

‘Salvation Survey’

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Salvation Survey

for those who hope they won't be left behind

Contents

1. Day of the Red Dragon
2. Beginning of all things
3. Enter the Serpent
4. The first family's fall and God's grace
5. God's great promise of mercy
6. The tower of Babel
7. Abraham and Israel
8. The Exodus, and Moses
9. Priests
10. Judges
11. Prophets
12. Kings
13. The Babe of Bethlehem
14. The Nazarene, teacher from Galilee
15. The Cross and Resurrection
16. The Church, children of God
17. The Lamb and the Lion-1
18. The Lamb and the Lion-2
- 19 The End Times

STUDY No 1

THE DAY OF THE RED DRAGON

Have you ever seen a dragon? Artists have dawn and painted dragons as they imagined how they would have looked like, and the movie industry has constructed such creatures for their films.

Recently I saw a movie on TV with a winged dragon that could speak with the voice of Shaun Conerry? Hero of the early James Bond movies.

Of course, Saint George of England was supposed to have slain a dragon to rescue a maiden. So did these creatures really exist?

Well whether they did or not, John of the Revelation saw what he described as a great red dragon—then in Rev. 12:9 his other names come to light, ancient serpent, Satan, the devil, and the deceiver of the whole world.

Now we must read the 12th and 13th chapters of Revelation to see what this dragon of John's vision is up to.

Leon Morris in his commentary calls this section 7 significant signs. Previously there were 7 trumpets following the opening of the 7th seal. So we might expect the 7th trumpet would lead into the 7 plagues. Not so. However there are these 7 signs John seems to have inserted as a special section in his series. These visions are connected with the troubles of the Church. Actually the whole of Revelation seems to be written, like Hebrews, to a church facing persecution, and whatever else it may be meant to do, each section is designed to help harassed believers.

But especially this section we are to address ourselves to.

It stresses the important truth that God has decisively defeated the devil. Now to the red dragon. He has 7 heads, 10 horns and 7 crowns on his heads. He also has a tail with which he sweeps a third of the stars from heaven, so he presents a figure of great power.

Let us look with the eyes of John as this awesome creature stands waiting before the woman about to give birth, so that he may devour the baby boy when he is born. Who is this child?

A male child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Now the dragon believes to rule the nations is his right, so he must destroy this threat to his authority. But we read he is unsuccessful in his attempt, and both mother and child are rescued from his grasp.

Let us take note of this scene as recorded by John and see what relevance it might have to history as we know it. First I want to suggest that the multiple heads, horns and crowns, most likely refer to wicked kingdoms, rulers and dictators throughout history.

One such ruler could fit quite well with the time around the birth of the baby king in our passage of scripture here in Revelation.

Who is the woman about to give birth? Our first thought would most likely be Mary who was the actual mother of Jesus the Christ who we can be certain is the infant. But in this instance of apocalyptic viewing, it is more likely Israel. Looking back to Matthew 2:16–18, after the birth of Jesus we find Herod determined to kill him as a threat to his own kingdom, and when he cant be found, has all the male infants in that district slaughtered. Was Herod one of the dragons heads at that time?

Concerning the woman's (Israel's) other children whom the dragon makes war on – Nazi-ism under Hitler's rule killed some six million Jews, and their persecution continues today in some countries. While Christians have been killed for their faith from the days of the Roman Empire till this present day. see Rev. 12:17.

Next is recorded the confrontation between the dragon and Michael an arch-angel and their followers, where the dragon suffers another defeat and is thrown down to the precincts of the earth.

Note: We can not fit the happenings of Revelation into a chronological time and space frame work as we know it.

Once again we see the dragon angry and pursuing the woman, to fail but again. Next he turns his attention to her other children as we have seen earlier. They are “those who keep the commandments of God [and] those who hold to the testimony of Jesus”. Some commentators believe these are two groups of people as I have previously inferred.

Concerning the dragon's confinement to the earth we read, “Woe to the earth and sea for the devil has come clown to you with great wrath because he knows his time is short.”

Before we move to chapter 13 to see the structure of the dragon's earthly kingdom, let us read what the loud voice in heaven proclaimed and be encouraged. Rev. 12:10–12a. The sovereignty of God prevails, and this is the point of these studies, to see for ourselves God's plan is absolute and will come to His conclusion as He pre-ordained it. if we have any doubts we can look to passages such as Rev. 11:15, and, trusting in God's word, be assured.

