a general inciting of humanity to sin in their hearts – the deceit is specified as occurring only in the last days, immediately prior to the Kingdom of God being established.

15. The Greek word *ballo* translated “cast out” doesn’t necessarily mean to throw *down* – Greek has words for this specific idea and it’s significant that they’re not used here. Here are a few examples of the usage of *ballo*, showing that it really means to expel or re-place:

- A wind “arose” (Acts 27:14); a crowd “threw” dust *up* into the air (Acts 22:23); a sword is “put *up*” into a sheath (Jn. 18:11) imply the word can mean to throw *up* as well as to throw *down*.
- Men “cast” stones (Jn. 8:7,59), “strike” another man on the face (Mk. 14:65), “put” fingers in the ear (Mk. 7:33), people “lay” upon a bed (Mt. 8:6,14; 9:2; Mk. 7:30) – horizontal movement.

- We “put” bits into the mouths of horses (James 3:3) – no vertical movement there. Thomas “thrust” his hand into the Lord’s side (Jn. 20:27).
- Believers were “cast” into prison (Acts 16:24,37; Rev. 2:10) – the idea of vertical movement isn’t there. Likewise love “casts out” fear (1 Jn. 4:18).
- The dragon casts water out of his mouth (Rev. 12:15,16), horizontally along the ground. Here the word clearly doesn’t mean to throw *down* from a height – and the same word is used in that context for the Devil being “cast out”, i.e. ejected, from Heaven.
- Men “cast” dust on their own heads (Rev. 18:19).

16. The language of ‘war’ is surely metaphor rather than literal description. What begins as a literal battle ends as a legal one, as the metaphor changes to the law court, with accusers, judge and Satan’s case rejected. If the legal language isn’t to be taken literally, why should the ‘war’ language be so literal?

The Chronological Problem

The woman of v. 1 is “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars”. These heavenly bodies, as well as the woman, apparently suspended in heaven, cannot be literal. She could not literally be clothed with the sun, or have stars as big as the earth on her literal head.

Another sign appears in heaven in v. 3 – a red dragon. This is commonly taken as a literal heaven, but why should it be, seeing that the same heaven is referred to in v. 1 and that is clearly figurative? Verse 4 shows the dragon casting a third of the stars of heaven to earth. We have seen that because of the size of the stars and earth, this cannot therefore refer to literal stars or heaven. The Kingdom of God is to be established on earth (Dan. 2:44; Mt. 5:5), which will not be possible if the earth is destroyed (which it would be) by huge stars falling onto it.

The woman in “heaven” then delivered her child, who was “caught up unto God and to his throne” (v. 5). God’s throne is in heaven. If the woman was already in heaven, why would her child have to be “caught up” to heaven? She must have been a symbol of something on earth, although in a figurative “heaven”. She then flees “into the wilderness” (v. 6). If she was in literal heaven, this means there is a wilderness in heaven. It is far more fitting for her to be in a figurative heavenly place, and then flee to a literal or figurative wilderness on the earth.

We then come to v. 7 – “there was war in heaven”. All other references to “heaven” in Revelation 12 having been figurative, it seems only consistent that this was war in a figurative heaven. This must be the case, as there can be no rebellion or sin in literal heaven (Mt. 6:10; Ps. 5:4–5; Hab. 1:13). The common view claims that wicked angels are locked up in hell; but here they are in heaven. They are not therefore literal angels.

I sometimes ask those who believe in the orthodox idea of the Devil the following question: ‘Can you give me a brief Biblical history of the Devil, according to your interpretation of Bible passages? The response is highly contradictory. According to ‘orthodox’ reasoning, the answer has to be something like this:

- a) The Devil was an angel in heaven who was thrown out into the garden of Eden. He was thrown to earth in Gen. 1.
- b) He is supposed to have come to earth and married in Gen 6.
- c) At the time of Job he is said to have had access to both heaven and earth.
- d) By the time of Is. 14 he is thrown out of heaven onto earth.
- e) In Zech. 3 he is in heaven again.

- f) He is on earth in Mt. 4.
- g) He is “cast out” at the time of Jesus’ death, according to the popular view of “the prince of this world” being “cast out” at that time.
- h) There is a prophecy of the Devil being ‘cast out’ in Rev. 12.
- i) The Devil is “chained” in Rev. 20, but he and his angels were chained in Genesis, according to the common view of Jude 6. If he was bound with ‘eternal chains’ then, how is he chained up again in Rev. 20?

From this it should be obvious that the popular view that the Devil was cast out of heaven for sinning cannot be true, seeing that he is described as still being in heaven after each occurrence of being ‘cast out’. It is vital to understand both heaven and the Devil in a figurative sense.

“That old serpent”

“That old serpent” (Rev. 12:9) is often misread to mean that the original serpent in the Garden of Eden is now a dragon in the sky. But care in thought and Biblical exposition is lacking in such a view. The orthodox understanding is that Satan sinned in Heaven, and was thrown down to earth, where he tempted Eve in the form of a serpent. But Rev. 12:9 is a prophecy of the *future*, just prior to the return of Christ to earth, saying that *then* there will be a conflict “in heaven” – which we understand to be figurative language. The orthodox interpretation does violence to the obvious chronology, and is evidently an opportunistic grabbing hold of Biblical phrases with no attention at all to their context, and stringing them together to justify popular Christianity’s adoption of Jewish and pagan myths about the Devil. In passing, note how Gen. 3:15 prophesies that God *will* put hostility between the serpent and the woman. This is not what we would expect to hear if this were indeed speaking of a pre-existent Christ and Satan. According to the orthodox understanding, the enmity between them occurred in Heaven *before* Satan supposedly came down to earth. Notice, too, that according to the Biblical record in Gen. 3:15 it is God who created this hostility, whereas the common view implies it was Satan’s hatred of God which was the original enmity. We read that the dragon / serpent’s “place” was not “found” in Heaven as a result of the final struggle (Rev. 12:8). The same term is to be found in Rev. 20:11, where we read that the ‘Heaven and earth’ had no place found for them in Heaven as a result of Christ’s final sitting in judgment. Clearly, ‘Heaven and earth’ are figurative – used here, as so often in the Bible, to refer to a system of things. Notice how the Devil / dragon / serpent are thus paralleled with the ‘Heaven and earth’. This worldly system of things in the last days, the dragon / serpent power, will be no more after the final judgment seat of Christ. We see all this prefigured in how the rejected Esau came before his father Isaac, typical of the rejection of the wicked at the final judgment, and “found no place”, despite his tears and gnashing of teeth (Heb. 12:17). The rejected *people* at the final judgment will “not be able” to enter God’s Kingdom then (Lk. 13:24) – and the same Greek word is used in Rev. 12:8 to describe how the serpent / Devil system of people will not “prevail”. Clearly the reference of Rev. 12 is to the very last day, when Christ returns to earth in judgment. The serpent ‘not prevailing’ and ‘finding no place’ with God in ‘Heaven’ refers [in the light of the same terms used in other Bible passages] to what happens at the final judgment, at Christ’s second coming, and it is therefore *not* descriptive of some past events in Eden. It’s also noteworthy that the serpent / Devil is ‘cast down’ from Heaven to make “woe” for “the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea” (Rev. 12:12). This hardly sounds like the orthodox Satan of *Paradise Lost* being thrown down to earth to make trouble for just Adam and Eve. The people who inhabit “the sea” rather than the earth surely indicates that we are to understand all this literally. And it is “the serpent” who is thrown down from Heaven to the earth / sea. Orthodox thinking holds that Satan was cast down and became a serpent here on earth rather than being a serpent “in Heaven” as Rev. 12 requires. In any case, the woman in Rev. 12 is persecuted by the serpent rather than being charmed and tempted by him; and she escapes from him by fleeing into “the wilderness”, which makes the serpent mad with her (Rev. 12:13–17). None of this Biblical testimony fits the orthodox interpretation of the passage – it directly contradicts it.

The “old serpent” may be a reference to the characteristics of the serpent whom we meet in Genesis. The serpent–Eve incident played itself out in history, and still does, in that the children of the woman [God’s people] are tempted and now threatened by the powers of sin and sinful organizations. Thus Paul could say that in the same way as the serpent tempted Eve, so Jewish false teachers in the early church were tempting the true bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). So it was again in the persecution of true Christians by the Roman empire, which Rev. 12 initially refers to; so it was throughout history; and so it will be in the time of the final tribulation before the second coming of Christ. My specific suggestions as to the fulfilment of Rev. 12 in the latter day tribulation can be found in *The Last Days* Chapter 12–7.

The Greek *archaios*, translated “old” in Rev. 12:9 and Rev. 20:2, can easily be misread as meaning simply ‘the archaic / very old’ serpent. But *archaios* is a form of the Greek root *arche* – the dragon power of Rev. 12 is the arch–serpent, the archetypical serpent. It doesn’t necessarily mean that the serpent is very old. For the serpent who tempted Eve suffered from the curse which came upon all other “beasts of the field” (Gen. 3:1), and died. We see serpents today eating dust and crawling on their bellies, living and dying like any other creature. The *arche* serpent doesn’t therefore mean ‘the extremely old serpent, the animal who tempted Eve, is still actually alive’. We meet the word *arche* elsewhere in the context of meaning ‘archetype’ rather than ‘having been in existence from the beginning of Biblical history’: “The *principles* (Gk. *arche*) of Christ” (Heb. 6:1); “the first (Gk. *arche*) principles of the oracles of God” (Heb. 5:12); and quite commonly *arche* is simply translated as “magistrates”, “rulers”, “principalities” – the ordering, *arch*–principles and foundations of society (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; Tit. 3:1). In line with this understanding, I think we could fairly paraphrase Rev. 12:9 as: “The great dragon, the classic, typical serpent, the thinking and behaviour of Eden’s snake played out all over again in classic role, the Gentile / Roman Devil and the Jewish Satan, an evil system adversarial to God’s true people”.

Austin Farrar coined the term “a rebirth of images” ⁽¹⁾ to describe what’s going on in Revelation. Old Testament images are taken up and given a new focus; and this is what’s happened with the image of the serpent. It’s not a reference to *the same* serpent as was in Eden – but a rebirth of that image. G.B. Caird has commented on the very common error of interpretation made with Rev. 12: “Later Christian tradition, by the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, treated this as a precosmic event... quite failing to recognize that John’s imagery had an earthly referent” ⁽²⁾. What Caird is saying, in dense theological language, is that Christian folk have over literally interpreted the reference to the serpent, assuming that Rev. 12 is talking about something happening before creation, when in fact it is referring to things happening on earth in John’s own generation.

The Deception of the Devil (Rev. 12:9)

The dragon power is associated with “the false prophet” and the doing of fake miracles (Rev. 13:14; 19:20) – this is the basis upon which the dragon / Satan / adversary of God’s people “deceives” the world (Rev. 12:9). There are multiple connections between the Lord’s Olivet prophecy and the prophecy of the book of Revelation. Almost every commentary on Revelation brings these out, and I have listed many of them in *The Last Days* Chapter 12. The Lord Jesus repeatedly warned His followers not to be “deceived” – using the same Greek word as in Rev. 12:9 about the dragon / Devil ‘deceiving’ unbelievers. But He warns time and again that the source of this deception will be from “*men*... false prophets... false Christs... false prophets” doing false miracles (Mt. 24:4,5,11,24). Jesus says nothing about some fallen–Angel ‘Satan’ being behind these men. He simply warns His followers to beware of *human* deceivers – and Rev. 12 fills out the picture by specifically painting these *men* as part of a massive *human* system called Satan, the adversary, who would have all the

characteristics of the serpent in Eden, just as the adversaries of God's people always have had. This system of opposition, in the first century context, was both Jewish and Roman – hence the dragon is called both “the Devil and Satan” in Rev. 12:9 – *diabolos* being the Greek term for the Hebrew *Satan*. They are practically interchangeable – but both terms occur here, I suggest, in order to show that the opposition to Christianity was coming from both Jewish and Gentile sources. Time and again the New Testament writers warn the Christians of both Jews and Gentiles, *men* [not demons, spirits, fallen Angels, Satan etc. – but *men*] who “seek to deceive you” (1 Jn. 2:26; 3:7; James 1:16). “Be not deceived” is a watchword of Paul (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7). It is the *world* which is deceived by wicked men (1 Tim. 3:13; Tit. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:25) – just as Rev. 12:9 says that the dragon / Satan system will deceive “the whole world”. That system was thus composed of wicked *men*. In all these passages, the very same Greek word occurs which is translated “deceive” in Rev. 12:9. Again we have to ask – why did Jesus, Paul, Peter, James and John not spell out to their converts that it was really *Satan* who was tempting them and likely to deceive them? Why do they repeatedly stress that it is *men* and the human heart (Heb. 3:10; 1 Jn. 1:8) who are the deceivers? Why do we have to wait until the very last book of the Bible to be told that actually, it's Satan who's doing this? How can belief in a personal Satan be so crucial to many churches, when the earliest Christian converts [made before Revelation was given] had been taught nothing about any Angel falling from Heaven and being responsible for temptation? Was there one Gospel for them, but another for the 21st century church?

The Serpent in God's Presence (Rev. 12:10)

The ‘accusation’ of God's people “before God” by the serpent / Devil doesn't mean he has to be literally in Heaven (Rev. 12:10). The same term is found in Jn. 5:45 where the Lord Jesus states that the long-dead Moses ‘accuses’ the Jews to God. Our own thoughts accuse us to God (Rom. 2:15). What all this surely means is that things done on earth, good and bad, even thoughts and feelings, are somehow represented before the throne of God, perhaps by representative Angels there, and God [to continue the figure] ‘judges’ those reported accusations. But this doesn't require our literal presence in Heaven to do this. The first century mind, especially those from a Jewish background, would likely have picked all this up with no problem; it is the European insistence on literalism in semantics which has led to so many of the problems in interpretation which these verses have given rise to. We have to somehow shed our slowness and hesitancy to accept that figures [e.g. of a judgment court replete with literal books, throne, accusers, witnesses] are just that – figures.

Suggested Explanations

1. To try and expound this chapter fully is out of the scope of our present notes. A full explanation of these verses requires an understanding of the entire book of Revelation in order to get them in context.
2. The conflict in figurative heaven – i.e. a place of authority – was therefore between two power groups, each with their followers, or angels. Remember that we have often identified the Devil and Satan with the Roman or Jewish systems.
3. That the Devil–dragon represents some kind of political power is indicated by it having “crowns upon his heads” (v. 3). Revelation 17:9,10 also comments on this dragon: “Here is the mind that hath wisdom” – i.e. don't try and understand this animal as a literal being – “The seven heads are seven mountains... these are seven kings”. One of the kings continuing “a short space” perhaps connects with the Devil–dragon having “but a short time” in Revelation 12:12.

Revelation 12: Deconstructing Pagan Myths

Various scholars have shown that this passage is full of allusion to contemporary pagan myths ⁽³⁾. This is in keeping with what we have seen elsewhere in the Scriptures – pagan myths are alluded to in order to deconstruct them. Surely the point of all the allusions here in Revelation 12 is to say:

‘Take your attention away from all these myths of what supposedly is going on out in the cosmos. Get real. Here on earth, you are going to be persecuted by Rome [or some other adversary]. Prepare for it in your hearts. The real enemy isn’t a dragon in the sky. It’s Rome’. Other scholars have demonstrated that Revelation 12 and 13 contain many allusions to contemporary Jewish writings – e.g. Rev. 12:9; 13:14 speak of the beast / Satan “leading astray those that dwell on the earth”, quoting from the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Enoch* 54.6 about the armies of Azazel / Satan who “lead astray those that dwell on the earth”. The point is that pagan Rome and the Jewish ‘Satan’ were those who were leading astray, and who would be punished in the cataclysm of AD70; and in a last days context, it is the latter day Satan / beast who will lead astray many and be destroyed by the second coming of Christ.

For 15 years Dr. David Pitt-Francis applied an exceptional mind to trying to get to grips with the book of Revelation ⁽⁴⁾. His conclusion, written up in chapter 9 of his book, was that not only does Revelation 12 not teach the existence of a personal Satan, but it actually is a parody of the whole belief in a sinful Satan figure existing in Heaven. He follows the approach that Revelation 12 alludes heavily to pagan myths of a Satan figure existing in Heaven, and that the whole idea of the chapter is to show that, given the victory of the Lord Jesus over all evil, those pagan ideas are just no longer tenable in any form. The idea of a Satan figure in Heaven has been ‘cast down’ for the serious believer in Christ: “Satan was imagined to have dominated at least a third of heaven in pre-Christian times. Babylonian, Zend and Teutonic thought assumed ‘Satan’ or his equivalent to be in possession of about a third of heaven. Jewish apostate thought (as in Enoch) also imagined a third of heaven to be in the possession of rebellious angels. The vision of a dragon occupying a third of heaven, and specifically defined as the ‘Devil and Satan’ is provided at this stage, not to indicate some literal fact, but to summarise the preconceptions about the Devil which had existed in pagan thought before the coming of Christ, and that had even crept into Judaism... It was primarily the task of Christianity to show the world that evil could have no place in heaven, that it did not occupy a place in heaven except in the imagination of mankind, and that it could be vanquished by the grace of Christ, and the Word of His testimony... The casting forth of Satan from heaven is a powerful symbol of what would happen to the human concept of evil as a result of the teaching of Christ. The woman and the dragon cannot coexist in heaven... Could there have been such a literal ‘Devil’ or even a ‘literal’ dragon, who perverted a third of the angels in heaven and cast them to the ground, as Jewish apocalyptic writers had actually believed? If we adopt this literalistic stance, we not only fall into the error of those books against which the Revelation was written but miss the main message of the chapter, that since the advent of Christianity to disprove the concept of imagined evil in heaven, no ‘Devil’ has ever had any place there”. He goes on to suggest that ‘Satan’ in post-Christian religions [e.g. Islam] has always been envisaged as a being living under the earth, in a supposed “hell”, rather than in Heaven. Whether or not we feel happy with this kind of ‘spiritualized’ interpretation of Revelation, the allusions of Revelation 12 to material in the book of Enoch about Heavenly rebellions, Enoch being caught up to God etc., cannot be gainsaid. And I suggest that such allusions are indeed, as David Pitt-Francis suggests, in order to deconstruct these wrong ideas.

Revelation 12: Judgment on Rome

It may be helpful to take this line of thought further. Revelation is a description of events on earth from the perspective of what happens in Heaven – encouraging the early Christians that God and His Son and His Angels are in fact intensely aware of the crises going on, and actually the whole scenario is playing itself out in the court of Heaven. All powers and individuals and organizations on earth have in Heaven their Angelic representatives, and the situations are tried by God before His throne – with the result that it is those on the side of Christ who are vindicated. The language with which John’s Apocalypse achieves this is shot through with allusion to earthly realities, often deconstructing the claims of pagans. Rome was the great reality of the first century world; it was

appropriate for the Jewish mind of the time to understand the “serpent” / adversary figure as referring to Rome. According to the Jewish Encyclopaedia, “the Serpent is spoken of as *Harasha*’, “the Wicked One,” in Gen. R. xx., Bek. 8a (compare Targ. Yer. Gen. iii. 13); and Rome as the wicked kingdom, *Malkut ha-resha’ah* (Gen. R. lxxvi.)”⁽⁵⁾.

Roman coins depicted the goddess Roma, THEAN ROMEN, as queen of the gods and mother of the world’s saviour. John speaks of she who claims to be the queen of the earth (Rev. 18:7) – and portrays her instead as nothing but a prostitute, who is soon to be destroyed. The fact Revelation alludes to the goddess Roma in this way doesn’t mean that ‘she’ actually existed in Heaven in reality. And the way John in Rev. 12 likewise alludes to myths about dragons and beasts doesn’t mean they exist either. The material in Rev. 12 has some twists in it which debunk the legends – thus it is not emperor of Rome who slays the dragon, it is the victory of Christ on the cross, through His blood, which is the real means of victory against all opposition on earth. The telling paradox is that the escape for the persecuted child is through *death*, through blood, rather than through some dashing heroic victory in battle. When Jeremiah compared Babylon to a dragon gulping down Jerusalem whole, we don’t for a moment think that Babylon was a literal dragon (Jer. 51:34); likewise when Ezekiel calls Pharaoh a dragon lying in a stream (Ez. 29:3). The message was that the real dragon / chaos monster was earthly powers – and God would break them. And so it is with Revelation’s message, although more attention is given to the idea of those earthly powers having Angelic representatives in the court of Heaven.

The language of judgment is really common throughout the Bible. In fact we could say that legal language is disproportionately common in the Bible. The idea of a Divine, heavenly court is common. God is the judge who upholds the weak, those who are condemned by human judgment (1 Sam. 24:15; Ps. 9:4; 43:1; 140:12; Lam. 3:58; Mic. 7:9); He is even portrayed as the one appealing for justice (Ps. 74:22). If God is the only and ultimate judge, then *His* judgment is all that ultimately matters, and in this sense human ‘sentences’ or judgment from the court of human opinion are reversed by Him (Prov. 22:22,23). Yet the pain of being judged by those around us is highly significant to us mortals; and time and again, Scripture is reminding us that we should not pay deep attention to this, because God’s judgment is what ultimately matters; and the Divine court is sitting in session right now, at the very same time as those around us are judging us with their meaningless human judgments. This, then, is the ultimate answer to the pain of being slandered and defamed, being misunderstood and misrepresented, or feeling that persecution by worldly powers is not noticed by God.

The traditional reading of Revelation 12 makes out that there was a rebellion in Heaven, the Devil came down to earth, and then trouble started down here. But the whole idea of Revelation’s visions of ‘heaven’ is that we are being given snapshots of the ‘throne room’ of Heaven, the Divine court... which is a reflection of what is actually going on here on earth, and what will subsequently follow from this in the future. I wish to stress this point, because I think it’s fundamental to understanding Revelation. Those visions aren’t historical descriptions of what happened before creation, before human history. They are insights into how God right then in the first century viewed what was going on there in the Middle East on planet earth, showing us how He judged the situations and Governments and individuals involved, and what would follow from this. Thus when we read that no place was found for the opposing forces in Heaven (Rev. 12:8), we are to imagine the representative of those forces, the barrister as it were, being thrown out of court. They would simply disappear from the Heavenly court room, thrown out of court as it were, perhaps reflected by the Angel representing them leaving the court. What makes interpreting Revelation so confusing is that there are so many layers of allusion going on in the text at one and the same time. Thus Rev. 12 alludes to the surrounding myths, and yet also on multiple further layers to Old Testament themes. The vision of Rev. 12 clearly has in mind Pharaoh pursuing the escaping Israelites as a dragon

pursues (Ex. 14:8), Israel like the early church carried on eagles' wings to some safety (Ex. 19:4), Pharaoh trying to destroy Israel by drowning them in the water of the Nile, God providing for His people in the desert. Again, these allusions are to a real historical situation that happened here on earth – and not to some Biblically unrecorded drama somewhere out in the cosmos.

Notes

- (1) Austin Farrar, *A Rebirth of Images* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).
- (2) G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1988) p. 55.
- (3) Neil Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) chapter 13. For example, the Greeks believed that the dragon Python attempts to kill the new born son of Zeus but is stopped the escape of the child's mother, Leto, to the island of Delos; Apollo then comes and slays the dragon. For the Egyptians, Set the red dragon hunts Isis but is then killed by her son Horus. In other myths, the dragon of darkness tries to kill the sun god but is killed by him. There are other examples of the sun god myth being alluded to in Revelation. Take the description of Jesus as having eyes as a flaming fire and feet of pure bronze (Rev. 2:18). This is said to the Thyatira ecclesia – and the god of Thyatira was Apollo, the sun god, known locally as Tyrimnos, who appeared in this very form on the city's coins. The point of the allusion was that actually, there is no sun god – for the Christians in Thyatira, that means Jesus.
- (4) David Pitt-Francis, *The Most Amazing Message Ever Written* (Irchester, UK: Mark Saunders Books, 1983).
- (5) Jewish Encyclopaedia, article on Ahriman [available online at www.jewishencyclopedia.com].

12:9 *cast out*- s.w. Rev. 12:4 for how the dragon had cast out or down a third of the stars. As the beast did to God's children, so it was done to them. However, the implication is that the Roman dragon would lose power after a three and a half year tribulation for the woman, and a period of extended conflict with Michael after the ascension of the woman's Son into Heaven. But the Roman dragon didn't lose power in the first century; if anything, they appeared victorious by destroying the temple and Jewish system in AD70. Things didn't go according to plan nor potential- because God's people didn't do their thing as they should have done, and Israel didn't repent of crucifying the King of the Kingdom which could have been even then.

12:10 *Loud voice*- the same Greek words are to be found in Mt. 24:31, where the Olivet prophecy predicts that there will be "a great sound" [s.w. "loud voice"] and the Angels will be sent to gather God's people to the final judgment. The Olivet prophecy could all have come true in AD70- but it didn't. Those parts of it which refer to the return of Christ and establishment of the Kingdom have been deferred for fulfillment in our "last days". As an expansion upon the Olivet Prophecy, Revelation had the same possible fulfillment in AD70, but much of the potential wasn't realized and so the prophecies have been deferred in fulfillment. Thus the "loud voice" proclaiming the establishment of God's Kingdom upon the fall of Rome could've been in AD70; but for various reasons, Israel natural and spiritual failed to work in with God's timetable, and so this loud voice will be heard only at the yet future return of Christ.

Salvation... strength- the same words in the great shout of Rev. 19:1, which is clearly talking about the return of Christ and establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

There are copious links between Rev.12 and Mt.24. This chapter therefore has reference to the last days as well as AD70, bearing in mind the reference of the Olivet prophecy to these two periods. The Olivet prophecy speaks of AD70 without doubt, and yet also of the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. It seems that the Kingdom could have come in AD70- but Israel didn't repent, the believers didn't preach as they should have, they didn't radically separate from the world system of the Roman empire in which they lived. And so the elements of that prophecy which refer to the return of Christ and establishment of the Kingdom were deferred in their fulfillment- until our 'last days'. Seeing that Revelation is an extension of the Olivet prophecy, we can expect a similar thing

here too- it's describing what could have happened in AD70, and which will therefore be deferred, in essence, to our last days.

What proves this beyond doubt is that as soon as the dragon is cast out we are told "*Now is come salvation... the Kingdom of our God... for the accuser of our brethren is cast down*" (12:10). Neither salvation nor the Kingdom of God can fully come without the second coming. If Scripture interprets Scripture, then the dragon being cast out must refer to the events of the second coming. There is rejoicing because the believers were no longer being accused (Greek 'seized upon' or accused in a law court), implying that this will be going on until the dragon/beast is cast out by Michael, the Angel who acts for God's people in the last days (Dan.12:1). The dragon accusing them before God sounds like Job's satan- as if the supreme intensity of suffering brought upon a materialistic, self-justifying Job to make him fit for God's full fellowship points forward to our tribulation to come. As Job was brought to say that he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear (theoretically), but now, through his sufferings, "mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5), so the latter day tribulation will develop us.

Accuser- a legal term. Those who accused the Christians in court were the Romans and at times the Jewish opposition to Christianity. What happened on earth was reflected in the court of Heaven by the Angelic representatives of the individuals and powers upon earth. In this sense, those accused on earth were accused in Heaven.

The dragon was an obvious symbol of Roman military might, a visual symbol often used by them. The Kingdom of God could have come in the first century, just as Jesus and the apostles intimated. But it has evidently been deferred. The Kingdom of God was to be established on earth once the Roman empire had been dramatically dislodged from power. This verse predicts a clear changeover of power from the dragon to Christ. But this didn't happen. Rome didn't perish in the first century, and it broke up slowly rather than by some dramatic being thrown out of 'heaven'. Therefore it seems clear that it was God's intention that a certain chronology of events occurred which would result in the power of Rome being smashed and Christ's Kingdom being established on earth upon its ruins. But that chronology didn't happen. The dragon power will exist in some form other than the historical Roman empire, and will be destroyed by the final conflict and tribulation between Christ and His opposers. And then at long last, verse 10 shall become ultimate reality.

12:11 Rev. 12:11 may imply that our testimony to others is proportionate to our victory against the devil. Preaching is therefore an expression of basic righteousness. We learn, I suggest, the fact that many things we do which seem to advance God's purpose, e.g. preaching and prayer, are primarily for our benefit, rather than being absolutely essential for the fulfilment of God's will. Consider, in a preaching context, how the faithful overcome by the blood of the lamb- by what is done for them- and also by the word of their preaching, as if the act of preaching and witnessing against a hostile persecuting system was what helped maintain their faith (Rev. 12:11). Preaching is a spiritual exercise for the benefit of the preacher. Through their work of witnessing, the persecuted believers overcome their tribulation (Rev. 12:11).

They overcame him- the battle is envisaged as being in 'heaven' between two groups of 'angels'. But on earth, in reality, it was a conflict between the world powers and the Christians, who were "accused" (:10) by the dragon system.

Word of their testimony- legal language. They had been falsely accused by the powers of their world (:10), and their testimony would've not been accepted. And yet from God's perspective, their testimony was what won the victory for them and destroyed their accusers, for all their temporal pomp and power.

Loved not- Alford: "they carried their *not-love* of their life even unto death."

The dragon/ beast made war with the seed of the woman "which keep the commandments (word) of God, and have the testimony (i.e. preaching) of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17); it was because of "the word of their testimony (i.e. preaching) (that) they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11), and

then Rev. 12 goes on to describe how this final witness amidst tribulation is resolved by the coming of Jesus and the establishment of the Kingdom. See on Mt. 24:14.

The persecuted believers overcome the persecution by "the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11). Only by preaching and being fully prepared to give our lives for doing so during this period will we truly overcome and survive. In passing, the emphasis on the preaching that will take place by the persecuted saints at this time means that those being persecuted cannot just refer to natural Israel. Because the true believers have the attitude of loving not their lives unto death, their guardian Angels are told "Therefore rejoice, ye Heavens, and ye (Angels) that dwell in them". But by the same token, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil (dragon- v.7) is come down... when the dragon (devil) saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman" (12:12,13). This equates the believers with those dwelling on the earth ('land'- of Israel?) and sea (of nations world-wide). Perhaps these two groups in earth and sea have a link with the two witnesses of Rev.11, i.e. persecuted Jews and Gentiles respectively. Other similarities are:

Rev. 11

"They finished their testimony" (cp. 6:9)

Then "the beast that *ascendeth* out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them... and kill them"

The final furious persecution at the end of the tribulation (v.7)

Rev. 12

"The word of their testimony"

"The dragon *went* to make war with the remnant of her seed"

"They loved not their lives unto the death"

"The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time".

12:12 "Therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Dan. 11:44) is a commentary on Sennacherib's rage (2 Kings 19:27,28). Rabshakeh boasted immediately after the receipt of the "rumour" that Assyria would 'utterly destroy' Israel still (2 Kings 19:11). This is matched by "to *destroy*, and *utterly* to make away" in Dan. 11:44. The fury of Assyria against Jerusalem because of their recognition that they only had limited time to destroy it before having to turn their attention against the Arab rebels is the basis of the Arab beast of the last days going forth against God's people with "great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12,17). In the same way as "the king of Babylon heard the report" of the Medes' invasion and was troubled (Jer. 50:43), so the latter-day "king of the north", while personally present conducting the campaign against Jerusalem, will be troubled by "tidings" of this massive Muslim mutiny against him, and will therefore go ahead in a furious rage to try to exterminate every Jew left in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:44,45). Jer. 51:31,32 stresses how the report of the attack on Babylon will spread like wildfire. This relates to the beast launching a final burst of persecution against God's people, "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12). "The earth helped the woman" (Rev. 12:16) might refer to the Arabs indirectly 'helping' Israel by turning against Babylon. See on Rev. 17:16.

Heavens and you who dwell in them- what is the difference between the 'heavens' and those who dwell in them? Is there some reference here to the Angels and the human believers whom they represent? "In them" could as well be rendered "under them".

There may be a contrast being pointed between those who *dwell* (lit. 'tabernacle', live in a tent) under the Heavens, and the beast's supporters who 'inhabit' the earth (the Greek suggests more permanent dwelling in a house). The believers tabernacle, temporarily sojourn, on earth but beneath

the rulership of “the Heavens”, whereas the beast’s supporters perceive this life as the end reality and exist permanently, in their own minds and perception, on earth.

earth and sea- the idea could be of total population, absolutely everyone on the face of the ‘earth’.

Come down- the same word translated “descend” in 1 Thess. 4:16 about the Lord Jesus descending with a great voice. See note on Rev. 12:5 for other allusions there. The coming down of the dragon from Heaven to earth is a parody of Christ’s second coming- he is the anti-Christ, the fake, imitation Jesus.

Great wrath- these two Greek words occur several times in Revelation to describe the great wrath of God in the final conflict with the dragon (Rev. 14:19; 15:1,19; 16:1,19). The situation speaks of the great wrath of the dragon facing off against the great wrath of God. This was intended to happen in some great showdown between Christ and Rome; but this never happened, and the whole thing has been deferred so as to be reapplied to some latter day version of the “dragon”. Whatever, the final conflict between Christ and all that is opposed to Him will be fierce indeed. For there’s nothing quite like religious anger, fear of losing ones status and world system... to bring out desperate wrath in its extremest form.

Because he knows- any political system which knows the end is near has a lot of anger and lashes out, damaging their former supporters and power base. The situation envisioned here is typical; and yet the Roman empire didn’t come to a dramatic end in conflict with the Christians, nor did the empire destroy itself [the dragon turning upon the earth’s inhabitants] because of a dramatic conflict with Christians which ended in dramatic victory for the Christians and defeat for Rome. Rather the Christians were corrupted by Rome and the two systems which should’ve been as separate from each other as Heaven and earth instead merged into one and faded away together.

12:13-17 The section from 12:13- 12:17 explains how the woman came to be in the wilderness in 12:5. As often happens in Revelation, a position is described and then there’s a flashback to describe how that position was reached. So 12:13-17 could be inserted between 12:5 and 12:6.

When the dragon saw- When the system and its leadership perceives that the writing’s on the wall, the end is near... see on 12:12 under *Because he knows*.

There are references to Israel in Egypt; the woman flees away from the dragon (cp. Egypt) into a wilderness, but is pursued by the dragon (12:13), who tries to use water as a means of destroying her (12:15; cp. the Red Sea), but miraculously this is rendered powerless. The woman is carried on eagle’s wings, as Israel were out of Egypt (Ex. 19:4). The woman is "nourished" during the three and a half years, as Israel were fed with manna in the wilderness. Jesus reasons in John 6 that the manna represents the word of God. It may follow that the nourishing of the seed of the woman in the wilderness of her latter day tribulation will be through some special spiritual feeding programme designed by God. It may well be through an increased level of understanding of the Apocalypse and other prophecies of the tribulations which we will then be experiencing.

12:13-17 Pharaoh and his people being plagued is based on the pattern of Gen. 12:17, where this very thing occurred due to his holding Sarah in captivity. The Egyptian beast being so furiously determined to destroy Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:5; 15:9) is the basis for the dragon being "wroth with the woman, and went to make war (as Pharaoh 'went') with the remnant of her seed", chasing her into the wilderness and trying to destroy her with water (cp. the Red Sea); but "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood" (Rev. 12:13-17), as at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12). This passage in Revelation has reference to the latter day persecution.

12:14 The description of a conflict between a serpent and a woman and her seed in 12:14-16 must refer back to Gen.3:15- from which we can conclude that there will be a short term victory for the devil/ dragon over the seed of the woman in the last days. Rev.12 indicates that the dragon is unsuccessful in totally destroying the woman, and therefore turns in a brief period of fury "to make

war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus" (12:17). Here we have the same idea as in 11:7; three and a half years of witnessing amidst persecution, followed by a brief, intense period of horror, as Christ's three and a half year ministry was terminated by three and a half days of especial suffering. Notice that the dragon goes into the wilderness to persecute the woman's seed; 17:3,8 describes a beast from the wilderness, full of the blood of the saints. Thus the beast of Rev.17 is also to be read in a latter day context.

The clear allusion to Elijah being preserved in a wilderness place by the Divine provision of ravens suggests that the persecuting power in some sense could be Jewish- because Elijah was persecuted at that time by Ahab king of Israel. The allusion also suggests that the faithful of the last days during their final tribulation period will be associated with an Elijah ministry. The 1260 days period connects with the three and a half years that Elijah was persecuted, and looks forward to a literal three and a half year tribulation period during which the persecuted faithful make a similar witness to Israel, aimed at bringing them to repentance.

The wings may connect with persecuted Israel in Egypt being delivered by Divine wings bringing them likewise into a wilderness place (Ex. 19:4; Dt. 32:11). But why the specific emphasis upon *two* wings- "*the two wings*" (Gk.)?

Great eagle- both the dragon and great eagle were obvious symbols of Rome. Is the suggestion that the Roman persecution of the faithful was going to be mitigated by some aspect of the Roman system itself assisting the faithful believers? This would be another way of saying that "the earth helped the woman", when "the earth" is used in this vision as the antithesis of the 'heavens' where the faithful are; "the earth" seems here to refer to the power base of the dragon, i.e. the Roman empire. It's possible that the dragon, "the face of the serpent", has specific reference to Caesar and the Caesar cult. This would've made Revelation an even more offensive and dangerous document (and message) in its first century context; nothing less radical than the call to separation from and resistance to the latter day dragon system.

Nourished- s.w. "feed" in v.6. Verse 14 is elaborating upon the situation portrayed in v. 6. The unfaithful of the very last days will nourish themselves in wealth and the good life (James 5:5 s.w.), whereas the faithful remnant will be spiritually nourished during that same period.

:15 *serpent*- the dragon is termed a "serpent" because of the links with Gen. 3:15- there are references to "the woman" and her "seed" (:17). The dragon was a perfectly normal symbol of Rome; but reclassifying this dragon as actually a serpent was a direct affront to the Roman system. John may well have flinched as he recorded some of these details, realizing how radical was this call to separation from the world system around him.

Flood- 2 Peter 3 and the Olivet prophecy liken the judgments upon the world of the last days to the flood; and the dragon / serpent system mimic these in their role as the anti-Christ, a fake Christ imitating Him. Being "carried away of the flood" is similar language used by the Lord in Lk. 6:48 in describing the final judgment by Christ upon the unfaithful.

Opened her mouth- the reference is clearly to the passages which speak of the earth opening her mouth and swallowing up the unbelievers in the wilderness (Num. 16:30,32; 26:10; Dt. 11:6). In this case the "flood" sent against the faithful would refer to persons sent out against them.

His mouth- referring to words and edicts issued against the believers?

:17 *remnant*- as if some of the woman's children are killed at this time but some survive?

Seed- Verse 17 is expanding upon v.5, where a singular man child is described in language relevant to the Lord Jesus. But this child is a group of people, her "seed"- it refers to the body of Christ, which can be described as Him personally.

Have the testimony- the body of Christ is defined not merely as those who intellectually hold the

doctrine of Christ, but who openly testify to it in their lives and witness. Witness to our faith isn't therefore an option, it's part of our self-definition as the body of Christ.

War- the "war in heaven" was a reflection of the war on earth between the dragon and the believers. Or it could be argued that conflict with God leads to conflict with His people; if we hate God's children, we hate God.

13:1

The beast and the "little horn" of Daniel 7

The little horn represents the beast; the persecution of the saints by the horn is therefore also by the beast:

The Little Horn	The Beast
"Diverse" (Dan.7:24) from others	"Diverse" (Dan.7:23) from others
"A mouth speaking great things" (Rev.3:5)	"A mouth speaking great things" (Dan.7:8)
"He shall speak great words against the Most High" (Dan.7:25)	"He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God" (Rev.13:6)
"The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (Dan.7:21).	"Make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev.13:7)

Thus Dan. 7:11 speaks as if the beast and the little horn are interchangeable: "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain". Rev.13:5 says that the beast makes war with the saints (AVmg.) for 3.5 years- as does the little horn in Dan. 7. The beast was "like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion" (Rev. 13:2). Again we see the elements of the various beasts of Dan. 7 and therefore the metals of the image of Dan. 2 all incorporated in this beast. It has "seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 13:1)- which is the total number of heads and horns of the four beasts of Dan. 7. In harmony with this, Hos. 13:7 describes Israel's latter day invader as a lion, bear, leopard and wild beast. All elements of the beasts are brought together in the final latter day invasion.

13:1 The beast of 17:4 was "full of blasphemous names". Not only the heads of the Beast (13:1), but its whole body is covered with them, indicating that the entire empire sanctioned the emperors' arrogation of divine titles; such titles could be found throughout the Roman world, inscribed on public buildings and monuments.

The name of Caesar is presented here as the name of blasphemy- i.e. the claim that he was God.

13:2 The names of the Roman emperors were to be greatly revered. The cult of emperor worship grew very strongly in the 1st century. Yet Rev. 13:2 describes the names of the leaders of the beast, which on one level represented the Roman empire in the 1st century, as "*blasphemous names*". To assign divine titles to the emperor was, to the Jewish and Christian mind, a blasphemy (Dt. 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4). This would have made the Apocalypse an outlawed document in the first century. Consider too the clear references to the evil of the emperor worship cult later in Rev. 13: *one of its heads...* is set up as the very opposite of the true Christ.

This could be describing how practically the dragon persecutes the believers for 1260 days as described in chapter 12; he does it by giving power to a sea beast who will do the actual work for him. I see this as a possible scenario which Rome could have done at some time in the first century; but the reality worked out differently and has been delayed until the "last days".

13:3 *wound-* s.w. “plague” in 11:6, where we read that during the 1260 days tribulation, God’s people will have the power to smite their enemies with “plague” or “wounds”. The battle in that period goes to and fro- some of the saints are “overcome” by the dragon and his beasts, the saints smite one of the beast’s heads with a deadly wound from which he appears to miraculously recover... Revelation 15 and 16 contain several references to the plagues or ‘wounds’ [s.w.] to be given to the dragon-beast system by the Angels of God.

healed- the Greek word is also translated ‘worship’. The wounded head was worshipped by the world. Rev. 17:8 puts it another way- and I see the various beast visions of Revelation as describing the same realities from different perspectives in different possible contexts: the earth dwellers “wonder” (s.w. 13:3) at the beast that was and is not and yet it, on account of its head which received a deadly wound and yet somehow was still alive to be wondered at.

13:4 Rev. 13 stresses the immense power of the final beast: "All the world wondered after the beast... they worshipped the beast, saying... who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:3,4). This kind of power has never really been exercised by any previous manifestation of the beast. "Power was given him over all kindreds, tongues and nations". To resist his captivity and killing with the sword is "the patience and faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:7,10). The beast leading saints into captivity and death sounds like ghettos and concentration camps- our persecution may well be through our having to suffer along with natural Israel. Those who openly proclaim themselves to be spiritual Israel will be treated the same as the Jews. For this reason, the distinctively Jewish aspect of our hope should be appreciated by us now in this our time of spiritual preparation. The mad intensity of the beast's persecution of the saints in the last days has not yet been seen by us.

“Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (Rev. 13:4) will be the world's reaction to the Arab beast of the last days. Seeing that the West has nuclear weapons, this could imply that the Arab beast either deprives them of their weapons (a Moslem dominated and more politically powerful UN or EU could achieve this), or that a new paradigm of weapons, worse than nuclear, are possessed by the beast and used to hold the rest of the world to ransom.

who is able to make war- yet unknown to them, there was a heavenly war going on between the dragon and Christ, as outlined in chapter 12. Whilst human opposition may seem invincible here on earth, all our conflicts with it are being played out in Heaven, between our Angels and the Angels representing our opposition. And the outcome is obvious- Christ’s side has to win ultimately. But on earth, for those without a Heavenly perspective, it appears the very opposite- that we have no chance. In this lies the power and practical advantage of understanding the oft referred to Biblical idea of a court of Heaven, a Heavenly throne room, where situations on this earth are played out before God, with [righteous] representative Angels playing the roles of our opposition. If we believe that and see it with the eye of faith, then any opposition to the cause of Christ appears ultimately laughable and certain of final defeat.

The beast is a true antiGod and antiChrist, a fake God and Jesus. For here he is parodying God’s frequent challenge that none can be compared to Him (Is. 40:18,25; 46:5; Ps. 113:5; Mic. 7:18; Jer. 49:19).

13:5 Daniel’s refusal to obey the command to worship Babylon's King is alluded to in Rev. 13:5; 14:9, which prophesy how the saints of the last days will be tested just as Daniel was, with a like miraculous deliverance. Thus Daniel seems to especially symbolize the latter day believers.

The beast wars with the saints for 42 months- Nero's persecution (Nov. 64 - June 68).

power was given- presumably by the dragon to the beast, his “publicity agent” as Peter Watkins put it so well. However, the idea of ‘power given’ [same Greek words] occurs about 24 times in the NT previously- and every time it speaks of God or Jesus giving power to men. Not least does the Lord Jesus comment that power had been given by God to those who were slaying Him (Jn. 19:11)- there is no power but of God. The similarity of phrasing is to remind us that although the dragon appeared

to have power to give away, this was all ultimately under God's hand. For literally all power in Heaven and earth has been given to the Lord Jesus (Mt. 28:18; Jn. 17:2). The dragon could never have given any power to the beast without the permission of the Lord Jesus. Likewise those who appear to have power over us are only ultimately allowed that power by the Lord who sees the bigger picture and permits it for our ultimate salvation and long term spiritual victory.

13:6 The 42 months of the Arab beast's prolonged persecution of Israel is also aimed specifically at God's "tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13:5,6), i.e. the temple (1 Kings 8:30 cp. 2 Sam. 15:25; Heb. 7:26; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2; 11:4). The figurative 'temple' is therefore the faithful of the last days (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21).

opened his mouth- the emphasis upon his mouth suggests that there will be huge rhetoric against the true God and His children. This is the equivalent of the serpent sending forth a flood out of his mouth in Rev. 12:15. But there we read that the earth likewise 'opened her mouth' and swallowed that flood. As the beast opened his mouth to spew out that flood of rhetoric, abuse and persecution, so the earth opened her mouth to swallow it. And yet "all the world" (13:3) feared that rhetoric, when ultimately it was powerless from the start.

The dwellers in Heaven are defined as the believers (:7) who are persecuted on earth. Paul several times refers to believers as in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus".

13:7 The concept of the court of Heaven is a major key to understanding the book of Revelation. Events on earth are described in terms of their connection with the Angelic system in Heaven which has arranged them. "The accuser of our brethren" being cast out of Heaven (Rev. 12:10) would therefore refer to how in the court of Heaven, an Angel represents the system who accused the brethren on earth. This isn't to say that the Angel representing the accuser is sinful. "It was given unto" the beast to have power to persecute the saints (Rev. 13:7), just as the Lord had perceived that His persecutors only had the power that was "given" unto them [thereby associating the saints' final time of trial in the last days with the Lord's sufferings]. But the power was "given" by the Angels in the court of Heaven, empowering people on earth to carry out what they permit.

it was given- see on 13:5.

To overcome- the battle in Heaven between Christ and the dragon's forces wasn't a walkover. The dragon and his publicity agent, the beast, will inflict damage upon some of the believers. Hence the dragon's especial wrath with "the remnant" of them, those who survive amongst them (12:17).

Kindred, tongue and nation- this phrase occurs elsewhere in Revelation. There will be converts from every kindred, tongue and nation grateful for Christ's salvation (Rev. 5:5,9; 7:9); and there is prophesied an appeal to every tongue, nation and tribe by an Angel in Heaven, presumably reflecting the earthly preachers in the Heavenly throne room (Rev. 14:6). It could be that this last minute appeal to the dragon's power base- the 'earth dwellers'- has some success; or it could be that as a result of a special worldwide witness in obedience to the great commission, converts are made from every ethnic group on earth, amidst persecution for all of them due to the worldwide nature of the final tribulation as orchestrated by the sea beast and little horn. It may be that if the body of Christ take the great commission seriously and make converts from every single ethnic and language group on earth, including every tribe of every jungle, then the latter day tribulation won't be necessary for them. But it seems it will be as it was in the 'last days' of AD70- tribulation was required to make the infant church take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

13:8 The idea of predestination from the beginning is introduced as a comfort, not as an intellectual knot to unravel. The battle between Christ and the dragon / beast appeared in the short term to sway too and fro, with the beast overcoming some of the saints. But the comfort is that victory was ultimately assured from the foundation of the world, indeed that victory for each of us on a personal level [each "name"] was assured from the foundation of the world on account of the death of Christ. "Foundation" translates the Greek *katabole*, a form of *kataballo*, to throw down. Yet 12:7-10 have

explained how the outcome of the war is that the dragon and beast are thrown down. But all this was assured from the foundation of the world, when from God's perspective the lamb was slain, our names were written, all opposition was thrown down. Again, predestination is a comfort to the saints during times of temporary defeat.

13:9 This highlights the conditional nature of the prophecies- a response is required to them. They aren't mere predictions of future events, otherwise there would not be this demand for personal response to them. "If... let him" could suggest that not all are given the potential to "hear", but those who are must make the freewill effort of response. Note that 'hearing' is put for 'response'. To understand, to hear as we are meant to, means we must respond.

13:10 *He who kills with the sword must be killed*- clearly an allusion to the Lord's instruction to the persecuted disciples not to violently resist evil, for "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Mt. 26:52). The faithful are not to take up arms during their tribulation- remembering that 12:7-10 had taught them that the war is being fought out in Heaven, Christ will fight for us and overcome the opposition in His own way at His own time. Potentially, the Kingdom could have come in the first century. But it didn't, because the Jews took up the sword and thought they could establish the Kingdom and slay the Roman dragon in their own strength, rather than in that of their crucified King Jesus. This admonition *not* to take up the sword was therefore of vital relevance- and was so sadly ignored- in the first century. The saints show their faith and endurance by believing that the dragon power will indeed be slain and fall from power, as outlined in 12:7-10. To believe that prophecy therefore wasn't, isn't and will not be (during the tribulation) a painless, intellectual affair. Belief that all powers opposed to the cause of Christ will come to their end and receive what they have done to us... this demands a lot. It means we will not try to get even in this life, we will not in our own strength seek to have a Kingdom for ourselves, but will with faith and patience wait for it in God's good time.

Goliath was the Arab "champion" (1 Sam.17:51), using the Hebrew word 'Gibbor'. This connects with the description of Messiah as 'El-Gibbor' in Is.9:6, and shows that the latter day Arab powers may well be headed up by one charismatic individual, who sets himself up as a pseudo-Messiah. The Hebrew word used for "champion" in 1 Sam.17:4 literally means 'the man who goes between the two camps', again pointing forward to the mediatorial office of the true Messiah. The root meaning of 'Goliath' is 'to lead and to go into captivity', which fits in with his wager that the Philistines would go into Jewish captivity if they killed him, and vice versa. This may be the basis of Rev.13:10 concerning the little horn and mouth of the beast: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity". This power having "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" (Rev. 13:5) certainly corresponds with Goliath's loud-mouthed blasphemy. "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:6,7) is Goliath exactly (cp. his blasphemy of the Angels in 1 Sam. 17:26). "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Rev. 13:8) recalls Goliath's charisma, indicated by the Philistines fleeing once they saw that he was dead. "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" (Rev. 13:10) nicely concludes this set of allusions- Goliath was killed with his own sword. These parallels indicate that Goliath is a prototype of the latter day 'mouth' or personal figurehead of the 'beast'. Note in passing how Gen. 12:3 may have hinted at this figure right at the start of God's purpose with Israel: "him that curseth thee will I curse" (RV). The method of persecution will be by leading into captivity and killing with the sword (13:10)- ecclesias herded into cattle trucks and hauled away to mini prison camps, sharing the sufferings of natural Israel? Once again, the account of the beast here is underpinned with hints of our Lord's sufferings (13:10=Mt.26:52; he that leadeth into captivity recalls Jesus being led away by Judas and the soldiers; 13:7 cp. the disciples being 'overcome' in Gethsemane). The beast acquires a puppet beast (or "publicity agent" in the words of Peter Watkins) who does "great wonders" (miracles) which deceive many (13:13,14; 19:20). These miracles must be impressive, seeing that they result in *all* that dwell on the earth, except the faithful, receiving the

mark, of the beast. It is hard to make this prophecy of such impressive false miracles have a significant fulfilment in the past. Miracles of the credibility described here have not been seen since the first century. Again, remember that the Olivet prophecy describes false miracles being done in the last days, which almost convince the very elect. They must therefore really be something very impressive.