In chapter 13 we see the extent of the authority of the dragon. John sees the dragon standing on the sea shore (this could be the sea of humanity), and out of the sea comes the first beast, who like the dragon, has multiple heads, horns and crowns. One of its heads has a mortal wound that has healed , probably to affect a counterfeit Christ. This beast has great power and authority over the nations and the inhabitants of the earth, except those who have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. He has awesome power and is allowed to make war against the saints and persecute them, but we are to take courage here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints”. For encouragement read Psalm 149. A song of the vindication and victory of the saints.

Satan opposed Christ from the beginning and tried to destroy Him, but without success. The evil one has been cast out of heaven. His power on earth is to be terrifyingly real to believers. But this is not because he is triumphant. It is because he knows he is beaten and has but a short time. Let the Church then take heart. She will have her martyrs hut ultimate triumph is sure. All this should be clear. Yet we must acid that no part of this book is more difficult to interpret in detail. Still we will try to grasp what we may by revelation.

Next a second beast rises from the earth looking like a lamb but speaking like a dragon. It has authority like the first beast and deceives the peoples of the earth, getting them to make an image of the first beast. Now they must worship the image or be killed.

And all who would enter the market place to buy and sell must have the mark of the beast – its name or number on the forehead or

right wrist...”this calls for wisdom”. If we were to take this literally, it would be very scary to anticipate as future events, but remember it is visions and imagery. Yet what it represents is scary enough for as yet the dragon still exhibits his power among the nations of the world.

And as this world becomes more like a global village we are more able to see the evidence of much of his activities, yet there are some things he is involved in that are not so evident, where, with cunning manipulation, he would attempt to fool even the saints if they are not wise, and wide awake to his methods and guile.

We will see him at his best in a later study, but next we will be looking at the Beginning of All Things & Eden.

Study 2

THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS & EDEN

Rev 1:8. I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord.. .also 21:6; 22:13. cf Rev 1:17b–18. I am the first and the last and the living one, I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and hades.

Other Bible readings: Gen.1&2. John 1:1–5. Heb.11:3 (Heb.1:10–12)

Now these passages in Revelation refer us back to the beginning and are important, so this is where we must go to get a clear picture of God’s plan for the ages. Genesis starts with these words, *In the beginning GOD*, and at the start of John’s gospel we have these words, *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, He was in the beginning with God All things came Into being through Him.*

It is no accident that GOD is the subject of the first sentence of the Bible for this word dominates the whole of this chapter being used some 35 times. This story, or more to the point all of Genesis is about Him first of all. To read it with some other agenda would be to misread it.

Every thing as we know it has a beginning, we can understand this, but there seems to be things going on before this beginning as we have it recorded. For example see Ephesians 1:4, *He – God – chose us in Christ BEFORE the foundation of the world....*

The expression *In the beginning* is more than just a reference to time. The variations on this theme in Isaiah 40 if show the beginning pregnant with the end, and the whole process present to God who is First and Last (eg Isa 46:10 48:12), and Prov. 8:22f reveals something of the Godward side of this beginning of creation. John 1:1–3 is more explicit and the New Testament elsewhere at times reaches back behind it (eg John 17:5, 24).

A point we should make here is that God didn't have a stockpile of material out of which He created the universe. Hebrews 11:3 supports the truth that until God spoke, nothing, existed **And God said...** God had a plan for eternity as He created the heavens and the earth, it was with a view to those things we read of in the final chapters of Revelation.

The New Testament reveals what is latent here in Genesis 1 when it calls the SON and the WORD of GOD *the first born of all creation for in Him all things were created and in Him all things hold together* Col 1:15–17 (cf Jn.1:1–4, Heb.1:2&3).

It's important we understand this so that we don't fall into the trap of thinking God set things in motion then let us run our own course.. This beginning is always with a view to the end which was known before the beginning began, (sound Irish) but this is how it really is. I'm not saying God planned the fall of man but He certainly preplanned redemption, the cross, resurrection, salvation, eternal life, the born again experience, new creation, adoption and all the other blessings we may enjoy out of His grace.