13:11

Identifying The Beast

Throughout Scripture the political manifestation of the enemy of God's people has been symbolised by a beast. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome, the Jews and the Papacy have all been described as 'beasts' in their aggression towards the true believers. The beast in Revelation has been convincingly expounded by different writers with reference to at least three separate powers - Rome, Israel and Catholicism. Whilst these interpretations hold true over certain periods of history, the present writer feels that 'the beast' must have a specific latter-day application. Copious evidence has been presented to show that the Babylon beast of history must have a latter-day equivalent.

The Serpent

The most basic principle behind the symbolism of the beast is found in Gen. 1:28, where man is told to "have dominion over" (Heb. 'to break to powder', cp. Dan. 2:35) the beasts. This was to teach him the need to dominate the bestial instincts of the flesh. Thus the beasts are set up as representative of the flesh. Indeed, Strong defines the Hebrew word for 'beast' as fundamentally meaning 'raw flesh'. It is therefore understandable that the devil (sin), the beast and the serpent are linked in Rev. 12:9, and that Prov. 28:15 parallels "a wicked ruler" with a wild bear or lion; the beast epitomizes the sinful person who controls it. The Apocalyptic beast of the earth (Rev. 13:11) must look back to the common phrase "beast of the earth" in Genesis (e.g. Gen. 1:25). The serpent is an epitome of the bestial desires found in the beasts, and is thus the prototype 'beast' of later prophecies. The serpent being the greatest of the beasts (Gen. 3:1,14) points to the latter-day beast being supreme over the other nations; its being cursed above all beasts (Gen. 3:14) points forward to the latter-day beast-power being relegated beneath all other nations in the Millennium. As the serpent dabbled in spiritual things but was not morally responsible⁽¹⁾, so the beast of the last days will do likewise.

This beast being a manifestation of sin, the significance of the conflict between it and Christ at the second coming lies in the open declaration of Christ's victory over sin, the motivating spirit of the beast. Thus Is. 51:13 describes the Assyrian beast in language which is picked up in Heb. 2:14-18 concerning the "devil" of human nature. Christ's victory will not just be the means of Israel's salvation from the Arab oppressors. The two-fold conflict between the serpent/beast and the woman (Christ), and between their respective seeds, must therefore have a latter-day application (Gen. 3:15). The temporary bruising of the saints by the beast must be seen in the last days - and we have earlier examined the prophecies concerning the holocaust to come upon both natural and spiritual Israel. The final crushing of the serpent/beast and vindication of the woman's seed will therefore be at Armageddon. The language of Gen. 3:15 is alluded to in Rev. 12:17, which describes the dragon making war with the woman and her seed. We have earlier shown this to have a specific latter-day application.

As the serpent deceived Adam and Eve, so the beast will deceive the weak believers of the last days. The serpent/beast in its first century Jewish manifestation is described as seducing the saints through the subtle reasoning of the Judaizers (2 Cor. 11:3). These people used many "fair speeches" (Rom. 16:18 cp. Jude 15), suggesting that their prototype, the serpent, persuaded Eve to eat the fruit after a lengthy series of discussions, albeit unrecorded. "Yea, hath God said..." (Gen.

3:1) implies the continuation of an unrecorded conversation. The beast's ecclesial agents of the last days will likewise use the tactic of extended public speeches using superficially deep arguments. Their political arm will be doing the same to destroy the morale of natural Israel, after the pattern of Rabshakeh's speeches to the Jews during the Assyrian invasion. Being an apostate Jew he may possibly have a latter-day equivalent in a Jewish leader, who deserts to the Arab cause, urging Israel to capitulate. Likewise there may be a specific "man of sin" who similarly tempts spiritual Israel. The description of him in 2 Thess. 2:3 is framed in terms of Judas - implying that he will be an apostate member of the ecclesia?

These two evil individuals may well meet their opposite numbers in the "two witnesses" who will arise (Rev. 11:3). The judgment of the serpent was by the voice of God (cp. Christ, the word) walking through the garden, summoning the sinful parties to judgment. This easily looks forward to Christ's second coming, and the judgment by Him in His role as the word made flesh (Rev. 19:13; Gen. 3:8). The beast has always been associated with a pseudo-spirituality, an aping of true God manifestation. We have shown earlier that there will be much of this in the latter-day Babylon/beast. There is a connection between the beasts of God manifestation and the cherubim in Rev. 4:7; indeed, the Hebrew word for 'beast' seems to be the equivalent of the phrase "living creature" used in Revelation concerning the cherubim. The beast and beasts therefore represent systems which falsely claim that they are the vehicle of God manifestation. This most clearly fits the claims of Islam, and also those of Catholicism. With all this in mind, it must be significant that Is. 14:29 speaks of Assyria as a "cockatrice" born out of "the serpent's root", i.e. she was the seed of the serpent. "His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent" is the language of Is. 6:2 concerning the seraphim. Thus the Assyrian seed of the serpent is associated with a pseudo-seraphim, and a false God manifestation.

Spotting the beast

The precise political identification of the latter-day beast seems to have preoccupied the minds of many students. Instead, there needs to be close Biblical analysis of what the beast *does* to God's people. When a system arises which fulfils these expectations, there will be no more doubt in the minds of those who have had ears to hear concerning *who* the beast is. This said, there is such extended use of the beast symbology concerning Israel's previous enemies that it seems reasonable to suggest that the beast largely refers to Israel's Arab neighbours. Dt. 32:24 connects the 'beasts' of the surrounding nations with the Genesis serpent: "I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust" (cp. Gen. 3:14). There is also a connection between the serpent and beasts in Is. 30:6. "The teeth of beasts" coming down upon Israel will be finally fulfilled in the Arab desolation prophesied in Joel 1:6,7, where the Assyrians of the future (Joel 1:15) are described as having Israel between their "cheek teeth" tearing the bark off the Israeli vine and fig (cp. Is. 9:12 concerning the Philistines).

Sheep and Wolves

Israel being the sheep of God's pasture is a common Bible figure. Whenever their shepherds were negligent over a prolonged period, the figure was extended to describe the 'wild beasts' of the surrounding nations invading the land and mauling the flock. Hos. 13:6-8 is typical of those passages which speak in these terms. Verses 7 and 8 liken these nations to the lion, leopard and bear, all of which are nations mentioned in Dan. 7, which are constituents of the huge system of Arab domination described in Dan. 2.

These three beast nations are all part of one "wild beast", as the nations of the image in Dan. 2 are all part of the same latter-day confederacy headed by 'Babylon': "I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard... as a bear... *the* wild beast". Likewise Is. 56:9,10; Jer. 30:16 and Eze 34:5 feature the beasts of Babylon and the surrounding Arab nations as preying on the flock of Israel due to their sleepy shepherds. After Israel's spiritual awakening *they* will become like a beast among the 'sheep' of the Arab nations (Mic. 5:8), continuing the theme of the Jews doing to the Arabs as they did to

them. It is possible that Dt. 28:26 also refers to the beasts of the surrounding nations: "Thy carcase shall be meat... unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away". This alludes to the fowls being frayed away while the covenant was made to Abraham. Thus while Israel abode in the covenant, the Arab nations surrounding them were kept away. Similarly Ez. 34:25 associates the making of the covenant with Israel in the last days, with the "evil beasts" leaving the land. Time and again Israel's Arab enemies are likened to "wild beasts". The list of references is impressive: Hos. 2:12; Ez. 5:17; 14:15; Ps. 80:13; Jer. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; Dt. 7:22. Job's Sabeans (i.e. Arab) invaders are called "the beasts of the earth... the beasts of the field" (Job 5:22,23). It is possible that "beasts" in these passages can be read as an intensive plural - i.e. 'the great beast', which symbolizes all of Israel's various enemies. This equivalence of the multitude of these enemies with a singular beast is seen in Ez. 34:28, which parallels "the heathen" (enemies of Israel) with "the beast of the land" (singular). Rev. 17 similarly exhibits *the* (singular) beast as comprising a number of nations (heads/horns).

Ps. 74:19 RV asks God not to deliver His people "unto the wild beast". This is one of the Asaph Psalms, written in the context of the restoration. The 'beast' threatening to destroy Judah then was a confederacy of her surrounding Arab neighbours. Ps. 73:13,14 likens these enemies to a many-headed dragon. Another such Psalm, Ps. 83, asks for protection against a confederacy of 10 such nations. In all this we have a remarkable type of the last days after the pattern of Daniel and Revelation - a beast with 10 horns, seeking to devour the recently returned people of God from off their land.

There is repeatedly the theme that Israel's enemies are confederated together under one confederacy which has one leader. Ps. 118 can be shown to be relevant to Hezekiah at the time of the Assyrian invasion (see George Booker, *Psalm Studies*). He speaks of how "all nations compassed me about", i.e. the surrounding Arab nations confederate with Assyria. And yet Hezekiah speaks about them as if they are really headed up by one individual: "Thou [you singular] didst thrust sore at me" (Ps. 118:13). The beast is to punish people by beheading them (Rev. 20:4) - and it's only Islam at the moment which legally practices beheading as a form of execution.

Babylon

The symbology of the beast was particularly used concerning Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's king, was given a beast's heart and lived with them (Dan. 4:16) to show his personification of the beast. "The beasts of the field", i.e. the surrounding Arab nations, were given into his control (Dan. 2:38), thus they constituted part of the beast of Babylon, "the noisome beast" of Ez. 14:21.

Babylon's army is likened to "beasts" in Jer. 34:20,21. As God gave power to Assyria and Babylon to achieve His will (Isa. 10), so He will to the latter-day beast (Rev. 13:5,7). The description of the beast leading people into captivity (Rev. 13:10) shows another connection with Assyria/Babylon, whose trains of captives were well known. The beast causing men to worship it (Rev. 13:12) recalls Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the statue on the plain of Dura (Dan. 3:1,5). The historical "beast of the field" was associated with the wilderness (Is. 43:20), as the beast of Rev. 17:3 is a wilderness power.

Babylon's beasts

Israel's Arab neighbours confederated with Babylon in their invasion of Israel. Jeremiah describes this in beast language: "I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar... the beasts of the field have I given him... to serve him... to serve him... all nations (around Israel) shall serve him" (Jer. 27:5-7; 28:14). Ps. 79:1,2, a passage whose links with Rev. 11 give it a clear latter-day application, speaks of the beasts of the surrounding Arab nations being confederate with Babylon. As the horns hate the Babylon/whore and turn against her to destroy her (Rev. 17:16), so the beast nations once confederate with Babylon will come and lie down in her (Jer. 50:39; Is. 13:21). Beasts lying down in a ruined city is representative of nations dominating another one (Zeph. 2:14,15). Note that the beast is "scarlet coloured" (Rev. 17:3). Whilst this may have had reference in

its time to imperial Rome, let's note that "The Canaanites... derived their name from the purple dye which was produced there and used for making an expensive cloth" (2). In the light of all this, it is difficult to read the latter day beasts of Revelation as referring to anything other than a conglomeration of Arab powers under the leadership of a revived Babylon, between them constituting the most powerful system of opposition to God's people which there has ever been.

Notes

(1) John Thomas in 'Elpis Israel' has an excellent section concerning the a-morality of the serpent - i.e. its lack of moral perception.

(2) R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 21.

13:11 This beast doesn't necessarily represent a situation which was to arise chronologically after the work of the earlier beast. The dragon gave power to the sea beast, the sea beast has a head which is deadly wounded and yet is worshipped, and this attracts awe and worship from the earth dwellers and is used to persecute the believers. The beast which now arises from the earth does the same kind of things- he causes the earth dwellers to worship the sea beast, making an image to that beast which has to be worshipped, and persecutes those who refuse to worship it. He speaks like the dragon. This is all providing more detail as to the nature of the dragon's war against the believers which we met in chapter 12. The dragon achieves that persecution through beasts / systems subservient to him, who in their turn use an image [used by the earth beast] and one of their heads [used by the sea beast] to bring the earth dwellers under their control.

13:11-18 The beast of the earth in Rev. 13:11-18 seems to have some application to the cult of emperor worship which became so popular throughout the Roman empire: it speaks in the voice of the dragon (v. 11), from whom it receives its power; and like the first Beast, it attempts to mimic the Lamb (v. 12, 13). It seems to be a personification of an Antichrist embodied in the pagan priesthood, which endeavoured to draw all men to the cult of the emperor. In these thoughts we see just how radical was the Apocalypse in its first century context. "The image to the beast" (13:13) would refer to representations of the divinized Roman emperors. "The wound of the sword" (13:13) is possibly an allusion to the mortal wound Nero inflicted upon himself in ad 68. Nero was perceived to live again in the persecutor Domitian (Tertullian, *Apol.* 5). Note how it is "the beast" who appears to have died or been wounded and then revives (17:8)- and yet these are references to what happened to Nero. The symbolism correctly perceives how the empire was incarnated in one man, the emperor.

13:12 Babylon and the beast with which it is associated is said to have power over the nations of whole earth (Dan. 7:23; Rev. 13:12). This is referring back to the way in which historical Babylon was praised by the whole earth (Jer. 51:41), and had an army which included men from "the whole earth" (Jer. 34:1). As Babylon of the last days will influence all nations of the earth with her wine, so Babylon of old is spoken of in the same way (Jer. 51:7 cp. Rev. 17:2,4). Thus several prophecies speak of how Babylon's fall had effects on the whole earth (e.g. Jer. 50:46); and latter day Babylon likewise (Rev. 18:9,10). If we are correct in interpreting "Babylon" as a revived Arab power of the last days, based on the prototype of historical Babylon, then we must look for a nation like Iran or Iraq to gather together the surrounding Arab powers for an assault on Israel, and to somehow bring the whole world under the control of this confederacy. An Arab-dominated UN or other global political power could bring this about. "The Charter of Allah" makes it clear that Islam aims for world domination, within which "co-existence is possible with other religions, but only on Islamic terms and under Islamic domination". Thus the control of the Western world may not be as difficult in practice as it may seem; if, for example, the Pope makes some suitable deference to Islam on behalf of all 'Christians', such a situation would come into existence.

before him- Gk. 'in his presence'. See on 13:11- this doesn't have to imply that the beasts operate at different times, one after the other.

Causes- s.w. v. 13 he “does” great wonders / miracles. He causes people to worship him by false miracles. Worldwide, spellbinding psychological domination of absolutely everyone apart from God’s people has never occurred on this scale in human history. Attempts to match this up with false miracles claimed by Catholics and others is really a poor attempt to force history to match these words- and it just doesn’t fit, because the language implies a worldwide, totally convincing psychological blinding of an entire population; and the specific production of fire from Heaven (:13), so credible that the world believes it, surely implies something more than a few bogus cures of illnesses. This situation could have arisen in the first century, but it didn’t. It is yet to come- unless we are right now in the ‘last days’ and it has all come true through the spirit of the age in which we live dominating the hearts of all unbelievers.

We read of the beast’s deadly wound being healed or worshipped; but v. 3 specifies it was one of his heads which was thus wounded. That head therefore became symbolic of the entire beast; that head was the beast’s figurehead. To slay it was to slay the beast. This suggests that the beast system is headed up in one individual- a personal antiChrist figure. This may be the simple thrust of v. 18- that the number of the beast is an individual man, 666, whereby 6 is the number of man. The whole opposition is headed up and personified in a single individual, an anti-Christ figure.

13:13 Making fire come down from Heaven suggests he mimics the miracles of Elijah- in order to discredit the Elijah ministry which will be ongoing throughout the tribulation. The inference is that the latter day miracles of the Elijah ministry will be matched, to some degree, by the false claims of the beast. The miracles performed at Israel’s deliverance from Egypt were likewise mimicked by the persecutors of God’s people.

13:14 *deceives-* another connection with the Olivet prophecy, where the Lord four times (Mt. 24:4,5,11,24) warns of deceit [s.w.] in the last days due to false miracles. According to Mt. 24:24, these will be so persuasive that everyone apart from “the very elect” will be deceived. The connection with the Olivet prophecy again shows that this scenario could have happened in the lead up to AD70- but it didn’t. It’s been deferred and perhaps will be reapplied to a situation in [our?] last days. Again, note that this deception by the earth beast is a filling out of what we read in 12:9- that the dragon system deceived the whole world. Here in 13:14 we’re reading how the dragon achieved that. And we get more detail later in the prophecy, when we read of the “false prophet” as doing this deception (Rev. 19:20), and of how Babylon [the dragon-beast system epitomized as a city] deceived [s.w.] “all nations” (Rev. 18:23). Babylon is likewise ‘cast down’ just as the dragon was to be; for Babylon is but another view of the dragon system, through slightly different symbolism.

image- s.w. Mt. 22:20 about the image of Caesar. The word is also used about the Lord Jesus being the image of God (Col. 1:15)- another of many indications that the whole dragon / beast system is an anti-Christ, a fake, imitation Christ.

The command to make an image on pain of punishment naturally suggests the king of Babylon doing the same, and punishing the faithful Jewish remnant for not worshipping it. Thus there is a connection made between Babylon and the beast-dragon system. This continues later in Revelation, where the whole system is presented to us again under a different set of symbols, namely as a city. It may be that this is just another angle or window onto the same reality; or it could be that the essence of the dragon-beast system could have been articulated in different ways at different times, depending upon human fulfillment of various potential conditions.

13:15 The Old Testament mocks the images of the Gentiles, especially of Babylon [in latter Isaiah] as being lifeless and not speaking; in allusion to that, the beast makes his image come alive. It’s as if all the proof ever required against the true God and His Son is suddenly, apparently, produced- and exhibited worldwide. The faith of the believers in God’s revealed truth will be tested as never before. Giving life to a dead image is also a parody of resurrection. It’s as if the Babylon / beast has

momentarily succeeded in disproving God's prophetic word. Perhaps a literal image would've been constructed in Rome or Jerusalem, within the potential fulfilment which is envisaged here. "Power to give life" is a concept only true of God and His Son, as John emphasizes in his Gospel (Jn. 6:27,51; 10:28)... and this blasphemous system played God, appropriating His role to themselves. Just as in essence societies and human leaders are doing in our day.

Pagan priests were and are known for claiming that statues and icons can speak. But it would seem that this is done to such an extent that the earth dwellers are totally convinced that really, it's happened.

The "image of the beast" rather than the beast itself apparently had the power given to it to cause that any who didn't worship it should be killed (AV is unclear here). There is the theme here of progressive deputation of power- the dragon gives power to the beasts, the earth beast gives power to the image of the beast. Yet as we earlier noted, all power is with the Lord Jesus, in Heaven and on earth. This emphasis on the delegation of power is perhaps to remind us that at every stage in the process, it was the Lord Jesus allowing this- and therefore all impression of an invincible power on earth abusing the believers is ultimately flawed, because in the final end, all power is with the Lord, and any misuse of it is clearly under His total control, indeed the whole idea of a war between the Lord and any opposing 'power' is somehow hollow and unreal.

Killed- an expansion upon the killing of the two witnesses at the end of the three and a half year witness they make in Rev. 11:7. This began to have a fulfilment in the 1st century, for Rev. 2:13 records that faithful Antipas was 'killed' [s.w.] where Satan was on earth [the dragon system defined as the adversary, Satan, in Rev. 12:7-9]. But Rome didn't fall then, the conflict didn't progress to completion as prophesied at that time- although it could've done. It was deferred. The seals are clear expansions of the Olivet prophecy, and they featured the beasts killing [s.w.] the faithful, or some of them (Rev. 6:8; 9:5,11,18). Just as the Olivet prophecy didn't fulfil in AD70 as intended but was delayed until the second coming, so these expansions upon the seals and the Olivet prophecy here in the later visions likewise could've come true in the 1st century, but didn't.

The beast system will insist that all people receive the mark in their foreheads (Rev. 13:15,16; 14:11). This was an allusion to the way slaves were branded with a mark of ownership. And so in the very last days it will intensely cost to have the stigmata, the marks / brand, of being true servants of Jesus. It will cost and hurt to really believe His words, that we cannot serve two masters. 1 Tim. 4:2 RV speaks of how some will depart from the faith in the last days, having their consciences branded "as with a hot iron". Presumably this is to be connected with the fact that the beast system will brand people in the last days; and it seems that some in the latter day ecclesia will fall for this. And, interestingly enough, it seems it will not just be the liberals who fall to this temptation: those who will thus fall away are those who 'forbid to marry and command to abstain from meats' (1 Tim. 4:3).

The beasts of Revelation seem to be described in terms of the Kingdom of God, and the descriptions link within Revelation to the descriptions of God's Kingdom. The point is being made that these beasts, both over time and in the last days, are fake Kingdoms of God.

Beasts

The dragon has Angels (Rev. 12:9)

He figuratively comes from heaven to earth (12:10)

Speaks of us day and night before God's throne (12:10)

The Kingdom Of God

As Christ

"

"

Has a name in his forehead (13:2)	"
Given power, throne and authority (13:13)	"
Does great miracles and signs (13:13)	"
Faithful followers have mark in their hands and foreheads (13:17; 20:4) and are "sealed" (13:16)	Ez. 9:4; Rev. 7:3
All the world worships the beast (13:12)	All the world will worship God (15:4)
Followers as numerous as sand on the sea shore (20:8)	As the seed of Abraham
Their followers have one mind (17:3), and are world-wide	How it should be amongst us
The woman clothed with a blood red robe and a cup (17:4)	Cp. the sacrificial office of Christ
The beast is, was and will be (17:8-11); an allusion to the Yahweh Name	God is, will and will be (16:5)

The beast systems, as Babylon and Assyria before them, were false Kingdoms of God. The beast has the power to give *pneuma* to the image / body of the first beast (Rev. 13:15)- an evident mimicry of God's creation of Adam. They appear to offer, here and now, the things of the Kingdom, and the fleshly-minded are persuaded by them. This is all playing out the drama of Eden again; the serpent offered equality with God, the wisdom of God, when it was actually the wisdom of the serpent. Adam and Eve grasped for what was offered, unlike the Lord Jesus, who refused to grasp at equality with God (Phil. 2 is full of allusion to the events of Gen. 3). What happened in Eden is in essence the epitome, the prototype of all temptation and sin (1 Jn. 2:16 = Gen. 3:6). Every one of our temptations has an element of this; we are tempted to grasp for what looks like the Kingdom here and now. Pentecostals are an evident example of this; they think they can obtain the full healing and physical ecstasy of the future Kingdom here and now. And on a more common level, there are many of us who reach out for the supposed fulfilment of hobbies, the supposed peace and 'security' of a nice home and bank balance, when these things are actually a false fulfilment, peace and security, the peace and security of Satan's Kingdom which is a counterfeit of the spiritual fulfilment, peace and security of Christ's Kingdom. A very evident example of this is found in Rabshakeh's offer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'If you reject Yahweh as your God, the King of Assyria will give you a Kingdom where you will "eat every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree" ' (Is. 36:16); in saying this, Rabshakeh was quoting the very words of Mic. 4:4 concerning the Kingdom of God. The Jews were faced with the choice of God's Kingdom, or Satan's Kingdom, couched as it was in terms of God's Kingdom. Likewise, the world around us isn't passive. It is actively seeking to deceive. There is a tension between us and this world, including the apostate 'Christian' world, which is vital to recognize if we are to share the salvation of God's Kingdom and avoid the condemnation of Satan's Kingdom. There can be no half way position.

Those who will refuse to worship the beast will be killed (Rev. 13:15); but those (responsible) who try to avoid this death will themselves be *tortured* to death by the Lamb, because they worshipped the beast (14:9-11; 16:2). See on Mt. 3:11.

13:16-18 The branding of right hand and forehead with a mark which is somehow 666 defies historical fulfilment. It was something which could've happened in a possible scenario of events in the 1st century, but didn't. We're still awaiting it, unless it has been reassigned some highly symbolic application. Branding with a mark speaks of slavery, especially used for temple slaves- the

entire population were [and are] to become slaves of the beast system. Receiving a mark from God was a sign that a person was to be spared His judgments (Ez. 9:4,6). Again, the beast system plays God, acts out His role, and inverts everything. Perhaps we are to understand that we can have only one mark, one loyalty in all we do with our hands and think in our deepest minds [the forehead]. Rev. 14:1 goes on to speak of how the faithful have the Father's Name in *their* foreheads. It's either the invisible mark of the true God, or the visible mark stamped there by the beast system. Recall how Israel were forbidden to make any such visible marks upon themselves (Lev. 19:28).

13:17 *number of his name*- this does indeed sound like gematria, i.e. the practice of each Latin or Greek letter having a numerical value.

Note that there appear to be three things a person could have- the beast's name, *or* mark, *or* number. It's hard to reconstruct how this might have literally worked out; vague suggestions about "the sign of the cross" make no sense at all. Again, it seems this was a possible fulfilment which never came about, and we await with trepidation how it is yet to fulfill.

Buy- literally, 'to go to market'. Was there some potential plan that markets were to be closed to those who didn't have the mark? But the Greek word is also that translated "redeem"- as if property was to be taken over by the beast and only redeemed back by showing the mark? We could speculate from this that all property will be taken over by the beast system, for the branding of a mark suggests that the people become slaves of the system, personally owning nothing, but can in some sense redeem back their property by displaying loyalty to the system through the mark. When things collapsed in Egypt, the way out of the crisis was for all private property to be resigned to the state. In a global financial and economic meltdown, it's possible that some draconic beast system achieves just this; everyone becomes enslaved, the concept of private property will be no more. This is in a sense what Communism did upon the ruins of a starving and desperate Eastern Europe after the second world war. One could realistically envisage it happening again, but on a global scale. For the world economic system could now collapse totally at any moment.

It has been shown that in Nero's time it was forbidden for Christians to use Imperial coinage, with its images of Caesar as Lord. It was in this sense impossible to buy or sell unless one was willing to accept the mark of the beast- exactly as in Rev. 13:17. The next verse goes on to identify the number of the beast / man as being 666. And yet this is the sum of the Hebrew letters in 'Neron Caesar'! Whatever other application these verses may be seen to have to Catholic persecution, there can be little doubt that their first century context applies to the persecution of the early converts. Later, Domitian demanded that he be worshipped as Lord and God, " Dominus et deus noster" (Suetonius, *Domitiani Vita*, 13.4). John records how Thomas called the Lord Jesus "my lord and my God", in active opposition to this kind of thinking (although Domitian came after Thomas). One couldn't worship Caesar and the Lord Jesus. The Lord Himself had foreseen this when He warned that His followers couldn't serve two masters. Domitian demanded to be called 'Master', but this was impossible for the Christian. Indeed, much of Revelation seems taken up with this theme of the first century refusal to worship the Caesars and deified Roman empire on pain of persecution (Rev. 13:4; 14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20). "Following the Neronian persecution, being a Christian was tantamount to being part of a criminal conspiracy, and Christians (unlike other religious groups) were punished simply for being Christians (Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.5; Pliny *Letters* 10.96.2-3). Their crime was an unwillingness to worship any God but their own, an exclusiveness the Greeks labeled "atheism." The refusal to sacrifice to pagan gods and on behalf of deified emperors was perceived as a threat to the harmonious relationship between people and the gods" (J.L. Mays, Editor, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). Although in many parts of the 21st century world the tension between the believer and the beast is not articulated so starkly, the essential realities of the conflict remain, and must be felt by us.

We either receive the mark of the beast and ultimately face torture and the wine of God's wrath; or we refuse it and face Babylon's wrath (Rev. 13:16,17; 14:9,10). Now is the time for self-examination.

13:18 The little horn takes a stand against the Prince of princes and then is destroyed "but not by human power" (Dan. 8:25), i.e. he will be destroyed by the stone [Jesus] cut out without human hands. This is just the language of 2 Thess. 2, of how the Antichrist will be destroyed by the Lord's sudden return. Micah and Isaiah call this individual "the Assyrian" (Is. 10:5; 14:25). We have shown elsewhere that the description of Lucifer being thrown out of heaven can be read as describing the fall of a future King of Babylon in the last days. The most comfortable understanding of antiChrist as being an Assyrian / Babylonian is that he will be an Assyrian / Babylonian, and ruler of those areas. A leader of Iraq would ideally suit this. And their leadership shows every sign of the aggression, meglomania and anti-Semitism which will characterize the antiChrist. Note too that Gog is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal- areas identified by some as being in present Iran / Iraq. The number of the beast is the number of a man (Rev. 13:18); he becomes personally identified with the system that persecutes the saints and Israel in the last days.

him that has understanding connects with Dan. 11:35 speaking of the persecuted amongst God's people as "they of understanding", and Dan. 12:10 especially: "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand". That phrase within Daniel is in its turn intended to connect with the descriptions of Daniel personally as a man of understanding (Dan. 1:4,20; 5:11-14). He was one of the faithful remnant of God's people living in Babylon. As such he becomes symbolic for the 'men of understanding' under Babylonian / beast / dragon persecution in Revelation, who would understand and be strengthened by the prophecy.

number of a man- this could be translated "a man's number", rather like "a man's pen" in Is. 8:1 means 'a pen as a man would use it', and could suggest that this is a number counted as a man would- and in the first century context, this would've meant counting the numerical value of names by gematria and coming to a total of 666. This sort of thing was common in the 1st century, e.g. Jupiter was known by his numerical value of 717, and the early Christian writings mention Jesus as the 888 (the numerical value of 'Jesus' in Greek). In the Roman context, "Latinus", "Nero Caesar" and "Diocletian" have all been computed as having the value of 666. Clearly there could have been a fulfilment of this prophecy in the 1st century- the stage was set for it, but it didn't come about.

14:1- see on 2 Tim. 4:17.

The lamb comes to be on Mt. Zion with the believers in that they are snatched away there and judged there. John maybe has the reverse image of Judas and Peter standing with the Lord's enemies in mind when he writes that the redeemed shall stand with Jesus on Mount Zion facing the hostile world.

Name- i.e. God's character- has been engraved in their foreheads. Cp. how in 14:11 the name of the beast has to be merely 'received'- a rather passive verb. We either 'receive' the beast's name, or have God's name slowly engraved. We can't have a forehead / mind / underlying heartbeat which has both names. See 14:9 note.

His *Father's* Name- rather than simply 'God's Name', to show how we have God's Name placed upon us because of His revelation in the Lamb, His Son.

14:2 Harpers- the Angels? But in what sense are the harpers different from the four beasts and the 144,000 [believers] of v. 3? Or was God's one voice somehow like the voice of many harpers, unity in diversity?

14:3 *before the throne... the four beasts... the elders*- there's a frequent connection made between the Angels and the redeemed at the Lord's return, for He returns from Heaven with the Angels. It will be so appropriate for the believers to be united with their guardian Angels at this time.

no man could learn- implies there will be those who try to repeat the song, seek to enter the life eternal, but cannot. Eternal life, salvation, redemption, is likened to an eternally sung song.

We shall stand before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). Rev. 14:3 paints the picture of the righteous singing before the throne of judgment. In Him, in that day, will be fulfilled Zeph. 3:17: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee... He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful (us) for the solemn assembly", when the Lord will keep Passover with us again.

14:4 *not defiled with women*- i.e. the prostitute women associated with the Babylon system. Seeing "all nations" commit fornication with her (14:8), this implies a separation from the majority of the world in the last days.

Virgins- there should be the sense in us all that we are keeping ourselves, for Him.

Follow the lamb whithersoever He goes- alluding to Mk. 15:41, the women who followed Jesus around Galilee in the days of popularity and mass adulation, followed Him also to the rejection and loneliness of the cross. To follow "whithersoever" is a challenge. Mk. 15:40,41 makes the point that the women who followed the Lord in fair weather times in Galilee also followed Him to the darkness of the cross: "There were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the little and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered unto him". Mt. 13:55 makes it apparent that Mary the mother of James and Joses is clearly enough Mary the mother of Jesus- for He had brothers of those names. She had followed Him to Cana, and now, she faithfully followed Him to the cross. But Rev. 14:4 alludes to all this by saying that all the redeemed follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Thus Mary and the ministering women, following even to the cross, become typical of us all. Not only following the Lord in popularity, but also in the real and radical demands of His cross.

The firstfruits- in that during the Millennial reign, many others will be converted, far greater in number than those redeemed in this dispensation? Surely "firstfruits" implies that.

14:5 *no guile found*- the very language used about the Lord Jesus in 1 Pet. 2:22. His personality and character, down to His way of speaking, are imputed to us. Only by imputed righteousness can it be said that a person has no guile (Ps. 32:2). Guile / deceit / dishonesty is seen as the epitomy of sin, and to be without guile is the height of righteousness. To be honest about who we are, not seeking to impress, being straightforward, who we are matching what we say- this, rather than dramatic works, is the height of righteousness. "Found" implies a process of searching- at the judgment? "Blessed is the man...in whose spirit is no guile" (Ps. 32:2) is picked up in Rev.14:5: "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God". The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance "before the throne of God". Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect.

14:5 *For they are without fault*- as in Col. 1:22 and Jude 24, the faithful are presented faultless before God's throne- only by the Lord's righteousness being counted to them.

14:6 Dan. 4:17 speaks of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation as being "by the demand of the word of the holy ones". Was it that the Angels had noticed this man's awful pride, reported it to God Himself in the court of Heaven, and then been empowered to carry out his demise? The same context reminds us that God does according to *His* will in the army of Heaven (Dan. 4:35). And yet His purpose is to some extent moulded by them. And we are led to ask, how much influence do *we* His beloved children have upon His actual purpose? In the context of Daniel, one observes that a "herald" cried aloud to peoples of all nations and languages, and bid them worship the Babylonian image, on pain of being cast into a fiery furnace (Dan. 3:4 ff.). And yet in Rev. 14:6, an Angel cries to all nations and languages, warning them that if they *do* worship the image, they will be cast into the lake of fire. The Angels had observed Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance and defiance, and many centuries later

they will work out their way of parodying it in their future proclamation. The point is, they have the power to work out their way of operation in accordance with their perceptions and understandings; in this we see the “freedom of the spirit” which is now and shall be ever accorded to Yahweh’s *elohim*.

Rev. 14:6 describes the great latter fulfilment of the great preaching commission in terms of an Angel flying in Heaven with the Gospel of the Kingdom to be preached to all nations and languages. Surely the implication is that the latter day preachers of the Gospel are walking on earth in league with an Angelic system above them, empowering and enabling them. See on Gal. 5:25.

An Angel may be given a mission to preach somewhere, and success may be arranged by Him in prospect, but it is for us to put the work into practical effect, without which the converts will not be produced, despite the Angels preparatory work, although of course ultimately this is all foreknown by God Himself. Thus we read in Rev. 14:6 of an Angel being sent "having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth (same word as 'land'- i. e. the land of Israel), and to every nation, kindred and tongue and people "(i. e. the whole world as well). However, this actual work of preaching to the Jews and to the world will be done by the saints; thus they will work out in practice what was achieved by the Angel in God's plan. In this context it is worth considering how the great commission as recorded in Mt. 28:18,19 is set in the context of other references in Matthew to world-wide preaching. We are to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations; and yet it is the Angels who will gather the harvest from “the world” (Mt. 13:38), Angels who will “repay” us for our work at the last day (Mt. 16:27), Angels who gather the elect from “the four winds” (Mt. 24:31) and gather [converts from] “all nations” to judgment (Mt. 25:32). The implication surely is that in our preaching work, the Angels are with us and will gather in the converts which we have made.

14:6-9 “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the *earth*, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand” (Rev. 14:6-9). This makes more sense if we imagine the nations presently living in the land promised to Abraham, confederated against Israel under Babylon, now having the Gospel preached to them. They are told *not* to confederate under Babylon. The ‘earth dwellers’ in the OT (especially in Joshua) invariably refer to the nations dwelling in the land, not the whole planet. Yet Babylon will reign over “the kings of the earth” (17:18), another phrase so often used in the OT of the nations dwelling in the land. So it would seem that generally they will reject the warning given to them to keep separate from her. Yet Revelation ends with: “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it”. The kings of the land, once confederate with Babylon, will in the very end come to Zion and accept her rather than Babylon as their capital.

14:7 Worship Him- conversion is a call to worship our creator, not merely assent to a set of theology.

For the hour of His judgment is come- like many Old Testament prophets, is this a last minute appeal for repentance in order to avert the world's final judgment? God is to be feared and worshipped because of the hour of His judgment (Rev. 14:7); "when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9); for "the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth" (Ps. 9:16). Israel's condemnation was to be "an instruction" unto the surrounding nations (Ez. 5:14,15). And Israel herself will know that "I am the LORD" in their final condemnation, as Ezekiel so often prophesied. This clearly associates God's judgment with a learning process. "When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise" (Prov. 21:11). Thus the

nations are intended to learn from the experience of Israel's condemnation (Hos. 2:10). The repentance of Egypt will be because "the Lord shall smite Egypt... and they shall return to the Lord" (Is. 19:18-22).

14:8- see on Rev. 16:12.

Fallen- the word occurs many times in Revelation. Believers either fall before the Lord, or fall in condemnation. We must fall and be broken- one way or the other (Mt. 21:44).

Because she made- making others sin is the ultimate sin. To make just one brother stumble means we should be thrown into the sea with a millstone around our necks (Mk. 9:42).

Drink of the wine- drinking a cup of wine is a double symbol. It's either "the cup of blessing" or the cup of condemnation. Hence the breaking of bread service leads us to a T-intersection, we take the cup either to our eternal blessing or eternal condemnation. And we can't flunk the choice.

Wine of the wrath- i.e. the wrath of God because of her fornication- v. 10. Babylon caused the nations around her to drink her wine of fornication, making them "mad" (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 14:8). Wine being a symbol of doctrine, this must point to 'Babylon' spreading the idea of Islamic fundamentalism to the nations around Israel (as "the nations" seem to normally refer to), making them "mad" in their hatred of Israel. Iran and Iraq, geographical Babylon/Assyria, are already noted for this. As Sennacherib relied heavily on propaganda and religious rhetoric, so Nebuchadnezzar and his latter-day equivalent will do even more so. Jer. 51:55 speaks of Babylon as "the great voice", referring to her religious propaganda. This will be quite complex, carrying with it all the power and persuasion of a pseudo-intellectuality: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee" (Is. 47:10).

14:9- see on Rev. 13:17.

Mark on the forehead- prostitutes had their name on their foreheads (Jer. 3:3). By using Babylon as a prostitute, they themselves became as prostitutes.

Daniel's representative role is most clearly shown in the figurative death, resurrection and judgment which he receives in Dan. 10. In this Daniel is acting out the experience of each of the approved. His refusal to obey the command to worship Babylon's King is alluded to in Rev. 13:5; 14:9, which prophesy how the saints of the last days will be tested just as Daniel was, with a like miraculous deliverance. Thus Daniel seems to especially symbolize the latter day believers. The comforting "Fear not Daniel" (Dan. 10:12,19) slots in to many other instances of Angels saying these words to frightened men. This makes it appropriate to speculate that the latter day believers will hear the same words from the Angel who comes to gather them (and cp. Is. 35:4, which gives the same "fear not" message to the generation which sees the second coming). Again, Daniel's relationship with the Angel appears to be representative of that enjoyed by all the saints.

14:10 *without mixture*- implies some who are condemned drink wine mixed with water, i.e. are condemned with a lesser condemnation. To drink wine without any dilution at all was unusual in the first century. It would've been very bitter. But those who are told Babylon has fallen and yet still take her whore's mark into their foreheads with Angels flying overhead appealing for repentance- will be punished most severely. The grades of condemnation inversely reflect the grades of acceptance, one star differing from another in glory, one over five cities, another over two.

brimstone- sulphur. To recall the destruction of Sodom. Sodom is equated with Babylon. Those who refused to leave or who turned back [Lot's wife] represent those in the last days who will refuse the Angelic call to leave the Babylon system.

In the presence of- the other Biblical information about condemnation suggests that the rejected will be taken quickly out of the Lord's presence. He takes no pleasure in their destruction. So maybe we have here a snapshot of their agony in His presence as they perceive their final rejection before they

are cast out of His presence. The rejected will be punished in the Lord's presence (Rev. 14:10), and then cast out of His presence (2 Thess. 1:9) into outer darkness. This suggests two stages of condemnation: the slinking away, within the Lord's presence, and then being cast out into outer darkness (perhaps literal darkness?). The rejected are handed over to the judge who then casts them into prison or fire. The branches are cast forth, and then (stage two) cast into the fire (Jn. 15:6). There are verses which speak of the rejected being slain before Christ, cut in sunder (i.e. slain with the sword) (Is. 63:1-6; Mt. 24:51; Lk. 19:27). This presumably suggests that some will be punished quite soon after their rejection (e.g. the unwilling Jewish 'subjects' of Christ's Kingdom, Lk. 19:27), whilst others will be punished and yet expelled from the Lord's presence to suffer the agony of existing without any relationship with the Lord they once loved. Again, Lk. 19:27 has an example of both. Surely these are the "many stripes" of Lk. 12:47,48, compared to the "few stripes" of immediate death. Likewise the degree of punishment for individual Israelites in the wilderness was surely reflected in how long they were kept alive until they were finally wasted away by the Lord's hand. Some of the nations / political systems of the world are immediately destroyed at the Lord's coming, whilst others have their suffering period extended for a season and time (Dan. 7:12). The rejected amongst the people of God will in some ways share the condemnation of the world which they loved. It may be that there will be different geographical areas of punishment; some are cast into fire, others into outer darkness, into prison (Mt. 5:25)... or are these simply saying that there will be different kinds of punishment? Or are they different figures for the same thing?

14:11 *the smoke*- they themselves are consumed, but the smoke, the memorial of their condemnation, will eternally remain. We will remember the rejected, in some sense, for eternity.

They have no rest day nor night- in the awful moments, days, months, maybe years, the rejected have to exist after their rejection. Their rejection means that simply existing is mental torment. In the new Jerusalem, there will be no night (Rev. 22:5)- but they will be outside of it, where day and night still exist. This is another illustration of the way that the Kingdom of God starts as a little stone at the return of the Lord Jesus, and spreads to fill the earth.

Those who do not worship the beast or have his mark will be killed (13:15,16; 14:11 cp. Dan. 3:6); in this context we are told by a special announcement from Heaven "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (14:13)- as if there will be a special blessing for those who die in the tribulation. "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast... his image... his mark... sing the song of Moses" (15:2,3)- implying that their persecution by the beast was like being in Egypt, and their deliverance therefore gave rise to a new song of Moses.

Rev. 14:11 speaks of the smoke of torment ascending up "for ever and ever" in the presence of the Lamb and His Holy Angels. This going on throughout the 'aion of the aions' would suggest that there will always be the reminder of the condemnation of sinners, certainly for the duration of the Millennium. How this will be achieved in practice is hard to envisage. But in some way, there will always be a reminder of the rejection and judgment of the unworthy saints of this present dispensation. This will serve as a powerful reminder to the mortals of the Millennium age; it may well be something which we use to remind them of the seriousness of sin.

14:12 Keeping the commandments and having the Faith in Christ are paralleled in Rev. 14:12. To have the commandments is to keep them (Jn. 14:21 Gk.)- a true understanding leads to obedience in practice.

14:13- see on Rom. 14:8,9.

Yes, says the Spirit- i.e. a Spirit-Angel was the "voice from Heaven", gasping as it were at the wonder of how those who die in the Lord will be saved. Their works "follow" them, literally 'walk alongside with them'. Actions are important, even if we are saved by faith. For faith without works is dead. We come to judgment with our works, our lives, standing next to us.

14:14 A white cloud- representing Angels, or the faithful believers (Heb. 12:1), or simply a reference to how the Lord ascended in a cloud and will return likewise (Acts 1:11).

14:14-16 The Angels are described as most active in the setting up of the Kingdom, but that in time we take over their roles. It is to help us visualize our part in that age that so much has been revealed to us about how the Angels operate now. The Angels are reapers; the descriptions of the final judgements on Israel in Revelation indicate that we start to take over this role as the time of judgement for the world draws to a close. "Behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat *like* unto the Son of Man (note: *like* the Son of man-i. e. the saints), having on His head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another Angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat upon the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe; and he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped" (Rev. 14:14-16). The "earth" here is probably 'the land'- of Israel. The saints are commanded by an Angel that the time has come to reap the spiritual harvest of repentant Jews now accepting Christ. There are other references indicating the part of the saints in welcoming repentant Israel- e. g. Jer. 3:15. Perhaps this Angel is Palmoni, the "wonderful numberer" of Dan. 9:13, in whose hands the overall control of the timing of God's purpose is held. This would indicate that the saints will co-operate with the Angels, each playing different roles, in the execution of God's purpose. This is exactly how the Angels operate in this age. In this case, the basic Heavenly organisation and ways of working would remain unchanged, but the size of the *elohim* would be increased by our joining their ranks. Alternatively, in view of the fact that the world to come has not been put into the hands of the Angels but of us, it may be that only during the setting up of the Kingdom are we under such direct control of the Angels.

14:15 *ripe*- Gk. over-ripe. The second coming will be delayed; wickedness will be ripe for judgment but it will be delayed [to allow yet more to repent, such is the Lord's grace?].

Both the cross and the final judgment (Rev. 14:7,15) are described in John's writings as 'the hour coming'; the parallel language indicates that he presents the cross as the essence of the judgment. Is. 53 speaks of the Lord as being "bruised" upon the cross. But Is. 42:4 had earlier used this language about Christ, saying that He would be bruised with the result that he would "set judgment in the earth" (RVmg.). His bruising thus set forth judgment to all. We have suggested above that there was a *sedile* or seat affixed to the cross, on which the victim sat in order to get temporary relief. Thus some accounts of crucifixion describe the victim as mounting the cross as one would mount a horse. This would make the cross capable of interpretation as some kind of seat or throne. And significantly, there are men on the right hand and left of the Lord, one rejected, the other gloriously accepted. See on Jn. 19:13.

14:17- see on Heb. 9:23.

Rev. 14:17,18 describe an Angel coming out of "The temple which is in Heaven" and another coming out of the Altar (Christ). Does this imply that although all Angels are subject to Christ in rank, some are in His control and others in the Father's ? Jesus will return with "His Holy Angels". Presumably when He returns not every single Angel in Heaven will return with Him. The Father's Angels will remain. As Jesus is in control of our daily lives through our guardian Angels, it would seem a fair assumption that the guardian Angels of the saints of all ages are in the specific control of Jesus, and these are the "reapers" of the spiritual harvest which will return with Him to judge us.

14:18 Revelation has much to say about Angels and prayers. Rev. 14:18 pictures an Angel coming out of the incense altar, and triggered by the incense of our prayers, asking another Angel to do something dramatic on earth. This is how powerful prayer is! See on Is. 6:7.

The way the Angel comes out from the incense altar to begin the final judgments implies that the beginning of the end of human history is related to our prayers (Rev. 14:18). The more of it, the

greater and stronger the effect- that was the lesson of the allusion to prayer as incense. The more the unjust judge was nagged [cp. prayer], the more he responded.

Rev. 14:18-20 provides what appears to be a picture of the judgement; an Angel with power over fire throws the apostate vine branches outside the city, where they will be trodden. That these are the responsible is clinched by the similarity with the Lord's description of the rejected being branches broken off from the true vine, because of their lack of spiritual fruit (Jn. 15:2). Thus it would appear that there is one Angel responsible for co-ordinating the punishment of the rejected, which he does with fire just outside Jerusalem. This suggests that the rejected will be punished by literal fire in the locality of the historical Gehenna.

14:19 The harvesting of the vine of the earth / land is different from the harvesting of the earth generally (14:16). The vine of the land may refer to specific judgment upon Israel- hence the reference to 1600 furlongs of judgment in 14:20, which was thought to be the length of the land of Israel.

Our response to the cross is a foretaste of our response to the judgment experience. In a similar way, the connexion between the cross and the judgment is solidified by the image of the winepress. It is used in Rev. 14:19 as a figure for the final judgment by Jesus; but this passage is in turn quoting from Is. 63:1-6, where the treading of the winepress "without the city" is clearly with reference to the Lord's crucifixion "without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). As He said, in His death, there was the judgment of this world.

14:20 Trampled in the winepress "outside the city", i.e. where Jesus was crucified (Jn. 19:20; Heb. 13:11-13)- as if to show that these judgments on Israel came because of what they had done to Jesus. 1600 stadia is the length of the land. The Itenerarum of Antonius of Piacenza says the length of Palestine was 1664 stadia.

15:1- see on Rev. 19:11.

15:2 At the end of the saints' latter day tribulation, the Most Holy is opened (Rev.15:2,5), just as it was on Christ's death; as if His hanging on the cross is parallel to the saints' tribulation. The Angels comment "It is done" when the saints are finally delivered (Rev.16:17), as our Lord could say "It is finished" at the end of His sufferings. The great earthquake which is then described (Rev.16:18) matches the earthquakes at Christ's death and resurrection. See on Mk. 13:13.

The saints will sing "The Song of Moses", which Ex. 15 records was sung after the triumph at the Red Sea. This indicates that Israel in Egypt prior to that represents the saints, just before the Lord's coming. Rev. 15:2-4 is all in the context of the Exodus: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire (cp. the calm Red Sea after it had returned over the Egyptians): and them that had gotten the victory (God was victorious at the Red Sea, Ex. 15:1) over the beast (Egypt is the prototype beast, Is. 51:9; Ez. 29:3)... having the harps of God (cp. Miriam's timbrels)... they sing the song of Moses... Who shall not fear Thee (cp. Ex. 15:14-16)... all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest", referring to how the Arab nations of Canaan were subdued as a result of the Red Sea victory (see Ex. 15:15). There must therefore be a latter day equivalent of the Red Sea.

15:4 God's judgments are in all the earth right now (Ps. 105:7). God judged nations in order that men might *know* Him as Yahweh (e.g. Ez. 25:11; 28:22; 30:19). Yahweh is exalted in His judging of men (Is. 5:16). His judgments make His Name / character manifest. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name?... all nations shall come and worship before thee; *for thy judgments are made manifest*" (Rev. 15:4).

This harder side of God converts men, and will convert them at the final judgment. God judged nations [often terribly] in order that men might *know* Him as Yahweh (e.g. Ez. 25:11; 28:22; 30:19). Yahweh is exalted in His judging of men (Is. 5:16). His judgments make His Name / character

manifest. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name?...all nations shall come and worship before thee; *for thy judgments are made manifest*" (Rev. 15:4). A number of OT passages (e.g. Is. 25:3) hint that a remnant of Israel's Arab enemies will actually repent and accept Yahweh's Truth- *after* their experience of His judgments. God is to be feared and worshipped because of the hour of His judgment (Rev. 14:7); "when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9).

15:5-8 In Isaiah 6:1-4 we have a vision of "the Lord high and lifted up", enthroned in the temple, with an earthquake, the temple filled with smoke, the doorposts that held up the veil being shaken (with the implication that the veil falls; 6:4). Note how Rev. 15:5-8, building on this passage, has the veil being removed, the Most Holy opened, and the temple filled with smoke. This sends the mind straight to the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion and the earthquake (Mt. 27:51). The Lord "high and lifted up" (6:1) is a phrase that occurs later in Isaiah (52:13), concerning the crucified Lord, lifted up and exalted "very high" by the cross. John 12:37-41 tells us that Isaiah 6 is a vision of the Lord Jesus in glory; and in this passage John quotes both Isaiah 6 and 53 together, reflecting their connection and application to the same event, namely the Lord's crucifixion. So it is established that Is. 6 is a vision of the crucified Lord Jesus, high and lifted up in glory in God's sight, whilst covered in blood and spittle, with no beauty that man should desire Him. The point is, when Isaiah saw this vision he was convicted of his sinfulness: "Woe is me, for I am undone...". And yet the same vision comforted him with the reality of forgiveness, and inspired him to offer to go forth and witness to Israel of God's grace. So once again, the vision of the cross convicts men of their sin, and yet inspires them to go forward in service. In passing, it should be noted that the vision of Isaiah 6 has evident similarities with those of Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4. These likewise show something of the glory of God in the crucified Christ, and they likewise inspired men like Ezekiel and John in their work of witness and living the life of the spirit in the midst of apostasy. The only other time the phrase "high and lifted up" occurs in Isaiah is in 57:15, where we read that He who is the exalted and lofty one (AV- the same words as 'high and lifted up') dwells with those who are crushed (Heb. *Dakka*- cp. Is. 53:5,10), i.e. those who share in the Lord's crucifixion in their lives. This passage is talking about God Himself in the first instance- just as Yahweh is spoken of as walking on the waters, and yet the Lord Jesus did this in manifestation of the Father. Likewise many NT passages appropriate words true only of God Himself to the Lord Jesus, in that He manifested the Father. And so it seems the same principle operates here. The one "high and lifted up" was the Lord Jesus in Isaiah chapters 6 and 52. In chapter 57 it is God Himself, and yet in that the Lord Jesus knew the depths of the cross, so He came to manifest the heights of His Father. And *through this* God through Him is able to dwell with the crushed. In a sense, the suffering servant has been exalted to the throne of God and yet is able to know the feelings of those who are still the suffering servants. The same idea is found in Rev. 4- the one who sits enthroned is as it were a slain lamb. There is a connection between His present glory and His previous suffering on the cross.