Let us now look at the substance of this creation as recorded for us in Genesis. God said let there be light. But He must have also said let there be darkness, because it is well documented where the presence of God is there is no darkness, **only light**.

In the first chapter of John's gospel we read the appearing of God's Son into the world means true light has come to overthrow darkness, and in Revelation there will be no need of a lamp or the sun (22:5), for the Lord God will be their light. So we have a manufactured night and day for our benefit.

Water is next provided. Interesting isn't it that the largest portion of a human being is water. Point of interest: 97% of the water on the surface of the earth is salty (only 3% is available for drinking and irrigation).

When God fashioned Adam from the dust we can imagine Him making clay from earth and water to form his person. You may remember an occasion in the gospels when Jesus healed the man born blind,(John 9). Some commentators believe that the man was

apparently sightless because he had no eyes at all. So when Jesus spat on the ground He made day and placed the balls of clay into the man's sightless eye sockets and sent him to wash thereby completing the creational order to the glory of God the Father. Remember what the blind man said to the theologians of the day, : I don't know about what you think of Him (Jesus) . One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.

Let us get back on track. The dry land is called Earth and the waters Seas. Then came vegetation and fruit trees with seeds to reproduce. Next we have the Sun and the Moon having functioning roles to play in the welfare of plants and animals along with mankind. . Sea creatures and birds are next to take their place in the scheme of things. The following day brings animals such as cattle, creeping things and wild animals to spread across the earth and inhabit it.

Then God said Let us make Man (plural) in our image according to our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish, birds, cattle, wild animals and creeping things. So God created Adam –in the image of God He created them Male and Female He created them.

Now note verse 24 Let the earth bring forth—creatures. But when it comes to Man verse 26 Let us make Man... This was going to be different. There was going to be a special relationship between God and Man and this was to be defined by the terms, in our image and according to our likeness.

Some may say we lost one or both of these at the Fall, but scripture doesn't back this up. . For image see Gen 9:6 and likeness James 3:9. Never the less we require to be renewed ...after the image of Him that created him (us) Col. 3:10 of Eph. 4:24, 51,3. As long as we are human we are by definition in the image of God. But spiritual likeness, in a single word LOVE, can be present only where God and Man are in fellowship—hence the fall destroyed it, and our redemption recreates and perfects it. We are God's children now .. . when He appears we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is, 1John 3:2 c.f. 4:12.

God blessed the first Man giving him responsibility over all the rest of creation, and showed him the food bearing plants for himself and the other creatures. Now what is Adam to do with himself? Let us see in chapter 2 a review of the way God created Adam, then in verse 8 we read God planted a garden in Eden and put Adam in it. Good fruit trees are found there, and two special trees (1) Tree of Life (2) the Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil.

A river flowed to water the garden, and Adam is given the task of tilling the soil and caring for this garden. We read his other task is naming the animals. In this ideal situation, if we could let our imaginations run free so as to visualize it, is placed but one prohibition, he can eat of all the trees to be found in the garden with one exception, he must not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Study 3

Enter the Serpent playing Truth and Dare.

Bible Reading: Genesis 3

Eden or Paradise – let your mind wander remembering the most beautiful place you have ever been to, seen in a film or on TV. Some place in Africa where the wild animals roam free, or a rainforest with huge trees and a leafy canopy overhead, rivers and cool streams teeming with fish. A tropical island with seas emerald green and sands white as snow. But none of these could compare with the pristine beauty, grandeur and uniqueness of this garden God Himself has grown in Eden.

So this is where Adam lives and works tending this garden, and naming the animals by observing their habits, getting to know them personally so that he can superintend their welfare. While working with them it is obvious they are mated for procreation of their kind, but this is not possible for Adam. So God takes the next step in preparing man for his destiny by providing him with a helpmate.

Read: Genesis 2:18–25.

Into this ideal situation comes the serpent (chapter 3) remember our study on the red dragon. In Rev 12:9 one of his other names being the ancient serpent. This serpent is very crafty, first he approaches the woman Eve when Adam is apparently absent. Now Eve wasn't there when God gave the prohibition concerning the tree of knowledge to Adam, although she was in Adam at the time, but Adam would surely have instructed her about what God had said, for her protection.