15:8 no man- see on Ps. 80:1.

16:2- see on Rev. 8:7; Rev. 13:17.

16:5 Revelation abounds with examples of Angels talking and co-operating with each other in order to execute God's purpose; e. g. in Rev. 16:5 one Angel comments on the wisdom of another Angel's action- "the Angel of the waters said (to the third Angel of v. 4), Thou art righteous... because Thou hast judged thus". See on Gen. 1:26.

That a specific Angel controls "the waters" (Rev. 16:5) is implied by the way flood waters are described as praising God (Ps. 42:8; 148:7), water trembling at God's presence (Ps. 77:17; Hab. 3:10), and the deep waters mourning (Ez. 31:15). How else can waters sensibly be personified as having such feelings, unless these figures of speech are in fact based upon the real existence of a personal "Angel of the waters"?

16:7 It seems that Jesus has His own personal Angels- He returns "with all His holy Angels"; the Angel of the altar (Christ) would also appear to be specifically connected with Him (Rev. 16:7), perhaps marshalling these Angels for Christ.

16:12- see on Jn. 3:32.

The sixth vial was poured out upon the Euphrates "so that the way of the kings of the east [the believers?] *might* be prepared" (Rev. 16:12). The allusion is the drying up of the Euphrates by Cyrus to bring about the fall of Babylon and the return of the exiles. Babylon fell- but the exiles generally didn't return as God intended. So perhaps the emphasis should be upon the word "might" in a conditional sense- the way of the triumphant saints will be *potentially* prepared by certain latter day judgments. This approach connects with how the fall of latter day Babylon is mentioned three times in Revelation (Rev. 14:8; 16:17-19; 17:16,17); and it's hard to work out *when* this happens; Rev. 16:17-19 places the fall of Babylon *after* Armageddon and Christ's return, whilst Rev. 17:16,17 places it *before* Armageddon. I see no contradiction here; it's just that the timing of the actual fall of Babylon and return of Christ are events which depend on various preconditions which may or may not be fulfilled by human freewill decisions. Such considerations may explain why it remains unclear whether Christ returns at the time of the 6th, or 7th vial. The language of both vials has application to His return, and yet some of it seems to speak of *before* His return. Perhaps it's beyond the technique of Biblical exposition to reconcile this language- it may simply be that the actual coming of Christ is dependent upon various conditional factors, and the inspired language of predictive prophecy is therefore appropriately ambiguous. Or take the way Revelation consistently speaks of "the beast" as if there is only one- and yet we read of three beasts, from the sea, the land and the abyss (Rev. 13,17). Is it really that the beast changes form over time- or are there three possible manifestations of "the beast" dependent upon various possible factors in human response? This approach would explain why Revelation is so hard to interpret if we insist on forcing all the events and pictures presented into a strictly progressive chronological sequence.

16:14 The immediate build up to Christ's return will be a result of much Angelic activity among the nations. We have elsewhere suggested that the references to "seducing" and "evil" spirits in Scripture may well refer to [good] Angels in some way. The three spirits that gather the nations to Armageddon may well refer to Angels (Rev. 16:14). See on Ez. 38:4.

Gathered together The previous Arab invasions which typify those of the future, also mention this 'gathering together': Sisera's forces did this (Jud. 4:13), as did those of Ammon (Jud. 10:19; 1 Chron. 19:7), the Amorites (Jud. 11:20), the Arab powers with Assyria in Hezekiah's time (Mic. 4:11), Gog's forces (Eze. 38:7), the Arab-Canaanite tribes (Gen. 34:30) and especially the Philistines (Jud. 16:33; 1 Sam. 13:5,11; 17:1; 25:1; 28:1; 29:1; 2 Sam. 23:11). This is quite some emphasis. Thus while we can expect to see greater potential Arab unity developing around the Israel issue and perhaps a common allegiance to charismatic 'Nebuchadnezzar' figure for a brief period, their complete meeting of minds will not be until the final push against Jerusalem.

16:15- see on 1 Jn. 2:28.

1 Tim. 5:24,25 implies a 'going through' of the good and bad works of men, with the added implication that it is done in the presence of others. Thus they will "see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). "All that behold" the unfinished spiritual building of the wicked "will mock him" (Lk. 14:29); and the accepted will praise each other for their humility in taking the lowest seat in ecclesial life (Lk. 14:10). The rejected will awake to "the reproach and abhorrence of the age" (Dan. 12:2 Dr. Thomas' translation)- as if they will be reproached by some. "When the wicked are cut off, [the righteous] shall see it" (Ps. 37:34). The 12 disciples will judge the tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28). At judgment day, the children of the Jews who criticized Jesus would judge them- "they shall be your judges" rather than Jesus Himself (Lk. 11:19). "The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools" (Prov. 3:35) is looking ahead to the judgment. But "shame" must be in the eyes

of someone; therefore the rejection of the wicked will be in the eyes of those who once knew them in the ecclesia. The men of Nineveh will condemn first century Israel (Mt. 12:41); the folly of the rejected will be made manifest unto all men (2 Tim. 3:9). This is not so as to simply humiliate the rejected. It is so that the faithful *learn* something too. This was all foreshadowed in the way that Israel experienced their judgments in the sight of the nations, so that God's principles would be taught even to the Gentile world (Ez. 5:8,15). Indeed, the idea of God executing judgment on His people *in the sight* of others is quite common (e.g. Ez. 5:8; 16:41). But we can learn the principles of God's judgments right now, from His word.

A read through Rev. 16:13-16 makes it evident that the 6th vial concerns the gathering of the nations to Armageddon; but right in the middle of this section we read: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked" - clearly relevant to the saints. It's as if the punishment of the unworthy believers and that of the nations is to be connected. The collapsing of time at the judgment would enable this to actually happen- the events used to punish the world could fall upon the rejected from the judgment seat. These unfortunate individuals will be threshed, as will the world be (Mt. 3:12; Rev. 16:16). This is foreshadowed by the way apostate Israel were treated like the surrounding Gentile world in the time of their judgments (Jer. 4:7). Thus in the 'judgment day' of AD70, the 'rejected' Jews were sent back into Egypt as slaves. "They shall return to Egypt" had been God's earlier prophesy (Hos. 8:13; 9:3). Their condemnation was expressed in terms of an undoing of the redemption from the world which they once experienced.

16:16 "Megiddo" and the descriptions of Sisera *gathering* his chariots and God *drawing* them into battle (Jud. 5:19) must link with the nations being *gathered* to Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). If this connection is valid, then "the kings of the earth (land - of Israel?) and of the whole world" which are gathered (Rev. 16:14) would primarily refer to the kings of the Arab world, Sisera of the latter days, or perhaps specifically to those within the 'land' at its maximum promised extent between the Nile and Euphrates.

Rev. 16:14-16 and Rev. 19:19 appear to be based upon the ideas of the 'gathering together' of Israel's Arab enemies outlined in the commentary on Rev. 16:14, and also upon Zech. 12:3. "The spirit of devils ... go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day... into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon". "The kings of the earth" can be interpreted as in Zech. 12:3; "of the whole world" may refer to the world in relation to Israel (as in Dan. 2), or possibly to the fact that all nations literally will be incited to attack Israel. 'Armageddon' meaning 'the valley of Megiddo', takes us back to Zech. 12:9,11: "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem... in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as... in the valley of Megiddon". The conclusion from this is that although Israel have repented before their victory in the valley of Jehoshaphat (the same area in terms of prophecy), according to the typology of 2 Chron. 20 and other passages, their full realization of the enormity of their sin of crucifying Jesus only comes home to them on seeing His complete rout of their enemies. Thus their returning to Jerusalem with joy (2 Chron. 20:27) will be preceded by, or mixed with, tears of pent-up emotional release. The similarity of the 'gather together' language has led us to associate the following:

- The gathering together of Israel's Arab enemies against her at various times
- The gathering of the Arab nations into a valley near Jerusalem (2 Chron. 20:16, A.V. mg.) for destruction in Hezekiah's time
- Joel's prophecy of all nations being gathered into the "valley of Jehoshaphat" (3:2)
- The gathering together of the Arab nations into the 'valley of Megiddo' (Rev. 16:16) to fight Israel in the last days.

It could be objected that the valley of Megiddo is in the North of Israel whilst that of Jehoshaphat is in the South, near Jerusalem. However, the other similarities of language and context are so great as

to suggest that they must refer to the same place. It may be that Megiddo having been the scene of many previous Arab battles in Israel's history, it is being used symbolically in Rev. 16:16 rather than as a literal geographical reference. Back in Rev. 16, the sixth vial has described how the nations will be gathered to their place of judgment in Armageddon. The seventh vial then records the destruction of Babylon, who receives "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" in the form of huge hailstones (Rev. 16:19,21). This equates the nations who are gathered to Armageddon with Babylon, which we will see is primarily a symbol of the Arab powers. The cup of the wrath of God alludes to Zech. 12:2,3, where the Arab nations also are "gathered together" and have burdened themselves with Jerusalem are made to drink "a cup of trembling" by reason of doing so. The punishment with giant hailstones recalls how Israel's Arab enemies were destroyed in the time of Joshua/Jesus (Josh. 20:11). This confirms our interpretation of 'Babylon' as having an Arab context.

16:17- see on Rev. 15:2.

The second coming will be our meeting with the Lord who died for us. To come before Him then will be in essence the same as coming before His cross. Rev. 16 describes the events of the second coming, and yet it is full of allusion back to the cross: "it is done", the temple of heaven opened (16:17); an earthquake (16:18), a cup of wine (16:19).

16:17-19- see on Rev. 16:12.

16:19 The Assyrian army was split up under three leaders, Tartan, Rabsharis and Rabshakeh. "Tartan" is related to the Assyrian god Tartak (2 Kings 17:31), further confirming that there was and will be a religious aspect to the final invasion. More proof of this is found in the great emphasis on their desire to take Jerusalem as opposed to anywhere else (2 Kings 18:17); 2 Chron. 32:2 AV mg.). "Rabsharis" is mentioned in Jer. 39:3 as being one of the princes of Babylon who came against Jerusalem during that invasion, again demonstrating the similarity between the invasions of Babylon and Assyria (see introduction to this study). The attack comes against Jerusalem from the south (Lachish, 2 Kings 18:17), as do the attacks in the historical incidents which typify this final invasion.

The subdivision of the Arab invader into three groups, as in the original Assyrian battle plan, may also be seen in the last days, seeing that some previous Arab invasions may have had this feature too:

- "The spoilers of the Philistines (raided Israel) in three companies" (1 Sam. 13:17).
- The Israelites fought their Ammonite enemies "in three companies", perhaps because there were three groups of Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:11).
- The account of Gideon's victory over Midian, a clear type of the latter-day Arab destruction, has a triple emphasis on Israel attacking them in "three companies" (Jud. 7:16,20,22) - perhaps for the same reason.
- The "great city" of Babylon/Assyria will be "divided into three parts" for its destruction (Rev. 16:19).
- The Chaldeans (Babylonians/Assyrians) attacked Job, symbolic of faithless Israel in three bands (Job 1:17). The book of Job has many other links with the Assyrian invasion (see later).
- Is there some reference to this in the enigmatic three frog like spirits of Rev. 16:16? See on Rev. 9:16.

The great city [Jerusalem] divided into 3 parts - an OT image of Jerusalem's judgment. Jerusalem divided into three opposing camps by internal strife- John, Simon and Eleazar (Wars 5.1.1,4).

16:20 The Arab nations in this confederacy will turn against 'Babylon' in the ultimate 'time of the end'; through them God's judgment against her is administered. Babylon "gathereth unto him all nations", but "shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him... shall they not rise up suddenly (and) bite thee... and thou shalt be for booties unto them?" (Hab.2:5-8). First of all the islands (nations) flee away from Babylon (Rev.16:20), the

birds and animals scatter from under the big tree as it starts to totter. This may well speak of those Arab individuals who repent and 'come out of' Babylon. Yet seeing that all these nations on a national level drink the same cup of judgment as Babylon (Jer. 25:19-26, cp. Rev. 16:19), it follows that their destruction must be through their judging and desolating Babylon. A hi-tec war situation in which they all desolate each other with missiles urges itself upon us as the likely fulfilment of this. Note that Babylon's king drinks the cup slightly after this (Jer. 25:26), in the same way as the Arab leaders of earlier invasions were singled out by Gideon for especially symbolic destruction (Jud. 8:12-21), which we are informed will have its latter-day counterpart (Ps. 83:11).

16:21 The exceeding great plague of hail was one of the plagues which lead to Israel's Passover deliverance (Ex. 9:22), and yet this is the language of the last days (Rev. 16:21)- as if there will again be a Passover deliverance for God's people, heralded by the pouring out of plagues upon those who persecute them.

17:1 Babylon's "sea", i.e. the Arab nations she had power over, will be dried up from her - i.e. she will no longer control them (Jer. 51:36; Rev. 17:1,15), but "the sea" (those Arab powers) will then come up against Babylon to destroy it (Jer. 51:42).

17:3- see on Rev. 12:14.

Is. 13:14,15 shows the connection of the Arab peoples with Babylon; people of these areas are urged to "flee every one into his own land (because) every one that is... joined unto (Babylon), shall fall by the sword" in the day of Babylon's judgment. This sounds like a hint that the Arab peoples will be given the opportunity to repent and avoid God's judgments. Their previously being "joined unto" Babylon is the language of marriage/intercourse, showing the brief intensity of their association (remember Babylon is called a whore in Rev. 17:5). The intensity of their joining together is shown by the fact that Babylon is spoken of as the 'hire of the north', although "the north" can refer to other Arab powers apart from Babylon (Jer. 1:14,15; 25:9; 46:24). Passages where "the north country" is Babylon include Jer. 3:18; 6:22; 10:22; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8; 46:10. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that these powers became part of 'the king of the north' for the purposes of Israel and Jerusalem's invasion and judgment. Jer. 51:20-23 speaks of Babylon as an individual controlling others, i.e. the other Arab nations - e.g. a rider of a horse, a shepherd over a flock, a ploughman over his oxen. This paves the way for Babylon being the whore who rides the beast (Rev. 17:3). In similar vein Is. 49:26 speaks of Israel's Arab enemies being fed "with their own flesh", whilst Babylon's flesh will be eaten by the powers confederate with her (Rev. 17:16). This shows their close association.

17:4 The beast of 17:4 was "full of blasphemous names". Not only the heads of the Beast (13:1), but its whole body is covered with them, indicating that the entire empire sanctioned the emperors' arrogation of divine titles; such titles could be found throughout the Roman world, inscribed on public buildings and monuments. The golden cup which the whore has (cp. 18:6; Jer. 51:7) has contents which would have been understood as idolatrous cults and the vices of Rome-all in sharp contrast with its outward beauty and the splendour of the woman. These prophecies were therefore in direct and open criticism of the Roman empire which surrounded the early ecclesia.

17:5- see on 1 Cor. 9:27 for a Jewish / Roman interpretation of "Babylon". There are other similarities with the apostate Jewish system:

Double unto her double	Jer. 16:18; Is. 40:2
Sound of the millstone no longer heard...	Jer. 25:10
In her was found the blood of the prophets	Jer. 2:34; Lk. 11:50 [the blood of all the prophets was required of Jerusalem in AD70]

Great whore 17:1	Ez. 16,23; Jer. 2,3; Hos. 1-4
Arrayed in purple and scarlet	Ez. 28:5,6,8- a priest, cp. Jer. 4:30
Precious stones	The High Priest's breastplate
Golden cup full of abominations	Ez. 23:25, 32-34 cp. Mt. 23:28
Upon her forehead a name written	A parody of 'Yahweh' written on the High Priestly mitre
Mother of harlots	Ez. 16:44-52
Drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus	The first century martyrs
Burnt with fire	The punishment for harlotry cp. Ez. 16:37-41
The habitation of demons	Mt. 12:43-45
Come out of her my people	Implies they were already within her, as God's people. Ref. To Lk. 21:20,21 and the need for the Christians to leave Judaism.
Her plagues...death, mourning and famine	Jer. 18:21
18:12,13 the things traded in	All used in the temple worship cp. 2 Chron. 2:4,7,8.
Rejoice over her thou heaven...for God hath avenged you	Dt. 32:43 LXX re. Israel
A great millstone cast into the sea	As happened to Judaism / the temple mount as a result of faith in Christ (Mt. 21:21; 18:6)
Harpers harping	In the temple
A candle	The menorah
In her was found the blood of the prophets	A prophet didn't perish outside Jerusalem (Lk. 13:33).
Babylon is "the great city"	Which in Rev. 11:8 is where Jesus was crucified, i.e. Jerusalem.
Babylon divided into three parts for judgement	As Jerusalem was (Ez. 5:1-4; Zech. 14:1-4).

17:6 Hab.2:16 describes how Babylon is punished at the Lord's return because of her drunkenness. Rev.17:6 defines this as being "with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus", as if to imply that it is the Babylon/ beast's mad, drunken persecution of the saints in the last days that results in the Lord's return in judgment.

17:7 The seven heads are seven kings, 5 have been, one is, one is yet to come for a short space: The first seven Caesars of Rome: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius already dead. The sixth, Nero, was alive when John was given the Revelation; and the seventh was Galba who reigned only

7 months (June 68 - Jan 69). This order of the Caesars is that taken from standard works: Suetonius (Lives of the twelve Caesars); Dio Cassius (Roman History 5); Josephus (Antiquities 19.1.11 cp. 18.2.2; 18.6.10). The beast's war with the saints for 42 months (13:5-7) = the Neronian persecution. Note how 13:12,14 interchanges the head with the whole beast. Mosheim confirms this: "The dreadful persecution which took place by order of this tyrant, commenced at Rome about the middle of November in the year of our Lord 64... this dreadful persecution ceased but with the death of Nero... in the year 68 [June], when he put an end to his own life" L. von Mosheim, Historical Commentaries vol. 1, tr. Robert Vidal (NY: Converse, 1854) pp 138,139. In the same way as the 1st century believers could not have accurately predicted how all this would come about, but would have been wonderfully encouraged as they saw it all happening, and perceived then the interpretation- so we will see the Revelation come true, rather than be able to predict its precise fulfillment, in our final "last days".

The fear or awe of the Lord, our wonder at Him, is the beginning of wisdom. Wonder isn't a kind of intellectual resignation, giving up on the study of God and retreating into numb feelings. Quite the opposite. True wonder leads to a more earnest seeking after wisdom. The Angel told John that John had 'wondered' in amazement at the visions so that God could now reveal the mystery to him (Rev. 17:6,7). In our wonder we sense we are at the beginning of things of infinite significance, we feel we are starting to grasp something ultimate. And we wish to go further. We will glory in the understanding and knowledge of God which that wonder stimulates us to search out (Jer. 9:22,23)

17:8 Like the Lamb, who was killed and then raised up (5:6), the Beast seems to disappear and then return to life (17:8). This passage may be a reference to some definite event, such as the murder of Caesar and the healing of the empire under Augustus, the legend of *Nero redivivus*, whereby Nero was believed to have returned from the dead. The marvellous cure of the Beast excites admiration and leads to the adoration of the dragon and the Beast (17:8). This is an allusion to the rapid progress of the emperor cult and to the ready acceptance of the immoral example of the emperors. Thus Caesar is set up as the very antithesis of the one true Lord and Master, Jesus.

17:10 A pre-AD70 date for Revelation has been well argued by J.A.T. Robinson, H.A. Whittaker and Paul Wyns. John would've been pretty old if it was indeed given in AD96 as claimed by some. The many connections between Revelation and the Olivet prophecy and 2 Peter 3 all suggest that it too is a prophecy of AD70. The historical connections are too great to ignore, and seem of little value if the book is simply alluding at a later date to what happened in AD70. Rev. 17:10 speaks of the leadership of the Roman empire, speaking of "five that are fallen"- clearly referring to:

1. Julius Caesar the first Roman Emperor (44 BC-26 BC).
2. Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).
3. Tiberius (AD 14 – 37).
4. Gaius (AD 37 – 41).
5. Claudius (AD 41 – 51)

The leader who "is" would therefore refer to Nero (AD54-68), and the context of persecution would then be that of his reign.

17:16 According to the prototype of the Old Testament invasions of Israel, their enemies turn against each other. We are to expect this in the last days, so that, e.g., Ethiopia will turn against Assyria. This may be part of the process whereby the horns "hate the whore" of Babylon/Assyria during the final stage of their persecution of God's people (Rev. 17:16 cp. Hab 2:8). Nah 3:9 points out that the real strength of Assyria against Israel was on account of the support she received from the smaller Arab powers. Likewise the 'Romans' who destroyed the temple in AD70 were largely Arab and Persian mercenaries. Similarly no one Arab nation presently has any likelihood of dominating the Middle East in terms of military power. Iran and Iraq (geographical 'Assyria') will need the assistance of the other Arab nations to realistically invade Israel. "*Tidings* out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him" (Dan. 11:44) uses the same word translated "rumour" in 2

Kings 19:7, concerning the 'rumour' Sennacherib heard of his Ethiopian allies turning against him. These 'tidings' can be interpreted in a last-days context as referring to news reaching 'Assyria' of her smaller Arab allies turning against her - the horns hating the whore (Rev. 17:16).

17:16,17- see on Rev. 16:12.

17:17 The final "day of the Lord" will contain elements of all the previous 'days' of God's manifestation in the affairs of men. It will be the time when "the words of God are fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17), when "all is fulfilled" (Lk. 21:22,32) - presumably referring to the prophetic word. It is therefore fitting that there are many Old Testament historical backgrounds to the prophecies which relate to the Lord's return; those events were types of the final last day. See on Mt. 24:15.

The last days will be the time when *every* prophecy has its ultimate fulfilment (Lk. 21:22; Rev. 17:17). Therefore we are justified in seeing every prophecy concerning Israel and her Arab neighbours as having at least some latter day application.

As in Hezekiah's time the Assyrians likened captivity in their land to the wonders of being in God's Kingdom, thus Babylon is likewise depicted as a fake Kingdom of God. All the nations flowed together unto her (Jer. 51:44), as they will to the true Kingdom of God (Is. 2:2). She is called "that great city, which *reigneth* (Gk. 'basilia') over the kings of the earth" (Rev.17:18). 'Basilia' is normally used about God's Kingdom. When Jesus described His Kingdom as a tree "greater than all herbs" with "great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it" (Mk.4:32), He was actually quoting from the description of the kingdom of Babylon in Dan.4. By doing so, He was pointing out that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, legendary as it might be, was but a fake replica of His.

17:18- see on Rev. 14:6-9.

According to Rev. 17 & 18, the latter day Babylon persecutes the saints, both Israel and the believers, and extends her power over "all the earth". Her leadership sits on seven mountains. All attempts to identify these with literal hills in Jerusalem or Rome seem to me rather futile as the prophecy states clearly enough that these seven mountains represent seven kings (Rev. 17:9,10 RV "they are seven kings"). And there are very few symbols in Revelation which we are intended to interpret dead literally. The latter day Babylon will therefore head up a confederacy of seven nations. When the mountains flee in Rev. 16:10, Babylon loses the support base of the coalition she leads. These kings are described in Rev. 17:18 as the kings of the land- that promised to Abraham. And within the boundaries of that land we find seven such nations- Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Iran. The appeal in Rev. 14:6-8 and Rev. 18:4 for Christian believers to "come out of her" would imply that there are believers within those nations and that there will be a major witness made to her- and it is surely highly significant that there has been a great growth in conversions in those areas in recent times! This is a sure sign that we are approaching the time of the end. Sadly Rev. 18:24 implies that believers will be murdered in these areas in the final tribulation- and already the persecution and murder of Christian converts is in full swing there. The description of Babylon sitting upon various peoples, nations and tongues is to be connected with the same use of the phrase in Rev. 5:9 and 7:9 to describe the world from which Christian believers are drawn out. And significantly, the same phrase is very commonly used in Daniel to describe the area ruled over by historical Babylon (Dan. 3:4,29; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14). God will make the various nations under Babylon's rule to "agree" (Rev. 17:17)- there will be an unprecedented unity amongst those nations located within the land promised to Abraham. Pan-Arabism will triumph in the end. The resolution of the Iran-Iraq tensions is one example of this 'agreement' being reached. This union will lead to economic prosperity for the region (Rev. 18:3)- easy to imagine, given the huge oil wealth of these areas. Babylon will become a fake Kingdom of God; hence she is described in terms elsewhere applied to the people and land of Israel (Rev. 18:22,23). Babylon is arrayed in fine linen (Rev. 18:16) as a pseudo-bride of Christ.

18:2 demons- see on Job 2:4.

18:3- see on Rev. 17:18.

The description of Rome's trading in chapter 18 would have been especially powerful- it would have seemed that Rome was invincible, economically and politically unshakeable, admired by the whole world. And yet it was to be brought down by Divine judgment. Note too how these passages are also applicable to Jerusalem- as if there in the city that was so defiantly anti-Roman, the same abuses in essence were going on, and would meet a like judgment.