The serpent begins his game of 'truth and dare' by asking Eve a question concerning what God said about the trees in the garden. "Did God say you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?" Note Eve's answer in Genesis 3:2–3, what has she added to what was originally told to Adam? Aren't we prone to embellish a little? This time Eve is changing the sense and reason for the prohibition, as if

God is being a spoil-sport and not caring lovingly for his creature Man.

The next step in the serpents game is to turn the truth into a lie, you will not die he says, as if he has any control over life and death at this time. Who has told the truth and what is the lie? Now comes the dare –when you eat the fruit of this tree your eyes will be opened (making you wise like God) and you will know good and evil There is a half truth here, for the eating of this fruit certainly was to bring the knowledge of evil, but they already knew good, for to know God is to know Good.

So you see the serpent, or dragon arrives very early in the journey of mankind, and the development of creation as we know it. But his devious plans are already doomed to failure, because God has a master plan that will over-ride everything the devil can conjure up in an attempt to defeat God, and enslave all humanity.

This next section is pretty sad for our ancestors, and us, but would we have done better? If you think so watch out, pride can be a dangerous thing to flirt with.

Now Eve succumbs to the cunning wiles of the serpent – eats the fruit sharing some of it with her husband, and both of them become immediately aware of what they have done, unbelief has brought about disobedience and has broken that innocence and free communion with God.

They see their nakedness no more protected by purity, and are afraid of the righteous holiness of God which was once their protection. Where once they could walk in harmony and peace with God as their loving Father in the cool of the evening, this beautiful communion is shattered, both with God and each other. Read this stark passage of the apparent end to this once perfect relationship. Genesis 3:8–13. When challenged by God as to their actions each tries to pass the blame on to the other, Adam even laying some of the blame at the feet of God Himself, the woman You gave me so where can we go from here?

Study 4

THE FIRST FAMILY–THE FALL–GOD’S GRACE.

Bible Readings: Genesis 2: 15–25 Genesis 4 Hebrews 11: 4

God has given to Adam a partner, a wife, a helpmate, and the first human family was formed. Of course Adam had already experienced a sense of family with his creator–Father, walking and talking together in the garden, and knowing the security of the Father’s loving care. We will return to the extension of Adam and Eve’s family later, but for now let us look at the ‘fall’.

In our last study we saw how the serpent had beguiled Eve with a lie, for he is the author of lies, and both she and Adam in a moment of unbelief, became disobedient in eating the forbidden fruit.

Note: Unbelief is believing the lie instead of the truth. Truth Biblically usually means ‘things as they really are’ against the illusion of things as presented by the devil.

All of us succumb to this state of affairs sometimes in our lives, (an understatement?) So that out of unbelief comes our disobedience to the will of God.

Back to Adam and Eve, the consequence of their actions is catastrophic. So much is lost, not only for them, but all generations to follow. They have sought independence which is not natural to them, for they were created to be dependent upon a dependable God, so from now on all of life for them, and us, will be unnatural. The holy communion they once had with God has been broken leaving them floundering in an unfriendly environment.

Remember, they had been created to live and work in the garden where they are in harmony with their surroundings, and all their needs are met. This is where they are meant to fulfill their God given destiny.

Read the section where God confronts the couple along with the serpent about this matter of disobedience, Genesis 3:8–19. God places them all under judgement, for sin must be dealt with and not

be allowed to go unpunished. Eventually all corruption must be purged for God's holy order to be sustained, and harmony once again to be restored throughout all creation.

Note: In the prophetic statement God makes concerning the future of the three, He infers a redeemer will come from the woman to overcome the serpent and his usurped authority.

This will mean eventually the Old Creation with the heavens and earth we have come to know, will pass away to make way for the New.

Adam and Eve are removed from the Garden of Eden and it is sealed to prevent their re-entry. This may seem harsh but it is an action out of grace by God. He has already provided them with more substantial covering than what they had made for themselves.

This is not only to cover their physical nakedness, but also their spiritual unholiness symbolically. Blood was shed to provide the skins for this covering so to set the pattern God ordained for the atonement. *Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin.* Later, Israel as a nation would keep a day of atonement annually to meet this requirement regarding its sin before God, and this was preplanned before creation ever was.

The other act of **grace** was to ban Adam from the garden, preventing him from eating from the Tree of Life. because it was in Man's best interest for him not to eat of the fruit of this tree for now. Yet there would be a time in the future when Eden's gates would once more be open, see Revelation 2: 7, and the Tree of Life will be available for Man's benefit.

The family of Adam increases with the births of Cain and Able. Eve thinks Cain is the promised deliverer, but he is far from it, and enslaves himself to Satan so that he denies God in deliberate rebellion, even killing his more righteous brother Abel.

Faith has now become an important attribute of mankind as a gift from God, another act of grace. Both Adam and Eve must exercise **faith** regarding the promise and provision of God, and Able as we read in Hebrews 11: 4, was a man of distinct **faith**.

Peace between men is now broken for all time and can only be restored when man has peace with God. This was the peace sung about by the angels at the birth of Jesus who is the Prince of Peace.

Seth is then born and his family line is recorded in Genesis 5. The last verse in this chapter is important, where once Adam had walked and talked with God in person, this privilege seems to have gone so that men invoke the Name of the Lord in prayer. But down the line we find a man, who like his ancestor Adam, once again walks with God.

Somehow Enoch found the key to that intimate relationship that seemed to be lost, but was just out of sight to those whose eyes are veiled, and ear deafened to the voice of God.

Enoch tuned in and was blessed. *Let those who have ears to hear .. (hear what is being said.)* Revelation 2: 11. Now in Hebrews 11 5–6 we read of Enoch as a man of deep faith. He was rewarded for his belief in God so as to not see death. This should offer hope even today to anyone of us who would seek to exercise this same gift of faith.

The Fall – what was lost?

1. The Kingdom. From the beginning Adam and Eve and all the generations to come after them were meant to share in the Kingdom.
2. The Mission. God has always been on Mission and they were to share this Mission with Him (this mission is trinitarian).
3. The Communion. The Holy Communion that Adam and Eve shared with the Father and so the triune community was now lost.
4. True Family. They had known God as Father in the most intimate way and the union between them that was pure and complete.
5. Church They were the foundation of the Church, a people set apart for a special function on God's behalf.
6. Peace. A desperate need of man to live in harmony with his himself, his fellow man, and his environment.
7. Access to the Tree of Life.

Can any of these things be reversed?

Kingdom – the kings and then The King Mission – the prophets and then The Prophet Communion – The priests and then The Priest Church – Israel and the People of God.

True Family – Children of God, the Son and Bride. Peace – restored by the Prince of Peace.

Rev. 2:7 tells us that there will be a day when the gates of Eden will once more be opened and the people of faith will be able then to eat the fruit from the Tree of Life.

Study 5**THE FLOOD AND THE PROMISE OF MERCY.**

Bible Readings: Gen.6–9. Heb. 11: 7

By faith Noah. Next we will look at another man of faith recorded for us in God's word..

On the face of it the old serpent seems to have won because we read in Genesis 6:5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of mankind was great in the earth and the inclination of their thoughts was only evil continually. Nearly all had tamed away from God at this time, but one man still had Faith. So God chose this man for an important project – to build a strange vessel to give protection for himself and his family, along with certain animals that God commanded him to gather and place in this (Ark).

As a point of interest we might speculate on the shape of this container. Its purpose wasn't to travel such as a boat to a distant place, rather to weather the flood and settle back on the ground approximately where it was built. This would mean a pyramid shape with the largest portion under the water like a submarine, until the waters subsided.

In the reading in Hebrews 11, Noah was warned of events yet unseen; this could mean the flood or it could refer to rain itself. Remember in the early days of creation watering came from rivers, streams, and springs coming up from the ground.

God has provided for this breakdown in society. A flood will come on the land to wash and purge all the evidence of evil that has polluted His creation. This will be the evidence of the sovereignty of God, and that no situation that man puts himself in, or finds himself in because of the activity of the devil, is beyond His intervention and control.

Noah becomes the exception to the rule as he amongst all his generation exercises the faith available to him, believes God, and is obedient. Every other person alive at that time had the same

opportunity to also believe God and be saved, but they chose unbelief and its consequences, to experience the wrath of God against sin, and so die in the flood. They were all destined to die the hopeless death of unbelievers even if the flood had not taken place.