18:4 Lot's witness completed, he was told to leave Sodom "lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Gen. 19:15), with "thy two daughters which are here". "Are here" in the Hebrew means literally 'to come out'- as if to stress that although living with Lot, they still had made the conscious decision to leave. The fact that they did not look back like their mother would indicate a certain degree of spiritual strength- and perhaps they were still virgins because they declined to marry "the men of Sodom (who) were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen.13:13). This command to leave Sodom "Lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" is clearly one of the source passages for Rev.18:4 concerning Babylon: "I heard another (Angelic) voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues". Note that it was also an Angel who said this to Lot. Babylon is directly equated with Sodom in Is. 13:19 and Jer. 50:40. Babylon geographically and culturally represents the Arab peoples of our last days- and therefore it is not surprising that related Arab nations like Edom, Moab and Ammon are also paralleled with Sodom (Jer. 49:18; Zeph. 2:9). This continues a long-standing Biblical theme that the curses on apostate Israel are the same as those on the Arabs- thus Sodom is representative of both Jews and Arabs.

Babylon (in Rev.)

"I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore" (Babylon); 17:2

The beast supporting Babylon "was and is not and shall ascend"; 17:8

"Her sins have reached unto Heaven, God hath remembered her iniquities"; 18:5

"She hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously"; 18:7

"Utterly burned with fire"; 18:8

"Her plagues... death... and famine"; 18:8

"The great city... great Babylon"; 16:19

"There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven" (16:21)

"They shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment"

Sodom

Cp. God showing Abraham the judgment of Sodom.

Sodom and surrounding cities were strong, then overrun by Abraham, then revived.

"The cry of Sodom... is great because their sin is very grievous ...the cry of it is come unto me" (Gen.18:20,21)

"Pride... fulness of bread" (Ez. 16:49)

'Sodom' = 'burning'.

"He overthrew all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (cp. "famine"; Gen. 19:25).

The city of Sodom.

"The Lord rained upon Sodom... brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen.19:24).

Abraham standing far away and seeing the smoke of Sodom's burning indicates that the

(18:9,10)	surrounding kings did likewise (Gen.19:28).
Merchants suffered through Babylon's fall (18:11-19)	Sodom was a trading centre (Lk. 17:28)
"...a great millstone cast into the sea ...thus with violence shall... Babylon.. be found no more at all" (18:21)	Sodom now appears to be submerged in the Dead Sea, to be found no more.
"Her smoke rose up" (19:3)	"Sodom... the land of the plain... the smoke of the country went up" (19:28)

Lot's call out of Sodom represents how the Angels will call us out of this present evil world. Indeed, our Lord said that Sodom represents the world just prior to the second coming (Lk.17:28). The evident connections with latter day Babylon would suggest that 'Babylon' too represents the world of the last days; "Come out of her my people" (Rev.18:4) therefore refers to the Angel's plea to us at the second coming, in addition to any previous historical reference it may have to the Catholic apostasy. The call for the first century Jews to leave Rome or for true believers to come out of Catholicism were pointers towards the ultimate fulfilment of these words, which will be in our leaving this life at the behest of the Angel who comes to call us away. Our obedience then will be the summation of all the previous decisions God's people have made to 'come out' from the 'world' in its various forms.

If 'Babylon' refers specifically to the Arab powers, it is possible to see Sodom representing the world under Arab control in the last days, offering great material wealth. Yet the obvious Biblical basis for the language of "come out of her my people" is in the many references to Israel being called on to leave the soft life of Babylon and return to the land during the restoration (e.g. Zech.2:6,7). In this there is a remarkable similarity with Sodom. The Jews in Babylon maintained their separateness, and yet became heavily involved in the government of Babylon (as witness Daniel and his friends, along with secular history). This is parallel to Lot's position in Sodom. Yet the prosperity of Babylon made the Jews disinclined to leave it in order to go to Jerusalem, as Lot had a similar disinclination. And the easy life of the present world will also seem a greater attraction to the unworthy of the new Israel, when the Angel calls them to go to Jerusalem to meet their Lord.

If we are not separate from this world now, we will not be separated from them when the judgments fall. If we don't come out from Babylon, we will share her judgments (Rev. 18:4). Zion lost her children and also her husband whilst still a young woman (Is. 49:21; 54:6), just as Babylon would (Is. 47:9). Each street of Jerusalem was named after an idol, just as was the case in Babylon (Jer. 11:13)- and thus Jerusalem shared Babylon's judgment. The world will be gathered to Jerusalem for condemnation as will unworthy saints (Rev. 16:14,16; 19:19). This is foreshadowed by the way apostate Israel were treated like the surrounding Gentile world in the time of their judgments (Jer. 4:7). Israel worshipped the Babylonian gods, and so they were sent along with Bel their idol to Babylon, where their hearts were. And so they were "Condemned with the world...". Likewise in the 'judgment day' of AD70, the 'rejected' Jews were sent back into Egypt as slaves. Their condemnation was expressed in terms of an undoing of the redemption from the world which they once experienced.

18:6 Those who judge Babylon are told, "As she hath done, do unto her" (Jer. 50:15). This is quoted in Rev. 18:6 concerning the saints as the judges of Babylon. It would appear from this that there must be two stages in Babylon's judgment:-

1) The Arab armies attacking her armies, both near Jerusalem and in geographical 'Babylon'. They are themselves largely destroyed while doing this.

2) The saints possibly directing some of the repentant Arab peoples, complete the judgment, giving some of the spoils to these Arabs.

18:7 Rome boasted that "I sit a queen" (18:7). The chief sin of Rome as of all pagan empires consists in their assertion that their power and their authority derive exclusively from themselves, that they are their own masters, recognizing no superior law. Please note that in seeing a first century fulfillment of Revelation I in no way thereby necessarily exclude a continuous historic or latter day fulfillment of it also.

Other prophecies about the sudden destruction of literal Babylon- which can only be latter day in their application- are also the basis for the words of Revelation about latter day Babylon. Consider:

"Thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me: I shall not sit a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children" (Is. 47:8)	"How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously...for she hath said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Rev. 18:7).
"But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood" (Is. 47:9)	"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning" (Rev. 18:8)
"Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up" (Is. 47:13)	"For by thy sorceries..." (Rev. 18:23)

Therefore we conclude that the Babylon of Revelation is the Babylon of Jeremiah and Isaiah, literal Babylon, which awaits her full punishment. This conclusion is strengthened once it is appreciated how the harlot Babylon of Rev. 17, loud, gaudy, decked with jewellery and painted face, is replete with reference to Semiramis, the goddess / mother of Nimrod, and one of the patron gods of literal Babylon.

18:8 Rev. 18:8 is specific that latter-day Babylon will be punished with famine. The Philistines, clearly typical of Israel's present Arab neighbours, will also die from severe famine in the last days (Isa. 14:30). This may well be due to the weaponry used to inflict this upon Israel being used by the Arabs against themselves. Babylon's famine coming "in one day" (Rev. 18:8) would suggest something along these lines - how else can a famine be suddenly created in a day?

The Lord taught that the believer who makes his brother stumble should have a millstone hung around his neck and be cast into the sea (Lk. 17:2). This is exactly Babylon's judgment (Rev. 18:21). The unloving in the ecclesia will be treated like the unloving world whose spirit they share. The rejected will weep and gnash their teeth (Mt. 25:30)- and be sent back into the Babylon-world, where they are also weeping and angry (Rev. 18:15,19). As the tree of Babylon will be cut down, so will the rejected be (Dan. 4:14,23 = Mt. 7:19). As Babylon is burnt with fire (Rev. 18:8), and indeed the whole 'world' too (2 Pet. 3:10), so will the rejected be (Mt. 13:40 etc.).

If indeed time is collapsed, this would enable all these prophecies to come true, but not in real time. Babylon is to be punished with famine in one day; yet famine is a process (Rev. 18:8). In one day her judgments come, and yet also in one hour (18:10). Surely the lesson is that time is compressed. The events around Christ's return were prefigured by those at the time of Joshua's conquest of the land. Some of the records of his campaigns require a huge amount to have been achieved by his soldiers within around 36 hours. The comment that so much was achieved "at one time" (Josh. 10:42) may hint at a compression of time to enable it. "The sun stood still" may well be intended to

teach that the meaning of time was collapsed by God, rather than that the sun literally stood still (Josh. 10:12,13). And the sun standing still over Gibeon is mentioned in Is. 28:21 as typical of the time when Yahweh will do "His strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act" in the last days. The same may be true when the shadow went back for Hezekiah. The movement of the planets need not have been altered; the meaning of time was simply suspended. Rev. 8:12, also speaking of the last days, says that "the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise". Could this mean that one day and one night last only two thirds of their usual length, whilst the judgments of the fourth Angel are poured out upon the land? I would suggest that the Lord had in mind the suspension of time when he asked that "the hour might pass from him" in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:35); rather than asking to escape the cross in this request, he was perhaps asking for it all to happen in only a moment of real time.

18:9 Even Babylon itself will be encouraged to repent through her latter day judgments. In this context we read: " Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her (cp. Rev. 18:2,9); take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed" (Jer. 51:8). Truly God does not willingly afflict, but in judgment remembers mercy, and His ultimate aim of achieving His glory.

Is.34 describes the judgments of "all nations" around Israel, notably "upon Idumea", in language which is clearly alluded to in the later prophecies of Babylon's doom in Revelation (v.9,10=Rev.14:11; 17:16; 18:9; v.11=Is.14:23). Indeed, all God's prophecies against Israel's enemies have marked points of contact with each other. Thus the prophecies against Tyre in Is.23 are shot through with links with those against Babylon in Revelation; and "as at the report (prophecy) concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre" (Is.23:5). Is.14:3 says that Babylon treated Israel like the Egyptians did; they too gave them "sorrow... fear, and... hard bondage wherein (Israel) wast made to serve" . Because of these similarities in how they treated and will treat God's people, their judgments will be similar. Yet a number of these nations, notably Egypt and Tyre, are described as being judged and destroyed by Babylon (e.g. Ez.26:7). However, there is good reason to think that Babylon's own judgment will be at the hands of nations like these, who come under her umbrella during their invasion of Israel. The resolution of this apparent contradiction lies in the prophecies concerning the Arab powers destroying each other in the final conflict, thus fulfilling all these prophecies concerning their judging of each other.

18:10 The destruction of the city is a sudden thing. The phrase "in one hour" occurs three times in Rev. 18. This destruction is like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Literal Babylon was not destroyed "in one hour" in 536 BC. The predicted fall of Babylon must therefore be in our last days.

18:11 The apostate religious system called "Babylon" in Revelation is evidently presented in the language of Solomon - at the time his kingdom was apparently flourishing, due to his righteousness:

1 Kings	Revelation
10:14	13:17,18
10:23	18:11,12,15
11:1,2	17:1,2
10:22	18:17,19
10:23	18:3,17
10:21,22	18:12
10:11	18:12
10:22	18:12
10:10,25	18:13

10:23	18:3,9
10:28	18:12
9:22	18:13
11:1,5 (Solomon influenced by Zidonian idolatry)	2:20 cp. 1 Kings 16:31
2 Chron. 9:15 (666)	13:18

18:13 Slaves in the first century were seen as mere bodies owned by their masters or mistresses. Hence Rev. 18:13 describes slaves as *somata*, bodies. They were seen as both the economic and sexual property of those who owned them. It seems Paul had this in mind when he spoke of how we have one master, Christ, and our bodies are indeed not our own- but they are His, to be used according to His wishes. For many slaves, this would've meant running the risk of death or flogging. And yet despite this radical demand, Christianity spread rapidly amongst the huge slave population of the first century world.

18:16 - see on Rev. 17:18.

18:19 "The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse (Jesus, v. 11), and against his army". The connection with 2 Chron. 20 and the other references to Israel's Arab enemies 'gathering together' invites us to see the beast as a primarily Arab organization. If there is a detailed allusion here to the 2 Chron. 20 scenario, Jehoshaphat (against whom the Arab kings initially gathered together) would represent Jesus, and Jehoshaphat's army would tally with the resurrected saints. In this case, the final Arab onslaught will be after the return of Jesus. In passing, note the differentiation between the leaders in this conflict and their armies: "The kings of the earth, and their armies... him that sat on the horse (Jesus) and against his army". This would suggest a specific Arab hatred of the Lord Jesus which is separate from, although in addition to, their antipathy towards Israel and the saints. It may also be possible to see in the separation between "the kings of the earth, and their armies" a certain degree of coercion, or difference of motivation, between leaders and people. It may be that an Moslem-dominated U.N., E.U. or similar organization controlling some kind of global army will fulfill such requirements.

18:20- see on Jn. 7:24.

18:21 When God described Nineveh as a "great city", the very fact of its size elicited a desire to spare it. And of course we meet the same phrase in Revelation (Rev. 18:21), where a condemned Babylon is described as a "great city". This was not God gleefully preparing to destroy a huge city. He surely had Nineveh in mind when He inspired those words. This was, and will be, a God whose very heart is touched by the tragedy of sinners having to be punished, and who is open to a change of purpose if they will repent. Thus the latter day appeal to "Come out of her!", whether we understand 'Babylon' as false religion, the Moslem world, the world of sinners or whoever, is rooted in God's spirit of passionate love towards Nineveh. As Jonah "cried" against Nineveh, so God 'cries' against Babylon (Rev. 18:2). We who make that appeal in these last days should be reflecting here on earth the mind of God in Heaven; not merely pronouncing doom and gloom against 'Babylon', but warning them of God's stated intentions towards them *with a heart that bleeds for them and seeks their repentance*.

The writer of Psalm 137, sitting angry and frustrated by a Babylonian riverside, with his guitar hanging on a willow branch, being jeered ("tormented" Ps. 137:3 RVmg.) by the victorious Babylonian soldiers who had led him away captive... he felt *so* angry with them. Especially when they tried to make him sing one of the temple songs ("sing us one of the songs of Zion"). And, as a bitter man does, his mind went from one hurt to another. He remembered how when Babylon had

invaded, the Edomites hadn't helped their Hebrew brethren (Obadiah 11,12). They had egged on the Babylonian soldiers in ripping down the temple, shouting [in a chorus?] "Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation". And so in anger and bitterness this Jew prays with tears, as he remembered Zion, "O daughter of Babylon... happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock" (:8,9 RV). God read those angry words as a prayer, and in some sense they will have their fulfilment. For these words are picked up in Rev. 18:8,21 and applied to what will finally happen to Babylon. Her spiritual children will be dashed against the rock of Christ, the stone of Daniel 2:44, at His return. He will dash in pieces the Babylon-led people that oppose Him.

It seems the rejected saints will share the judgements of Satan, the beast, the antiChrist. Thus Babylon has a millstone tied round her neck and she is thrown into the sea (Rev. 18:21), just as the judgement of the rejected saints is described (Mt. 18:6). They will be ground to powder by the stone of Christ (Mt. 21:44), just as he will fall on the nations of the Babylon confederacy and grind them to powder (Dan. 2:34). The Lord will appoint his unwatchful servant a place of condemnation "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46). This is understandable once we appreciate the idea that there are only two Kingdoms, God's and Satan's. The unworthy were effectively in Satan's Kingdom, therefore they will suffer the judgement that is prepared for it. Therefore we *must* separate from Babylon, Satan's Kingdom, or else we will receive her judgements (Rev. 18:4). Likewise the condemnation of the apostate in Israel is very often described in the language of the judgements on the surrounding kingdoms (e.g. Joel 1:5,10-12 = Is. 16:10; Ez. 16:37-39 = Rev. 17:16; Jer. 16:9 = Rev. 18:23; Jer. 49:4 = Jer. 31:22; Jer. 51:27 = Joel 1:4; 2:1; Jer. 50:13 = 19:8). The cup of judgement that Israel will drink will be given to the Arab nations who have afflicted her (Is. 51:23). This is all the principle of Rev. 18:6; as the latter day Babylon does to natural and spiritual Israel, so it will be done to her. Apostate Israel are often described as if they are Arabs- they share the same judgements, because they have effectively sold their birthright. Israel "sat... as the Arabian in the wilderness" (Jer. 3:2). Judah would be punished along with Egypt, Moab and Ammon, the circumcised with the uncircumcised (Jer. 9:25,26). Thus Rom. 9:8 describes faithless Israel as "the children of the flesh", with allusion to Arab Ishmael; and Gal. 4:23 likewise. The early chapters of Romans reason that both Jew and Gentile receive the same judgment, because both have sinned. The judgements on the nations are all described in similar language, whatever time or place they were in. Thus Babylon's judgement in Rev. 18 is based on the judgement of Egypt as recorded in Ez. 32:4-10, and Egypt's judgement of Ez. 29:4 is that of Gog in Ez. 38:4. The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10). There are so many examples of this. Surely the point is that fundamentally, all the nations of the world, in whatever time and place, are all fundamentally the same Kingdom of Satan, and will suffer the same destruction by the Kingdom of God. Likewise the Kingdom of God to which we belong is not limited by time or geography.

18:22 There is the assumption by many that all the O.T. prophecies about 'Babylon' were fulfilled in the overrunning of Babylon by the Medes. However, there are many details of those prophecies which didn't have a total fulfilment, and this we must see what the Medes did as but a partial, incipient fulfilment of what is going to come in the last days. This also requires that we understand 'Babylon' as literal Babylon- for it was against her that the prophecies were uttered in the first place. And quite clearly, the prophecies of Revelation against 'Babylon' are extensions of those of the Old Testament. We therefore are encouraged to see the 'Babylon' of Revelation as the Babylon of the prophets- i.e., literal Babylon. Jeremiah 51 predicts the judgment of Babylon, and yet v. 46 says this is a time when ruler will fight ruler. And this is quoted in Mt. 24:6,7 as being specifically applicable to our last days. Literal Babylon decayed due to the ravages of time, whereas Babylon was to fall "suddenly" (Jer. 51:8). And Rev. 18 tells us that the fall of Babylon will be "in one hour", smiting her down suddenly in her prime. This must be future in its fulfilment. Rev. 18:22 and

14:8 both speak of “Babylon is fallen” as applying to a latter day scenario. And yet these words are lifted straight from Is. 21:9 and Jer. 51:8, prophecies about *literal* Babylon being destroyed suddenly- a destruction which is clearly future, seeing the city was never so suddenly destroyed in the past. The suddenness of the destruction is a keynote of these prophecies. See on Rev. 18:7.

19:6- see on Rev. 6:9.

19:8 The “righteous acts” of the saints will be publicly arrayed before all (Rev. 19:8)- by none other than the Lord. All their good ‘acts’ will be revealed to all. And yet that righteousness is what they are clothed with by Christ- perhaps suggesting that their good deeds will be presented in a heightened form, as imputed righteousness, which would explain why the righteous will be shocked that the Lord could speak so highly of them (“When saw we thee...?”).

19:10 The preaching or testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, says Rev. 19:10. I understand this to mean that our testimony to Jesus is in the spirit of the Old Testament prophets. For Rev. 22:6 associates the God of the holy prophets [a phrase referring to the Old Testament prophets in Lk. 1:70 and Acts 3:32] with the same God who is with us in our witnessing to Christ. And Rev. 18:20 speaks of those prophets rejoicing in the last day together with all preachers of the Gospel. This is why incidents from the lives and teaching of the Old Testament prophets are repeatedly alluded to in the New Testament and applied to all of us. James 5:10 puts it bluntly- the prophets are to be taken by us as our examples. Jeremiah was warned: “Be not dismayed of *them*, lest I dismay *you*” (Jer. 1:17 RV). This is alluded to by the Lord when He tells us that if we are ashamed of Him and His words, then He will be ashamed of us (Lk. 9:26). The connection surely indicates that the Old Testament prophets and the spirit of their commissioning is intended to apply to us today in our fulfilling of the great commission. Thus the prophets become our pattern for witness; they are our “brethren the prophets” (Rev. 22:9). And so an understanding of them becomes programmatic for our witness today. Our audience, the world in which we live, is in essence that in which the prophets lived. Isaiah was up against the attitude that “Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die” (Is. 22:13)- and Paul quotes that passage as relevant for all Christians who hold the hope of resurrection amidst a world that does not (1 Cor. 15:32).

The Angel had made prophecies, and John felt that this was something so wonderful that it separated him from the Angel. But John like us was bearing “the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 1:9). The same essential spirit which was in the prophets is in all those who in *their* spirit or attitude bear the witness of Jesus. Hence the prophesying Angel encourages John not to worship him, but rather to recognize that he is John’s “fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book”, i.e. all believers (Rev. 22:9). And again, this was radical stuff for the initial audience of the Apocalypse. They were being told that they had the prophets as their brethren, and on account of their spirit / attitude of bearing the testimony of Jesus, the same spirit which was in the prophets was in them. The very act of bearing witness to Jesus in our spirit / disposition is in fact to have the same spirit in us which was in the prophets and was the basis of their prophetic witness. This makes the prophets our “brethren”, not distant white faced ‘saints’. See on Mt. 8:22.

19:11 One of the keys to understanding Revelation is to realize that it is structured as a series of visions based around the number seven. It must also be understood that as with many Old Testament prophecies, the book of Revelation is not strictly chronological in its fulfilment. Sometimes we read something which is actually the final picture, and then we read how this situation came about. At other times, we find a series of visions give us as it were ‘snapshots’ of different aspects of the same process. The seven final visions are introduced by the rubric “And I saw...”. It is my suggestion that they each show different aspects of the process of setting up the Kingdom. All references are to Revelation unless otherwise stated. The thoughtful student of the final chapters of Revelation will realize that there are difficulties in ‘fitting in’ our usual view of the Millennium with the information presented there. The suggestion is made in these notes that the “thousand years” simply means ‘a

very long time', and refers to eternity. This solves the problem that a rebellion at the end of the 'Millennium' would contradict Is. 9:7; 60:18; Jer. 3:17 and other passages which teach that "they shall learn war no more" after the Kingdom is established. The wrath of God is finished when the seven *last* plagues are poured out (Rev. 15:1 RV), at the Lord's return, i.e. at the *beginning* of the 'Millennium'. At the coming of Christ, the powers represented by the dragon and beast are defeated and chained up. The dead are raised and judged. The rejected join the dragon in the 'bottomless pit', an area on the borders of the land of promise, i.e. the initial geographical extent of the Kingdom. Here they are restrained, but once the Kingdom is established, perhaps after a period of 7 years or so, they 'attack' the land of Israel, where the Kingdom of God has been established. They are then destroyed. The Kingdom then continues eternally. The descriptions of a judgment seat in these final chapters are all related to the same judgment seat, i.e. that when Christ returns. The OT prophecies of a 'Millennium' with mortal people in it either apply to the setting up period of the Kingdom, or they are to be read in a more figurative way.

Christ goes out to make war, the Beast and his armies go out to make war against Him (v.19)- head on conflict.

19:12 Cp. our name in the Kingdom; no-one can enter into Christ's sense of resurrection and reward; there will always be an unreachable, untouchable element in him throughout eternity. Surely this makes our relationship with Him the more appealing.

As with many aspects of doctrine, it is often difficult for us to appreciate how radically revolutionary they were in the first century context; and in essence they should lose none of their radicalness with us. David Bosch observes: "Christians confessed Jesus as Lord of all lords- the most revolutionary political demonstration imaginable in the Roman Empire". Philip Yancey likewise: "As the church spread throughout the Roman empire, its followers took up the slogan 'Christ is Lord', a direct affront to Roman authorities who required all citizens to take the oath 'Caesar [the state] is Lord'". It hurt, it cost, to recognize Him as Lord. And so it should with us. Men and women died for this; and we likewise give our lives in response to that very same knowledge. There is a tendency, which the Lord Himself brought to our attention, of calling Him Lord but not doing what He says. To know Him as Lord in truth is axiomatically to be obedient to Him (Lk. 6:46). The reality of the Lordship of Jesus is used in Revelation (19:12, 16) to encourage the brethren to continue fearless in their witness despite persecution. Jesus is Lord of the kings of the earth; He has control over the world; therefore, no human power can harm us without His express permission and purpose. The exhortation of Ps. 110 is powerful: because Jesus is now seated at the Father's right hand, His people offer themselves as freewill offerings in this, the day of His power. They are arrayed in "holy attire" because *He* has been made the Priest after the order of Melchizedek- they share in the work which His exaltation has enabled (Ps. 110:1,3,4 RVmg.).

19:13- see on Heb. 12:24.

Joseph's blood drenched coat = Is. 63:2; Rev. 19:13.

19:14- see on Mt. 24:28.

19:17 birds of prey gathered together = Ez. 39:17-20; therefore Gog / Magog = Beast and false prophet (19:19). This = 14:18-20, which is Joel 3:13. Therefore Joel 3 and Ez. 38/39 are parallel.

19:19 This is war with Christ- therefore Ez. 38/9 = after Christ's return- the Psalm 2 scenario. He is already crowned, 19:12.

The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies 'gather together' to fight against Christ. This is the gathering of 16:13,14; they are gathered together by the power of the false miracles. Thus v. 20 mentions how "the false prophet that wrought miracles before [the beast]" is captured with the beast- the scene of 16:14.

19:20- see on Rev. 13:17.

"That wrought miracles"; the connections between Revelation and John's Gospel take us back to the miracles of Christ, for which John uses the same phrase (Jn. 2:11,18; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2,14,30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; 20:30. Thus the false prophet is an anti-Christ, a fake Christ with fake power and fake validation.

Destruction of the beast by fire = Dan. 7:11; Is. 30:30,33 (who is "the king"?). The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. This is the lake of 20:14,15; 21:8- where the unworthy saints are thrown. Thus the punishment of the rejected and that of the world is the same; and therefore there must be a separation *now*, lest we be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:). "Burning with brimstone" / sulphur recalls Sodom- where the unworthy believers shared the same fate as the 'world' around them. Lot's wife was turned into salt, as was the surrounding country (Lk. 17:29). "The lake of fire" will be in the presence of Christ (14:10)- not underground. "Cast alive" suggests torture; cp. 14:10 "tormented". Others are simply killed outright by Christ's word of command (20:21). This would suggest that even among the irresponsible there are degrees of punishment. Casting into a pit and fire as punishment cp. Babylon's persecution of Daniel and his friends.

Note how the Assyrian is described in Is. 30:31-33 as being thrown into a lake of fire- just as the future beast will be (Rev. 19:20). See on 2 Thess. 2:8.