We might say they should have been warned, given time to repent, but God in His mercy did give the time to repent and a warning, for all the time Noah was building the Ark anyone could have enquired as to its purpose, been enlightened by Noah, and repented.

The grace, and therefore the mercy of God is seen in this Ark. He has made provision for His creation to be renewed, and in a sense to be given a second chance. Along with all the animals that entered the Ark, Noah, his wife, with their three sons and their wives, also went into the vessel. This meant eight persons to be the foundation of a new humanity, to come under a covenant with God, and to function in concert with Him for the wellbeing of His creation.

When the flood subsides Noah, his family, and all the other creatures exit the Ark to re-establish life on dry land.

Noah builds an altar, and offers burnt offerings to God, and when the Lord smells the pleasing odour the Lord determines never again to curse the round because of humans for He knew that the human heart is evil from youth. God blesses Noah and his sons – be fruitful multiply and fill the earth.

Then He makes a covenant of grace promising never to flood the whole world again, this pledge coven all animal life as well as humans. The sign of this promise would be the rainbow seen in the gathering clouds, and when both men and God see this sign they will be reminded of this covenant, and will keep it.

This covenant, like all the others to come, points forward to the New Covenant, all of them having an element of grace where we are recipients of His precious mercy, however undeserving. The devil has been thwarted once again, God's plan continues, and a man has become an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith Heb 11: 7b

Study No 6

THE TOWER OF BABEL

Bible Readings : Genesis 11:1–9. Revelation 17–18

The sons of Noah were Ham, Shem and Japheth. Genesis 9:19 says from these three men the whole earth was peopled. Then Genesis 10 gives us the descendants of these three, where they settled, and established their families, tribes and nations. Next chapter 11 seems to indicate their willingness to work together on a common project, so that any differences between them became secondary to this important common purpose.

From our point of view on the surface, this cooperation surely is a good thing. An early United Nations for the welfare of all the people. A Common Market where all the needs of everyone are met. A place of security, commerce, wealth and power.

And so they set about to build a great city, and in that city a Tower with its top in the heavens.

Once again Man seeks self sufficiency, strength and power in numbers. If they remain together with this central city and tower, they will be invincible, even against God.

Their tower could have been a place of worship, but it also was symbolic of their defiance, that if God were to change His mind and send another flood, they would be prepared.

Whatever we might think of their ingenuity, God knew what was in their hearts, nothing they propose to do will now be impossible to them. We know in our days man is capable of amazing things, not least to fly to the moon, and even walk on it.

Yes, we are marvellously made, and God knows our capabilities, but He also knows our hearts which we are told, are wicked and utterly deter!.

So He cannot take the chance to trust these descendants of Noah to do the right thing. For surely pride will be their downfall. What then would be the simplest way to stop this project? Well we have it recorded for us in Genesis 11:7–8. Overnight He confuses their

tongues so that each group now has a different language, making it impossible for the free communication they had previously enjoyed. How effective this was is recorded in chapter 11:8–9.

Can you see anything of the grace of God in His actions here? Or is He just out to get His own way? Surely the answer is, left to their own devices, and thereby becoming full of pride, it was very possible they would self destruct. Once again, God in His mercy has saved them from their folly, as so often is the case we find recorded in the pages of the Bible.

Looking forward to the New Testament, we can find an occasion where God chooses to reverse the situation so that all the hearers, although with different languages, could understand the message being spoken Acts 2:1–11

The city of Babylon in Revelation is seen by John as images of a woman on a scarlet beast. On her forehead is written Babylon the Great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations. Revelation 17 spells out something of the woman and the beast. Although she appears all powerful, she fears the beast who might turn and devour her.

John is told, the woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.

God deals with the city of Babel in Genesis, but later other cities of great power rise up as Babylon such as Egypt, and the Babylon of the sacking of Jerusalem and captivity of Judah. Jeremiah 39. Rome also is said by some to be the Babylon of Revelation as the city set on seven hills. But there have been other cities of Babylon throughout history, where those who dwell in them believe in their own power and sufficiency, so as not to have need of God. We will not have this God rule over us.

To return to Revelation we see how quickly this seemingly indestructible, all powerful city is destroyed in One Hour. (Apocalyptic).

All of the empires of the past have gone, even though at their height, they may have appeared as if they would last forever. The most recent example being the USSR.

Any existing or future such power that defies the righteous and sovereign God will go the same way. For our God is a jealous God, and, His judgement will be true and just.

Read carefully Revelation 18 and take warning concerning wealthy nations of our day, who are prone to put their hope in their wealth. Likewise those with military might or others with religious fervour and fanaticism. All of these are subject to the condemnation of God, and His wrath can fall at any time, and in a manner of His choosing.

Now let us read the first four verses of chapter 19, and then joining with the 24 elders, shout Hallelujah Amen!

A TALE OF TWO CITIES.

The first city of man recorded in the Bible is found in Genesis 4:16–17 he (Cain) built a city and named it Enoch after his son.

Now city here meant a permanent settlement where numbers of people dwell together.

The name Nod could mean 'wandering' or 'exile' while Enoch probably means 'initiation'. In Genesis 11:1–5 we have the statement come let us build ourselves a city (and tower) v4 then the Lord came down to see the city... And in Revelation 18:10 Alas alas the great city, Babylon, the mighty city (cf v16) Rev. 18:21 With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down see also vs 18–19.

The City of God as seen by Abraham is recorded in Hebrews 11:10, for he was looking for the city which has, foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

John was given to see this city Revelation 21 & 22 he carried me away to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming out of heaven from God 21:10 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb 21:22.

Study 7

ABRAHAM AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

Bible Readings: Genesis 12 & 12. Hebrews 11:8–22

Once again, as with Noah, God chooses a man who both listens to Him and obeys Him. This man is Abram later to be called Abraham. From this man God was to form a nation to be His people on earth, through which He would reveal His will, plans, and grace to the nations.

We will find that the focus of Satan now centres on this nation we know as Israel. Back in Revelation we saw how determined he was to not only get the baby who was to be the foundation stone of the new Church, but he was out to get the woman (Israel) and her other children, Revelation 12.

Now to pick up the story of Abram. Terah, his father has already moved the family from their home in Ur to a place called Harare. Chapter 12 begins with Gods intentions and promises to Abram. So he, with his wife Sarai (later Sarah), and nephew Lot, moves into the Land of Canaan to live in tents as aliens. And Abram is 75 years old.

The faith of Abram gets tested early in his settlement in Canaan by a famine in the land, and influenced by his own rational thinking moves to Egypt. Here he gets both himself and Sarai into trouble with the Pharaoh, but God has not deserted him because of his folly, coming to his rescue. Abram will make other mistakes, but God will persist with him and keep His promises.

Trouble once again invades his family when his herdsmen and those of Lot get to arguing, so that eventually Lot chooses to move with all his family and possessions to the plain near to the city of Sodom. Later this will cause him and his much grief. Abram wisely elects to stay in the high country as wiled by God. This has been a test to his assurance in the promise of God as to where to establish his tents.

Before we look further into the life of Abraham and his relationship with God, we should note that faith plays an important part in the whole of the events that are recorded concerning him and his family. In Hebrews 11; 8–12 we have a summary of this faith of Abraham. And Paul in Romans 4 high-lights this centrality of faith in his life and quotes the statement ‘Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness ; this is repeated in Galatians 3: 6–9. Let us read this passage.

Moving on, chapter 15 shows a deepening of the relationship where God promises Abraham many offspring. In chapter 16 we see what happens when doubts arise, so that Sarai, with human reasoning and manipulation to get a son, uses her maid Hagar. But this backfires as such schemes are bound to do.

Abraham and Hagar have a son calling him Ishmael, and his descendants have been a thorn in the side of Israel ever since. Note the promise to Ishmael of future generations, but not of the covenant.

It would pay us at this point to read chapter 17:1–22 where Abraham and God have this face to face conversation, and a promise is made that Abraham and Sarah, (note change of names), at 100 and 90 years of age respectively, would have a son who will be called Isaac. A covenant from God would be made with him and his future descendants.

God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, three specially chosen men; and note their wives were also chosen.

Chapter 20 reveals to us just what a bad memory Abraham had, maybe it was his age. How is your memory? By the way Sarah must have been a stunner, even at 90, for Abimelech to desire her. The attraction from Egypt is strong, so that later we find Isaac also caught up in a venture into this land with similar results as his father.