19:21 Rev.19:17-21 describes "fowls" being called to eat the flesh of the carcasses of "all men" who had "gathered together" to fight God's people in the last days. This connection would associate the Philistines, who also "gathered together" (1 Sam.17:1) against Israel, with these latter day aggressors. The "all men" whose flesh is to be eaten are the remaining followers of the beast and false prophet, whose association with the Philistines encourages us to interpret them as having an Arab reference in the last days. This eating by fowls is equated with burning in the lake of fire, or Gehenna (Rev.19:20,21). Several passages in Jeremiah associate the mauling of carcasses by fowls with destruction in Gehenna. This creates the image of the Arab beast being ravaged by the 'fowls' of either natural Israel (as they represented in David's speech to Goliath) or the Arab nations once confederate with 'Babylon', as they seem to represent in Daniel.

20:2

Devil and Satan Bound

Comments

1. Verse 10 says that Satan is to be thrown into the lake of fire for ever. Eternal fire represents total destruction (Jer. 17:27; Jude 7) – it is not to be taken literally. Thus Satan is to be totally destroyed. Angels cannot die or be totally destroyed (Lk. 20:35,36), therefore Satan is not an angel. Death is also "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14). Death is not a being or person, it is an abstract concept. Death being cast into the lake of eternal fire, shows that it is going to be totally ended/destroyed. The beast and false prophet are also there. From what we learn earlier in Revelation these are human organizations, and according to this verse are also to be destroyed. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death"; those who commit sin will be punished with death, not eternal fire, therefore the lake of fire where they are must represent total destruction and death. Revelation 20:14 says as much: "the lake of fire...is the second death".

2. We have seen in Comment No. 6 on Revelation 12:7–9, that the Devil being called "that old serpent" means that whatever is represented by the Devil – be it our evil desires or a political system – has the characteristics of the serpent in Eden.

3. We have seen in our comment on Revelation 12:7–9 that the dragon is not a literal dragon, therefore the serpent is also to be taken figuratively.
4. We have seen that sin and spiritual deception come from our own evil heart (Mk. 7:21–23; James 1:14–15). Jeremiah 17:9 says that our heart is too deceitful for us to fully appreciate just how deceptive it is. We have also often seen that this evil heart is sometimes termed “Satan”; but Satan is not a force outside that evil heart – it is the heart itself.
5. Notice that Satan’s deceit of the nations and all of his powers were totally in control of God (Rev. 20:2,3,7). Satan is not a free agent to act as he wishes, without regard for God.
6. If the Devil in the sense of a personal being is caught hold of and bound at the start of the 1000 years, i.e. at the return of Christ, how then are we to understand that the Devil was “destroyed” by the death of Christ, and by the fact that a perfect Jesus had human nature (Heb. 2:14)? How come he is still running free at the time of Christ’s return? Further, Jesus had prophesied how in His death, He would “bind” [same Greek word] the “strong man” and enable us to spoil the Devil’s house (Mt. 12:29). The Devil in the sense of sin and the power of sin was indeed bound by the Lord’s death. The parable of the wheat and tares helps explain things further – the tares, the people and systems who follow the Devil in the sense of the desires of sin, grow together with the wheat, until the Lord comes and the Angels go forth and “bind them in bundles to burn them” (Mt. 13:30). Here in Rev. 20:1,2 we have an Angel binding the Devil and then burning him in the lake of fire. There’s an evident connection here. Surely the idea is that those *people and systems* who have followed the Devil / the flesh / sin will be exposed for whom they are, bound by the Angels, and destroyed by the end of the 1000 years. The Lord uses the same figure of ‘binding’ to describe how the condemned *people* at the final judgment will be ‘bound hand and foot’ by the Angels and then destroyed (Mt. 22:13).
7. I suggest that here again we have an example of Scripture alluding to contemporary incorrect ideas and deconstructing them. The Jews until about 150 B.C. believed that Messiah would return and establish His Kingdom on earth. But influenced by their humiliation under the Romans, they came to believe that the world was too evil for Messiah to return to, and that it required a 1000 year period of purification by the Jews before Messiah could return. Slavonic Enoch 22–23, which has been dated at around 50 A.D., stated this specifically. Revelation

was therefore written with this idea current in the surrounding Jewish world. I suggest that this incorrect view is being alluded to and deconstructed, by stating that Messiah will come at the *beginning* of the 1000 years and ‘purify’ the earth forcibly by figuratively ‘chaining’ Satan. Thus Messiah is to come and purify the earth Himself, rather than the Jews having to purify the earth for 1000 years before Messiah could come.

Suggested Explanations

1. Revelation 20:2 has clear links with Revelation 12:9 – “the great dragon... that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world”. We have interpreted this as having some reference to a political organization which epitomizes the Devil, i.e. man’s evil desires. The fact that it is “bound” for the 1,000 years of Christ’s Millennial reign (i.e. the first part of this Kingdom which He will set up on earth at His second coming), shows that this organization is very much in evidence in the last days before His coming – i.e. now.

This organization is “bound” during the Millennium. It then reappears, with God’s permission, at the end of the 1,000 years (v. 7) and inspires a political confederacy of nations to attack Christ (v. 8) – “God and Magog, to gather them together to battle”. This has many echoes of the confederacy against Christ in these last days before the second coming (cp. Ez. 38:2; Rev. 16:14,16). The same kind of political system will, perhaps, be allowed to develop again at the end of the 1,000 years. However, it is totally destroyed, v. 10, along with the other political systems – “the beast and the false prophet” – that meet their end at Christ’s second coming. The whole book of Revelation is full of allusions to the Old Testament prophecies. Rev. 20:1–3 is surely based upon Is. 24:21,22, which prophesied that the kings of the earth will be gathered together, imprisoned in a pit and punished. It is these very human “kings of the earth” who are described in the more figurative language of Revelation as “Satan”.

2. From what we know of conditions in the Millennium (the 1,000 years reign of Christ at the start of the Kingdom of God), the “Devil and Satan” here clearly also represent the evil desires within man and the expression of those desires in sin. In the Millennium, the curse that was put on the earth in Eden will be greatly reduced. The deserts will be fertile (Is. 35:1), there will be no more famine (Is. 35:7; Ps. 67:6; 72:16) and therefore man will not have to work so much in the sweat of his face to stay alive (Gen. 3:17). However, man will still have to till the ground and “sweat” to some extent (Is. 65:21). Although people will live much happier and longer lives, there will still be death – if a man dies at 100 years of age he will be thought of as a mere child (Is. 65:20). This is why, at the end of the 1,000 years, there will be a second resurrection (Rev. 20:5,6) for those who die during that 1,000 years.

Sin brings death (Rom. 6:23). The curse on the earth came because of sin, and to some degree is perpetuated because of our continued sinning – “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all (men) have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). The reduction of the curse will therefore be because man is sinning less, although it will still be there to some degree because the people are still sinful descendants of Adam. an accurate way of saying that man is sinning less is to say that the Devil – the evil desires and sins of man – is bound for 1,000 years, but resurges at the end, leading to a rebellion against Christ.

If this was the fault of an evil being outside of people, he should be punished, but *they* are punished (Rev. 20:9) because they have given way to the Devil within them. When the Devil is cast into the lake of fire, so is death (Rev. 20:10 cp. v. 14), implying that the Devil and death are closely connected – which they are, because “the wages of sin (the Devil) is death” (Rom. 6:23); the Devil “had the power of death” (Heb. 2:14). Thus the Devil here in Revelation 20 is also our evil desires;

they deceive the whole world, seeing that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" and is obedient to the lusts of the flesh (i.e. the deception of the Devil) – 1 John 5:19; 2:16.

The chaining of the devil/ dragon/ serpent in 20:2 probably refers more to the binding of the manifestation of sin in the political devil/ dragon/ beast/ serpent of 12:7 than to abstract sin. Seeing that there will still be nations in the Millennium, it may even be that the beast revives in a similar political form to which it existed in our last days; i.e. a collection of Arab nations, confederate with the forces of sin latent within all other peoples. The beast is returned to the pit from which he emerged (20:3). The souls of those beheaded for being witnesses to the word in the tribulation are made rulers with Christ, and live with him (20:4). Does this speak specifically of some special honour for the two witnesses during the Millennium?

Satan is bound. Surely 'satan' here is the political forces of the dragon, not abstract sinfulness. Satan in the sense of the power of the flesh was bound by the Lord during his life and death (Mt. 12:29). However, it may be that the Lord's binding of satan was only for believers; he still has the power to bind (Lk. 13:16). Bound 1000 years- i.e. for ever? Note the difference between binding and sealing.

The devil and beast will be cast to the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), as will all the rejected (Rev. 20:15); they will go to the same place. As Satan is bound (Rev. 20:2), so will the rejected be (Mt. 13:30; 22:13). This will be the antitype of Zedekiah being bound in condemnation (Jer. 52:11).

20:3 The Lord spoke in parables so that Israel would be deceived and therefore would not come to salvation (Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10 cp. Acts 28:26). This fact is hard to get round for those who feel God isn't responsible for deception. Isaiah spoke likewise (Is. 6:9,10; 29:10,11). The Angels will work in such a way as to allow the world to be deceived at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:3,8).

"The pit" is s.w. Lk. 8:31,33, where the demons ask Christ not to send them into the abyss; the parallel record says that they asked not to be sent out of the land of Israel (Mk. 5:10). Also Rom. 10:7 uses the abyss as a term for the lands beyond Israel (it is referring to Dt. 30:13). The beast that comes out of the abyss comes out of the sea (11:7; 13:1). It seems that the geographical area outside Israel from where the beast comes (i.e. the Arab world?) is where it is returned to for punishment. Loosed a little season once eternity (the "1000 years") is established. "Fulfilled" = s.w. accomplish; to establish, build up (Lk. 22:37; Gal. 5:16; James 2:8; LXX: Ruth 3:18; Is. 55:11; Dan. 4:30). The little season cp. 6:11- the time of persecution just before the Lord's return. Do the forces of evil try to persecute the saints by repeating their behaviour during the holocaust period which lead up to the Lord's return? If that lasted 3½ years, will their rebellion last a similar 3½ years? Both periods are described as "a little season".

20:4 The rebellion happens "when the thousand years are *expired*" (Rev.20:4). "The rest of the dead" did not live again "until the thousand years were *finished*" (Rev.20:5). This conscious connection between the 1000 years expiring and being finished may suggest that the rebellion is in some way associated with "the rest of the dead" who are resurrected and judged at the end of the 1000 years. It may be that those who are rejected at the second judgment, having the outward appearance of the seed of Abraham, will be associated with this rebellion. Notice that it is *after* the end of the Millennium and the second resurrection/judgment that the "nations" are gathered to rebel. Who are these "nations", seeing the second judgment is passed, and the Millennium has ended, by the time they are gathered? Presumably they must refer to the rejected responsible of all nations, who have been sent back to their various geographical homes to live for a while. As the rejected responsible of the first judgment may see part of the Millennium (cp. Moses seeing the land, the rejected Jews seeing Abraham enter the Kingdom, the goats seeing the sheep accepted), so those of the second judgment may exist a fraction into the glorious ages of eternity. There are many problems with interpreting these verses in Rev.20. These are just suggestions!

"Them that were beheaded". Death by beheading was only for Roman citizens; is this reference a special recognition of the sacrifice of those who could have had much in life, but gave it up for the sake of God's Truth?

Saints sitting on thrones = Dan. 7:22; the throne of the beast is cast down, and judgment given to the faithful.

"The word of God" = the preaching of the word; the word is designed by its very nature to be preached.

20:5 "But the rest"- those not among the righteous, v.4.

"Lived not again (no, not even when) the thousand years were established". For other examples of this idiom see 2 Sam. 6:23; Dt. 23:3 cp. Neh. 13:1. Who are the "rest of the dead"? The wicked responsible, raised to judgment along with the righteous? The rest of humanity?

"The first resurrection" doesn't have to imply that there is a second one chronologically. Jn. 5:29 says there are two resurrections; the first, to life, and the second to death. The second death is this second resurrection to death.

Because of the extreme importance of His people to Him, God uses language in a way which focuses very much upon them to the relative exclusion of all others. Frequently, New Testament references to "all men" really means "all true believers" or those who have become responsible to God. Hebrews 2:14 states that Christ killed the devil (the power of sin) on the cross; but this is only true for those in Christ. Those who are ignorant of the saving power of God's Truth are under the active control of sin- the Biblical devil. Revelation 20:5 speaks of "the dead" as those responsible to judgment, whereas many other Bible passages show that not all the dead will be raised. Only those who have heard the Gospel will be resurrected to judgment. Thus "the dead" in God's usage does not refer to everyone who has ever died. 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 speaks of "the dead" as those in Christ. Matthew 25:32 describes "all nations" coming before Christ for judgment. This indicates that to God, the world He sees is comprised of those who are responsible to Him; not literally "all nations" will come before Christ, only those people from them who are responsible to Him.

20:8 Gog and Magog. The similarities with Ez. 38/9 are so strong; an invasion of God's land when His people are in "peace and safety" (a phrase elsewhere used about the Kingdom), destruction by fire. According to the usual view of Rev. 20, this similarity means absolutely nothing. This cannot be correct exposition. There must be a connection; surely this must refer to the same invasion?

"Shall go out"- implying the bottomless pit is a geographical area? Satan deceives the "nations"; but 21:1 says that when the Kingdom is established, there will be no more sea, no more nations.

Therefore this must be appropriate to the beginning of the Kingdom. During the setting up period, the nations come up to worship Christ, as often prophesied in the OT; however, they are described as entering into the city (21:24-27), i.e. attaining immortality through their faith and obedience. The dragon "will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth/ land" (RSV). The Gog / Magog invasion comes from those dwelling in the "isles" (Ez. 39:6); but this Greek phrase often means Gentile areas on the borders of the land (Is. 41:5; Jer. 47:4; and "the isles" in Ezekiel refer to Arab lands bordering the land of promise). Abraham was from the sides of the land of Israel (Is. 41:8,9), the margins of the land of promise- from where the final Arab invasion will come. There is triple emphasis on his deception (vv. 3,8,10). He continues the work of the false prophet, after the false prophet is put into the lake of fire. The dragon carries on his work; the false prophet is Babylon (19:20), who also deceived (18:23). The bottomless pit, where the rebellion comes from, is therefore at the borders of the land. The Kingdom of God is fundamentally based upon the land of Israel. They are gathered to "the battle" (RV)- the final battle which the OT prophets so often mention.

The dragon was a deceiver back in 12:9, and still is, as Jezebel in the early church deceived (2:20). The dragon of chapter 12 is cast down at Christ's return; the description of the dragon being cast into the pit is an amplification of this. When the dragon is thrown down in chapter 12, he persecutes those of the land (natural Israel?) and the sea (the nations?) for "a short time" (12:12)- the "little season" of 20:3? The dragon is cast out of heaven in 12:9- meaning that he is thrown out of the 'heavens' of the land of Israel (or the temple specifically), into the earth / world.

Rev. 12	Rev. 20	Comment
The dragon persecutes the woman for 3½ years		The holocaust before Christ's coming
Thrown out of the temple / land of Israel (heaven) to the earth / rest of the world	Dragon cast to the abyss	Christ comes to throw the man of sin out of his place in 'heaven' (2 Thess. 2)
There for a while until he realizes he has a short time	Chained	Setting up of the Kingdom
Makes war with the saints for another 3½ years, replicating the holocaust, also involving suffering for the sea (nations) and the land-dwellers (natural Israel?)	Makes war with the saints; aims for Jerusalem.	Rebellion; the invasion of Ez. 38 and maybe Joel 3; the desire for the temple in Joel 3 would then be another similarity between the rebellion and the invasion prior to Christ's return.
	Destroyed by fire	The Ez. 38/39 invasion is destroyed in two stages; five sixths are destroyed first, then the final sixth- by fire.

20:8 It is reasonable to assume that there will be about three generations in the Millennium. A child will die at 100 years old (Is.65:20), whereas today a child would be considered anything from five to 15 years old. If a child will then be thought of as 100 years old, then life-spans will be increased by about 10. The average life of a mortal believer would then be around 700; it is for this reason that we suggest that there will only be three generations in the Millennium. Apostasy is usually evident in the third generation after a revival of the truth. It seems that this same tragic pattern will be observable in the Millennium. Ez.37:25 speaks of how Israel would dwell in the land, in the Kingdom, "*they and their children, and their children's children*", under the rulership of "David their prince" ; again hinting at three generations? Compare this with "to you and you children" in Joel 2:28 (cp. Acts 2:39), possibly referring to the two generations who had the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. That prophecy has a future fulfilment in the Kingdom- in the first two generations of natural Jewish believers having the gifts in order to support the spread of the Gospel? They will be heavily involved in preaching in the earlier stages of the Millennium. The rebellion comes from "Gog and Magog". The rebellion may be from the same geographical region as the Gog of Ez.38; or (more likely), the Gog/Magog invasion of the last days will be typical of the rebellion at the end of the Millennium. Their motive will be to take a great spoil, to capitalize on the weak defences of what seems to them like a paradise on earth. These same motives will be seen in the final rebellion. Notice that they come up against Jerusalem; as if the conditions and blessings of the Kingdom are particularly manifest there, as compared to the rest of the earth. This rebellion has support in "the four corners of the earth" (Rev.20:8); it will be widespread. 'Satan' does not just mean abstract diabolism; it is sin manifested in something, either an individual or an organization. It seems that such a movement, collectively embodying the diabolism of the flesh, will gain support in the Millennium. They are described as being as numerous "as the sand of the sea" - immediately shouting for comparison with the true seed of Abraham having the same description. This connection may imply that the rebels are apostates from the true seed of Abraham- they outwardly appear as the seed, yielding 'feigned obedience' to the Gospel, and then apostacizing.

20:9 They compass Jerusalem- s.w. Lk. 21:20. As they did during the invasion of the land prior to Christ's coming, so they will do in this re-enactment of it. The rejected saints and defeated Arab armies will make the rebellion of 20:9. This will connect with the rebellion of Korah and his company of rejects against the encampment of God and His faithful people- which was also destroyed by fire. The lake of fire / bottomless pit / second death all seem to be parallel.

20:10 The dragon is in the abyss and deceives the nations which are there. The devil will deceive during the rebellion as it did in the period of the holocaust before the Lord's return (12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20). The devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet already *are*. This suggests that their punishment lasts until the Kingdom is established, and until the "little season" of the rebellion is finished. Thus it would seem that the punishment of the wicked and rebels is to exist for some time into the Kingdom age. A number of passages tend to agree with this. The righteous will go forth from the borders of the promised land and look at their carcasses (Is. 66). The rejected saints go to the same place (20:15), condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11).

20:11- see on Heb. 2:3.

20:11 is amplified / repeated in 21:1. This is about the judgment at the second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. Earth and heaven flee away (cp. 6:14)- the old human system. "There was no place found for them" = Dan. 2:35 re. the human system being destroyed at Christ's second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. This is surely the new heaven and earth of 21:1; that of Is. 65:17 and 2 Pet. 3:13, which will be established at Christ's return. The opening of the books (20:12) = Dan. 7:10; 12:1, which concern the start of the 'Millennium'.

The rejected believers will slink away from the Lord's presence (1 Jn. 2:24 Gk.). The whole heaven and earth of this present world will likewise flee away from the face of the enthroned Christ (Rev. 20:11; Is. 2:21). Fleeing away is a characteristic of both the unworthy and also the world which they loved. In some sense the world will come before the judgment seat of Christ to be rejected (Dan. 7:9-14).

20:12 When Christ opens the books of His people (Rev. 20:12; as if each saint has a book written about him recording his life), He does this through discussing with our guardian the details of our life. Perhaps the Angels will have literal books with them; we pointed out earlier that the Angels do seem to use their facility for reading and writing.

The judgment seat is described as if literal books are written each day we live, and these will be opened and considered by God at the last day, in order to decide whether to give us the reward of the Kingdom or not. When we survey the total of God's revelation, it is evident that this is not to be taken literally. There will be a judgment, the result of which will be proportionate to the way we have lived our daily lives. But God (through the Lord Jesus) will not need to weigh up evidence. The books were written before the world began in the sense that God knew then who would be in His Kingdom. It is almost impossible to suggest that there will be literal scrolls unrolled. The idea of scrolls was no doubt used because it would have been understandable by those who were first inspired with God's word. Yet this is how God reveals the judgment to us; in human terms which we are capable of understanding. We are not explicitly told that there will not be literal scrolls, or that God will not need to weigh up evidence to decide whether we will be in the Kingdom. Moses (Ex. 32:32) and Nehemiah (Neh. 13:14) perhaps saw the judgment in this literal sense, but this does not mean that there will be actual scrolls unrolled.

20:13 The sea giving up the dead doesn't refer to dead bodies floating upwards; sea = nations (17:5), which won't exist after the Kingdom is established (21:1); therefore this refers to the judgment at Christ's return. Is the bottomless pit to be equated with the lake of fire? A place of punishment? The rebels are punished and then those who survive (i.e. those deserving more punishment) are sent back to this area, where they are punished for a long time, day and night for ever (20:10). But there will

be no day and night as such in the Kingdom (21:25; 22:5). Therefore we must take this description of their punishment figuratively.

Rev.20:13 speaks of the sea giving up the dead which were in it. Presumably, some people will drown during the Millennium. The shock of death, the trauma of tragedy, will still be experienced in the Millennium. Again, we can imagine the work of comforting the families in their loss, encouraging them with the prospect of the second resurrection. We need to ask whether in this life we have that desire to reach out into the world of suffering around us, ministering the grace of God and the love of Christ; if we rejoice to do such things now, our joy and fulfilment will be the greater in the Kingdom.

20:14 The destruction of death = the second death, which occurs at the judgment (21:8), when Christ comes. The second death can't happen twice, at the start *and* end of the Millennium. Death, sorrow etc. (21:4) are destroyed for *us*, the believers; this is believer-centric language. Likewise "men" in 21:3 = the believers, not all human beings then alive (some will still be enduring punishment).

21:1 down from Heaven- See on 1 Thess. 4:14.

No more sea- "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Is. 57:20). However it may be that the point of contrast is with the fact that in the Kingdom age, the source of water will not be the sea and its role in the water cycle, but rather the water which emerges from Zion (Rev. 22:1). The book of Revelation also seeks to subtly undermine the commonly accepted views of evil, by showing that all the beasts, dragons, demons imaginable are in fact not radical, free-ranging evil [as many imagined both then and now], but rather under God's very tight control; they are playing their role within His purpose, all leading towards the final end when sin and evil will be no more on earth. "The sea" was feared by the first century world, as being the source of monsters and evil. Rather than trying to argue that actually, that's nonsense- Revelation 21:1 instead teaches that whatever our beliefs are about "the sea", it will ultimately be no more when Christ returns.

No more sea, i.e. nations, 17:15. 21:1-8 connects with Is. 65, concerning the establishment of the Kingdom, not after the Millennium.

Heaven and earth pass away, the former (Gk. *proton*) things pass, v.4- the things that were once first place now pass.

One question we need to tackle is whether the events of Rev. 21 and 22 occur at the start or finish of the Millennium. Well, let's present the conclusion before giving the evidence: these chapters refer to the position at the start of the Millennium. Consider the strong evidence:

- Revelation of the situation after the Millennium would surely be inappropriate, if not impossible, for us to receive in this dispensation.
- The context of Revelation 21 and Revelation 22 is set in chapter 20. The earth and heaven flee away when Christ sits on the throne, "and there was found no place for them" (20:11). This is almost quoting Dan. 2:35 concerning the establishment of the Kingdom.
- In place of this heaven and earth, a new heaven and earth appear in Revelation 21:1. This is the language of Is. 65:17 and 2 Pet. 3:13 concerning the second coming.
- In this context, John sees "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:2,9). The church is only a bride at the time of the second coming, seeing she marries Christ at the marriage supper.
- At this time, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death", sorrow etc. (Revelation 21:4). The church will not be afflicted by these things during the Millennium; this must refer to Christ's return. Likewise the gift of the water of life (Revelation 21:6) is at the judgment at the second coming.
- The idea of former things (e.g. death, tears) passing away in 21:4 is one of many connections in Revelation 21 and Revelation 22 with Isaiah's prophecies of the second coming (Revelation 21:4 = Isa. 60:20; 65:19; Revelation 21:25 = Isa. 60:11,20).

- Revelation 21:7 speaks of the time when the faithful believer will receive his inheritance. This surely refers to the judgment at the second coming (Mt. 25:34).
- Revelation 22 has a number of connections with Revelation 21 which would indicate that we are to see Revelation 22 as also referring to the start, rather than the end, of the Millennium (e.g. Revelation 22:14, 21:27; 2:7). "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2) is another obvious example.
- "They shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5) is the language of Dan. 7:18,27 concerning the judgment at Christ's return.

21:2 The whole prophetic metanarrative of the Bible is in many ways a tale of two cities- Babylon and Jerusalem. There are times when Babylon masquerades as Zion- a false city of God with a false Messiah leading her. Babylon / Babel was a city built to reach unto Heaven, in contrast to the true city of God which comes down from Heaven (Gen. 11:4 cp. Rev. 21:2). And there are times when Zion in her apostasy has appeared as Babylon. But in the final conflict of the last days, these two cities will be literally pitted against each other. Zion will briefly succumb under the might and pride of Babylon, to rise again in eternal glory. It was in Babylon where Nimrod first built the tower of Babel, the first organized rebellion against God; and it was there that God first entered into open judgment of flesh and humanity *en masse*. And it is here likewise that His purpose with sin and His true people will likewise be fulfilled. Babylon was also called Su-anna, "the holy city". Yet "the holy city" is Jerusalem, thus making Babylon a fake Zion. Herodotus says the city was square, just as new Jerusalem. We have shown elsewhere that the events of the Babylonian invasion are typical of the last days. That invasion was "the time of [Israel's] trouble" (Jer. 11:12), clearly typical of Jacob's latter day "time of trouble".

"The bride" is married at the marriage supper (19:7-9)- not at the end of the Millennium. Therefore this is about the setting up of the Kingdom at Christ's return.

21:3- see on Jn. 1:14.

"The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (21:3) = Ez. 37:26,27, concerning the time of Christ's return. If God lives with us at Christ's return, how will He be shielded from the 'mortal' population? This problem disappears if the 1000 years is seen as a description of the Kingdom itself.

The tabernacle of God" being God's people; He being our God; God living and walking with us, is evidently alluding to Lev. 26:11,12 and Ex. 29:45,46 concerning the ultimate blessings of the covenant after Israel's final repentance. The shadowy fulfilment they have had in the past through God's manifestation in an Angel doesn't mean that these promises can and must only be fulfilled by some form of God manifestation. Surely Revelation 21:3 is saying that at the second coming the principle of God manifestation will change in that God will personally be with His people. Because we have so far lived under the paradigm of God manifestation, let's not think that it's not possible for God to personally be with us. Let's really try to be broad-minded enough to take this on board.

God promised Abraham that through Christ, His seed, blessing would come on people from all nations, with the result that God would be the God of Abraham's multitudinous seed: "To be a God unto... thy seed... I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7,8). The seed is Christ, and the "God" is Yahweh. Let's not confuse them. Now in Revelation 21:3 this fundamental promise is alluded to; God Himself will be our God then; we will see Him and have a personal relationship with Him. This would mean that this idea of personally being with God is a fundamental part of the Gospel preached to Abraham.

"God Himself" is difficult to refer to God manifestation in Christ. Long ago John Thomas urged us to settle for the simplest interpretation of a passage if it was supported by other verses. The other

references to "God himself" are to Yahweh personally, rather than to Christ: Is 45:18; Jn. 5:37; 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:18,19; Eph. 1:5. Indeed, those N.T. references seem to point a difference between "God himself" and Christ. So isn't it lack of spiritual vision - perhaps even of faith - that makes us wriggle against the idea of God Himself, in person, living with us?

The idea of God Himself dwelling with men in the tabernacle (temple) of the new city of Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2,3) is a clear reference to Eze. 48:35, which says that the name of Jerusalem in the Millennium will be "Yahweh is there". These ideas doubtless also have reference to Yahweh's promise to David to build an eternal house for Yahweh's Name.

This verse seems to teach that God Himself, in person, will descend to earth with Christ. This might sound altogether too incredible. But think about the idea. The King Himself (= God) comes to see the guests at the wedding of His Son (= Jesus; Mt. 22:11). "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:3). "God himself" here either means God Himself or God manifest in Christ. "God himself shall be with them" seems to me an odd way of describing Christ's second coming. God will "be their God". I would just about be willing to concede that this might apply to God manifest in Christ - but for one significant fact: this Revelation 21:3 is packed with O.T. allusions which explicitly refer to God the Father.

21:3 = fulfilment of Gen. 17:3.

21:4- see on Mt. 25:37-40; Rev. 20:14.

The utter literality of all this was perhaps emphasized to John, when he was told: "Write: for these words *are* true and faithful" (Revelation 21:5). The almost fantastical description of God Himself wiping away all the tears that are *in* (Gk.) the eyes of men... this really is true and faithful.

God (this is important) made Joseph forget all his "toil", his mental sufferings (Gen. 42:51). This was a miracle; no amount of steel-willed suppression of his past could have made Joseph paper over all the pain. But God did a psychological miracle upon him. Has God done the same to Christ now in His glory, as He will to us one day soon (Rev. 21:4)? Yet Christ will be factually aware of His sacrifice and the associated pain. God presumably did not obliterate Joseph's memory cells, but He made him "forget" the pain. This is surely what God has done to Christ, and what He will do to us: take away the pain on a psychological level whilst still leaving a factual awareness. Is it too much to suggest that even now, God is ready and willing to do something like this?

Wiping away tears s.w. Acts 3:19 sin blotted out at Christ's return. Tears = for our sins (sorrow = for sin in Is. 53). Will we have an emotional breakdown straight after the judgment? The accepted will feel so certain of this that they will almost argue with the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment that he hasn't made the right decision concerning them (Mt. 25:37-40). It's only a highly convicted man who would dare do that. Thus the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome (Rev. 21:4). We will be like the labourers in the parable who walk away from judgment clutching their penny, thinking "I really shouldn't have this. I didn't work for a day, and this is a day's pay". Therefore if we honestly, genuinely feel that we won't be in the Kingdom, well, this is how in some ways the faithful will all feel.

The tears that will be wiped from our eyes are those associated with "the former things" of this life, and also the emotion associated with our acceptance. But it can't be that it means we will never have the emotion of sadness ever again. For God is made sad, grieved at His heart, even now. And we are to share *His* nature. Consider for a moment the *emotion* which we will feel after being granted Divine nature. Malachi says we will be like stalled animals, who are fed, fattened, kept in small dark pens to be killed... who then suddenly break out into the daylight, and go prancing away through the meadows. This will be our leap of joy and taste of true freedom. Yet the Father will have to

comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome (Rev. 21:4).

21:5 All things will be made new at the Lord's coming (Rev. 21:5), and yet those in whom the new creation is worked out already have all things made new in their spiritual experience (2 Cor. 5:17,18).

21:6 Invitation to mortals to drink fountain of water of (eternal) life freely, as the river in chapter 22, implies the mortals will be progressively granted immortality during the setting up period. 21:24 Gk. speaks of the nations of those who are being saved. *We, now*, take the water of life (22:17; Jn. 4:14; Mt. 10:8). The mortals will replicate then our experience now. Therefore we can preach to them from our personal experience and they can follow our pattern of redemption.

Christ will give the water of life freely then to the mortals- as he did in his mortality. It's the same Jesus, with no fundamental change. Freely we received, freely give- not a reference to not charging for the Gospel, but a command to reflect the gracious enthusiasm for our salvation which we have received from the Lord.

21:8 These people are the responsible of 20:15, those of 22:15 who are placed (Geographically?) outside the encampment of the people of God.

The fearful- s.w. only Mt. 8:26; Mk. 4:40 re. disciples. We either have faith or no faith; there's no third road. "I believe, help thou mine unbelief" was counted as faith. On the other hand, "O ye of little faith. How is it that ye have *no* faith?"

The unbelieving- s.w. re. the disciples (Mt. 17:17; Jn. 20:27; Tit. 1:15).

"Liars"- only s.w. elsewhere in Rev. re. believers (2:2).

"Abominable, murderers, whoremongers (s.w. re. believers in 1 Cor. 5:9,11; Heb. 12:16; 13:4), sorcerers, idolaters, liars". These are the rejected saints. It means that in essence this is how God sees some in the ecclesias. I wonder how many of them will have literally done those things. Surely it is more reasonable to suppose that this is how their other deeds and attitudes were counted in God's sight. Or does it show that far more people than we expect will be classed as responsible to judgment?

This overall sequence of judgment on the kings of the earth, gathering them into a pit, shutting them up, then their revival and final destruction and then the unchallenged, eternal reign of Christ is the same sequence as in Is. 24:20-23. Very significantly, Psalm 2 has a similar picture, of Christ ruling amidst his enemies, "the kings of the earth" (cp. Rev. 19:19), who then decide to cast away the cords with which Christ has bound them (Ps. 2:3). This is exactly the scene of Rev. 20; the enchained remnants of the first invasion, along with the rejected saints, being loosed from their chains and surrounding Jerusalem. Interestingly, Psalm 2 describes them throwing off their chains, whilst Rev. 20 says that their chains of condemnation are loosed. Presumably this means that they try a rebellion against the Lord Jesus which he 'lets' succeed. The language of Rev. 19:15-18 combines allusions to both Psalm 2 and also Ezekiel 38- as if to imply that they both prophecy of the same invasion, i.e. that after Christ has returned.

We can construct a possible timeline of events from the evidence here presented:

Arab invasion; 3½ year domination of Israel? Temple desecrated?

Christ comes

Invaders destroyed and punished, some immediately, others by being placed outside the confines of the land of promise, i.e. the Kingdom. The rejected 'saints' also go there. They are 'chained', i.e. kept out of the territory which comprises the Kingdom. They rebel against this.

During this period of 'chaining' and punishment, the Kingdom is established.

Their invasion aims for the temple (Joel 3; Ez. 38). It replicates the earlier invasion, prior to Christ's return. He is King in Zion (Psalm 2). The rebellion lasts a short time- maybe 3½ years?

It is destroyed by fire (Ez. 39).

As with the first invasion, some are destroyed immediately, others are punished in a certain geographical area on the borders of the Kingdom, for a very long time.

21:12 The 12 gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem are identified with 12 Angels, whereon are written the names of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12). This suggests that the tribes of Israel are reflective of the situation in Heaven, where there are Angels representing each tribe. Dan. 8:24 speaks of Israel as "the people of the saints" (RVmg.), although v. 13 speaks of "the saint" (RV "holy one") as an Angel. 1 Sam. 17:45 parallels the Angelic hosts, and the hosts of Israel's armies; they were to follow where the host of God went, just as David's army had to follow the sound of the cherubim "marching" over the mulberry bushes (1 Chron. 14:15). And whilst we follow where we are led, we are identified with our Angels to the extent that what is done to us is done to them. To defy the armies of Israel was thus to defy the armies of Heaven (1 Sam. 17:45). Thus the four faces of the Angel cherubim were reflected in the four standards of the camp of Israel; the people were intended to "keep in step with the Spirit", following where they went, as they had done in the wilderness years. They were to walk "each one straight before him" (Is. 57:2 RVmg.), as each of the cherubim went straight ahead (Ez. 1:12). And we too are to follow where our Angel potentially enables us to go. The Angel went in to Jericho to take the city; and the Israelites went "straight" ahead, following the Angel, and thus took the city (Josh. 5:13,14; 6:20).

21:21- see on Mt. 7:6.

21:24 God dwells in light (1 Tim. 6:16), and this new city will have light from God, through Christ (Revelation 21:11,23; 22:5) - because Yahweh Himself will be there. Perhaps some of the intensity of that light will spread out to the surrounding world (Revelation 21:24), so that the nations call Jerusalem the place where Yahweh is (Ez. 48:35).

21:27 The many connections between Eden and the descriptions of the world's state during the Millenium become more meaningful if it was geographically located around Jerusalem, seeing that many descriptions of the Millenium apply mainly to the land of Israel and Jerusalem. The following passages are a selection of those which imply the conditions of the Kingdom will be far more in evidence in Israel/ Jerusalem than elsewhere in the world:

- 1) Rev.21:27-only the saints will be allowed in the new city.
- 2) Rev.22:3 "no more curse" in the city- this cannot apply to the whole earth.
- 3) Is.11:7-9 describes the animals living at peace and states " they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" ; yet the animals will hurt and destroy each other, albeit less than they do now, elsewhere in the earth during the Millenium- see Ez.44:31.
- 4) Is.65:20 " there shall be no more thence (i.e. in Jerusalem) an infant of days...". This whole prophecy of the Millennial conditions is in the context of v.17: "I create new heavens and a new earth". "Heaven and earth" is often a figure of the state of Israel. "I create new heavens and...earth" is paralleled by " I create Jerusalem a rejoicing" . Indeed, all Isaiah's Kingdom prophecies are what he saw "concerning Judah and Jerusalem" in the future (Is.1:1), rather than the whole world.
- 5) Psalm 72 and other passages describing the fruitfulness of the earth apply mainly to the land of Israel- there will be deserts elsewhere ,see Joel 3:19.
- 6) The passages about living under our own vine and fig tree and not labouring for others must apply only to the land, because Is.61:5 describes some labouring for others in the Kingdom; and Jer.32:43 implies there will still be money used in that age
- 7) The promises to Abraham comprising "the Gospel of the Kingdom" are primarily concerning the land of Israel. "I will bless them that bless thee... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen.12:2,3) will only be totally fulfilled in the Kingdom. The blessing of the earth will therefore be based around that of natural Israel. The "Holy Mountain", a phrase often used to

describe the coming Kingdom, is a separate area from the rest of the world; this agrees with Daniel 2 describing the little stone returning to the land (A.V. "earth")- i.e. the mount of Olives (Acts 1:11) and becoming a great mountain, filling the land of Israel and then the world. If we take the "earth" to be the land of Israel- it is the same word used, the metals of the image refer to the powers which governed Israel, rather than world empires, thus avoiding the problem of other contemporary world empires existing at the times of the Babylonians and Persians. Therefore the nations say "Let us go up to the Mountain (a common figure for a Kingdom) of the Lord"; they do not live in the "mountain", which is only in Israel.

8) "The plowman shall overtake the reaper... and the mountains shall drop sweet wine" in Israel *because* "I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel... and I will plant them" (Am.9:13,14).

9) That Eden had a mountain in it is shown by the four streams being "headstreams" (N.I.V.), necessitating the existence of a mountain. It is fitting that this mountain should be so prominent in the new Eden, and that from this mount should flow streams of living waters as they did originally. We need to be ever mindful that the Millenium will be a "restitution of all things". It is interesting to note in passing the significance of this mountain as the place where Abraham offered Isaac (Moriah= 'The Lord will provide', Jerusalem='The Lord will see (provide) peace'), the Jebus of David's time, and other important events. The four rivers mentioned in Genesis are each types of the future river of life:

Pison = 'freely flowing'- cp. Rev.21:6; 22:17 "take the fountain of the water of life freely"

Gihon = 'stream'- this river is presumably the same as the Gihon headstream which is mentioned as starting from Mount Zion in 2 Chron.32:30, thus again associating Eden and Jerusalem.

21:23 Grasping God's view of time means that we will see the Kingdom as immortality, not everlasting life. The eternity of our future existence is not the big theme of the Bible; it is "God manifestation, not human salvation", in the words of John Thomas. The process of eternity, the life and Kingdom of God, is already going on now; the tree of life *is* now (not 'will be'; Greek tenses are precise) in the midst of the paradise of God, at least from God's perspective (Rev. 2:7). We will have no need of the sun, for the light of God's glory will replace our concept of time (Rev. 21:23). Indeed, "the time of the end" can be read as "the end of time" (Dan. 12:4,9). There will be "time (Gk. *chronos*, the idea of time) no longer" (Rev. 10:6). The image of Dan. 2 is destroyed together by the Lord's return; each metal in some sense exists at his coming. Rather than meaning that each of those empires must have an end time revival, this may be teaching that the whole concept of human history and time will be ground to powder by the advent of the Kingdom. One day, when we are then with the Lord, will be like a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8)- there will be no comparison between our present view of time and what will then be. Even in the Millennium, the plowman shall overtake the reaper (Am. 9:13)- which may refer to the collapsing of time, rather than just being a figure of fecundity. Before people pray, they will be heard (Is. 65:24- although this is our present prayer experience too, Mt. 6:8). Our focus should therefore be more on the *quality* and *nature* of the Kingdom life, rather than the mere eternity of it.

21:27 The association between the city and the paradise of God raises an interesting question, in that the descriptions of the city in Rev.21 and 22 seem to contradict those given in Ezekiel 40-48:

Revelation

Ezekiel

21:27 Only those in the book of life can enter

45:6 the city is for natural Israel (Zech.8:5- children play in the streets). 44:11;46:9 ordinary mortals enter it.

21:25 City gates never shut

44:1 Gates shut at times

22:5;21:23 Glory of God is the light, eclipsing

45:17;46:1,3 Moon shines in the city

sun and moon

22:14 those who enter the city eat the tree of life mortal priests inside the city

21:22 no temple in the city a temple in the city

The true temple has already been sprinkled by Christ's blood. 45:20 This temple needs regular cleansing ("so shall ye reconcile the house") by sprinkling of blood.

These are just some of the many disparities, yet both cities are said to be built on a great mountain. No satisfactory explanation seems to account for this, except to assume that the "great mountain" of Zion, God's throne in Eden, will split into two "great mountains" as foretold in Zech.14:4, the temple of Ezekiel being built on one and the Saints' city of Revelation on the other. Zech.14 mentions the rivers from one of the mountains as flowing twice a year, whilst the river of Rev.22 flows constantly with the result that the trees of life blossom every month, another indication that although the two cities have certain similarities they are also clearly separate. Thus the temple and city of Ezekiel seems to be a lesser replica of those of Rev.22, as if to show the mortal worshippers what they can aspire to. This is perhaps based on the distinction in the prophets between 'Zion', the temple mount (to be equated with the future throne of God and the saints dwelling around it), and the 'daughter of Zion' being the inhabited city, which in the future will be the city where children play in the streets, inhabited by mortals and visiting gentiles, with the temple for the Jews in it. A similar distinction is found in Is.24:23: "When (in the Kingdom) the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, (as if separate places), and before His ancients (saints in the city) gloriously". A further possible basis for this arrangement is the clear difference between the "two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house" (1 Kings 9:10) during the time of Solomon, a clear type of Christ's Kingdom. The personal dwelling of the King would then connect with the saints' city, and the Lord's house- the temple- would be the temple of Ezekiel, whose dimensions are exactly the same as those of Solomon's temple.

22:1- see on Jn. 1:14.

22:2- see on Rom. 5:12.

The righteous man is like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth (in this work of preaching?) shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). These words are quoted in Rev. 22:2 concerning our holding out of life to the mortal population at the Lord's return. The conclusion? If we witness now we are living the Kingdom life now, and therefore we will be perpetuated in that time.

Rev.21 and 22 seem to describe a "wood of trees of life" (22:2- A.V. 'tree' must be wrong because the 'tree' is on either side of the river), watered by the river of life proceeding from the mountain of "the throne of God and of the Lamb" . We have seen that there was a mountain in Eden, and it seems fitting to suggest that God's throne was on this same mountain before the fall. Ez. 47:12 also implies that the new 'garden' will consist solely of trees of life, "whose leaf shall not fade" - a contrast with the bright, glossy fig leaves Adam and Eve used to cover their sin which would have faded so quickly. Another allusion is the description of the trees of life as "trees for meat", implying that instead of all the trees except those of life and knowledge being "for meat" (Gen.1:29;2:9), the tree of life alone will be for meat. Similarly, Rev. 22:17, in the context of describing the new Eden, speaks of drinking "the water of life freely", reminding us that "of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" - except for the tree of life. The garden is now composed of that tree and its associated water, which can be freely consumed. The new rivers and mountains described have both a physical and spiritual fulfilment- e.g. there will literally be a high mountain in Jerusalem to symbolize that God's ways are exalted above the nations, and the river of life physically healing the land represents the spiritual healing of the barren nations. For this reason it seems we can interpret

the description of many of the rewards of the faithful literally; we will literally eat the fruit of the trees of life in the midst of the new Eden- i.e. at the throne of the Lamb where judgement (or the ceremony of glorification) will take place; we will literally pluck leaves from those trees with which to heal the nations' sicknesses (Ez.47:12), symbolizing spiritually the fact that the nations are healed by God's provision through the medium of the saints. Rev.22:2 states that there is a "street" running through the city, on either side of which is the wood of life, thus implying that the new Jerusalem and the new Eden are synonymous. The city's foundations ('edens') are of precious stones- the abundance of which, as we have seen, was associated with the literal Eden. Rev.22:14 again parallels the city and Eden by equating having "right to the tree of life" with entering "in through the gates into the city". Rev.22:3 tells us that the throne of God will be in "it" - i.e. the wood of life (not the river- see context), as in Eden God's throne was in the garden, which garden was presumably a wood of trees and little else ("of every tree of the garden..." -other plants are not mentioned), in the same way as the new Eden is composed solely of trees of life. The invitation "of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" is mirrored in "take the water (lit. take from the stream) of life freely" - the stream being that of Eden. Rev.21:27 stresses that no serpent - "whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie" - will enter the new Eden as it did before. The midst of the new Garden will be the throne of Christ, who in every way will then be the tree of life and knowledge.

22:3- see on Rev. 21:27.

The final chapters of Revelation so often parallel God and "the lamb" (e.g. Rev. 22:3). The Father was so deeply united with the Son in His time of sacrificial offering. See on Jn. 19:19.

The descriptions of the new city of Jerusalem in the prophets and Revelation can be better understood once it is appreciated that Eden will literally be restored in that area. Zech.14:8-11 lays the basis for the descriptions of the city in Revelation, and includes the main elements of Eden- "living waters" ('Hiddekel') going out from a "Lifted up" mountain in Jerusalem, with "no more curse" there, v.11 (the phrase "no more utter destruction" is translated like this when it is quoted in Rev.22:3).

22:4 Throughout Revelation 21 and 22 there is a distinction made between God and "the Lamb". This further suggests that the references to "God himself" are *not* to God manifestation in the Lamb, but to Yahweh Himself. "They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4) indicates that "His face" and "His name" refer to the same being. The Name which will be in our foreheads will be that of Yahweh, the Father, not Christ (Rev. 3:12; 14:1). Therefore it is *His* face which we will see. Of course there is *some* reference here to 'seeing' in the sense of understanding, which is how we see the Father now. But then our fuller mental comprehension of the Father will be reflected in our physical vision of Him. Is. 25:6-9 speaks of how God's people will enjoy a feast in Jerusalem at the Lord's return, the veil will be withdrawn from their eyes, all tears will be wiped away, and then "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God... this is Yahweh". There is a parallel between physically seeing God and having the veil of our present incomprehension removed. The fuller understanding which we will then have will be reflected in our literal seeing of God.

22:5 In the new Jerusalem, "there shall be no night there; and they need no candle" (Rev.22:5). The candle, common symbol of God's word (e.g. Ps.119:105) will no longer be needed by the faithful, because "the Lord God giveth them light". Our personal, direct contact with God will replace the ministry of the Bible as we now have it.

22:6- see on Jer. 23:18,22.

22:9 The Angel told John that he was of "thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep (lit. guard, preserve from corruption) the sayings of this book" (Rev. 22:9). This shows that the Angel was a prophet. This title does not only mean one who foretells future events, but in Biblical usage

refers more to one who ministers the word of God under inspiration; the Angel was therefore responsible for inspiring the Bible like the prophets (Old and New Testament ones) were. Note too how the Lord describes the Angels as “servants” (Mt. 22:13), using the common description of the prophets as Jehovah’s servants- as if He saw a close connection between Angels and prophets. See on 2 Cor. 3:6.

22:10 The flagship verse concerning the opening of our eyes to latter day prophecy must be Dan. 12:4,10: "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro (an idiom often used concerning response to God's word: Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.), and knowledge (of Daniel's prophecies) shall be increased... many shall be purified, and made white, and tried (in the tribulation); but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand". This is all in the context of the Angel rejecting Daniel's plea for insight into his own prophecies. All he was told was that they would be fulfilled in the far distant future, but he was comforted with the thought that the faithful at that time would understand. That the fulfilment of all the latter day prophecies will be understood fully in the very last days is implied in Jer. 23:20: "In the latter days ye shall understand it perfectly". The "it" refers to "the intents of [God's] heart" revealed in His prophetic word. It is no accident that the Apocalypse ends with words which clearly allude to the closing words of Daniel. John falls at the Angel's feet, as Daniel did. The Angel then says: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of *this* book (unlike Daniel's, which was sealed): for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still (cp. "the wicked shall do wickedly")". The implication is that the book is sealed for those who are a long way from the time of fulfillment; hence John must not seal the prophecy *because* its fulfillment is near. Thus Dan. 12:4 LXX reads: "Seal the book until the time of its accomplishment"- *then* it will be unsealed and the meaning become apparent. The primary application of Revelation is to the events of AD70; the implication is that the righteous understood the pattern of events then because of this book. There is a repeated stress throughout the NT epistles on the need to understand and get true knowledge (1 Pet. 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18), perhaps with special reference to Scripture like the Olivet prophecy and Revelation; likewise 1 Tim. 3:1,16; 4:1,2 encourage Bible study in the 'last days' leading up to AD70. The need for understanding and study at that time is reflected in our last days. Paul told the Thessalonians (in the context of AD70) that he didn't need to tell them about the times and seasons because they already understood the prophecies so well- but they needed rather to make sure that their lifestyle was appropriate to their understanding (1 Thess. 5:1-5). The situation in AD70 is a type of the true "last days". Therefore the understanding of Revelation will not be sealed just before its second and major fulfillment in the second coming of Christ. In the same way as Daniel's prophecies will be opened to us in the last days, so must the book of Revelation, because the understanding of Revelation is so bound up with the meaning of Daniel. "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" suggests that this true understanding of prophecy motivates the faithful remnant in holding on to a righteous lifestyle. Time and again Israel are condemned because their lack of *understanding* of the prophecies led them into sinful behaviour (Dt. 32:29; Ps. 94:8; Is. 44:18).

22:12- see on Mt. 26:70.

It will be in our last days that Israel's blindness starts to be cured, thanks to a Word-based revival, led by the Elijah ministry. Solomon's prayer stated that when Israel properly repented, God would then "render unto every man according unto all his ways" (2 Chron. 6:30). Our Lord definitely applied these words to the work of His second coming, when "I shall give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). His allusion to Solomon's prayer should be proof enough that the time of His full apocalypse is related to the time of Israel's repentance.

22:14- see on Mk. 10:25.

We will have the “right” to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14); yet our salvation is by pure grace alone. We are “meet” to be partakers of the inheritance, we walk worthy of the Lord Jesus unto all pleasing of him (Col. 1:10-12), the labourers receive the penny of salvation, that which is their right (Mt. 20:14). We are either seen as absolutely perfect, or totally wicked, due to God's imputation of righteousness or evil to us (Ps. 37:37). There is no third way.

22:17 "The Spirit ("The Lord the spirit", Jesus) and the bride (the church) say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come". The whole spirit of the Lord Jesus is to invite others to come and share His salvation. He that hears will say to others "Come".

22:18 It is a feature of God's dealings with men that He confirms the degree of spiritual success or failure which we achieve or aim for by our own freewill effort. Thus we read nine times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; but ten times that God hardened his heart. Similarly, God adds iniquity unto the iniquity of those who wilfully sin (Ps. 69:27; Rev. 22:18). Conversely God imputes righteousness, adding His own righteous characteristics to us, in response to our faith. This is the key idea of 'justification by faith', being counted righteous although personally we are not. The briefest reading of the Gospels will likewise reveal that people were both attracted to and repulsed from Jesus at the same time.

22:18,19 As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13:18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

22:19 That disobeying the law of God is effectively adding to it was clearly brought home to Israel: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Dt.12:32). The command to Joshua to "observe to do according to all the law... turn not from it to the right hand or to the left" (Josh.1:7) is probably reiterating the command not to add ("to the right") or subtract ("to the left") from the law. Rev.22:18,19 is based on these passages.

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