Here again we see the patient way in which God deals with His fickle servant, and acts for the preservation of His plan to provide an heir from this select couple, a son of promise to establish the line which will eventually produce the nation of Israel to be the people of God.

The exciting fulfilment of promise at the birth of Isaac comes next, only maned by the sad result of the affair of Hagar and her son Ishmael eventually being cast out. But God hasn't turned His back on them, making provision for their survival and protection.

Then in chapter 22 we are confronted with an unusual command of God to Abraham. He is to take this precious gift from God, this son of promise, fruit of his beloved wife Sarah's womb, as a sacrifice to God on the mount of Mullah.

As we wrestle with the meaning of this event, maybe we might just catch a glimpse of the depth of the relationship between God and Man, and where true love begins and ends.

Before we leave Abraham we must mention a man, a priest of the most high God, whom Abraham meets, recognises and honours. In Hebrews 7 we have a record of this King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the most high God. We will see him again later.

Now we come to the romance and marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, a beautiful love story. Such records are important for us to keep in touch with the natural flow of life, so as to not put these persons as characters in fiction or myth. It also is a preview for us of the wooing and love relationship of the Lamb for, and with His Bride.

Twin sons are born to Isaac and Rebekah, Esau first followed by Jacob. Eventually these sons would cause a rift in the relationship between their parents, Esau being his father's favourite, while Rebekah favoured Jacob [see chapter 25]

Again human passions unrestrained cause deceit, bitterness, pain, suffering and anger, so that Jacob must flee in fear of his life.

Rebekah and Jacob trick the aging near blind Isaac out of the blessing rightfully Esau's as the first born. Jacob also tricks Esau out of his birthright leaving him in a sense bankrupt. Esau causes himself and his parent further trouble by marrying Judith a Hittite woman. To try and make amends for his folly he also marries Mahalah, Ishmael's daughter, and grand daughter of Abraham.

On advice from his parents Jacob moves to the country of his uncle Laban in the hope of taking an acceptable wife from within the family. While working for his uncle Jacob himself becomes the victim of deceit. He loves Rachel and seeks to marry her but is tricked into marriage to the elder sister Leah. Jacob's perseverance is now seen as he commits himself to a further seven years of service for the right to eventually marry Rachel as well.

So now with two wives, their maids, and many children, Jacob returns home to the Promised Land. On the way he has a life changing confrontation with God, where God changes his name to Israel to suit his new nature and role as a prince. God had made His choice between these two brothers before they were even born. Why did He choose Jacob?

Once again Egypt comes into the picture. Joseph, favoured son of Israel, is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. He is settled in Egypt, but God is with him, (another chosen one), so that he becomes a governor in this land, and eventually invites his family to come and live on the more fertile plains of the Nile.

Remember, they are leaving the Promised Land dedicated to them by God Himself, to settle in Egypt. From the earliest days this family, first Abraham, then Isaac had a leaning towards Egypt, but were not allowed to stay there. Yet Egypt was to play an important part in God's plan to establish an undefiled nation for His own purpose.

All is well while Joseph and the current Pharaoh live, but future Pharaohs see no need to honour the agreement of the past, eventually enslaving the Children of Israel to serve the then Pharaoh. What benefit can there be in this? No chance of intermarriage with neighbouring peoples so that they will remain true Israelites for a number of generations, and grow numbers-wise into a sizeable nation.

Although they will suffer some hardship as slaves, they will be protected and preserved until God will move them once more into the Promised Land

Study 8

MOSES AND THE EXODUS

Bible Readings: Hebrews 11:23 – 28 and Hebrews 3:1–19

The time has come for God to return His people to the Promised Land. To do this a suitable leader must be found.

The current Pharaoh is alarmed at the population explosion amongst the Israelites, so he has infant males killed. The mother of Moses believes he is a special child so she devises a plan for his possible preservation. All the mothers would want to save their sons if possible.

The Egyptian princess bathes each day at a certain place, so the child is put in a watertight basket and pushed into the rushes near by this spot. The mother's plan, and God's plan being equal at this point, succeed. The infant is discovered by the princess and adopted as her own, thereby growing up in the palace of Pharaoh.

In this way Moses learned all the ways and laws of the Egyptians, preparing him to be an ideal spokesman when the time comes to confront Pharaoh, and demand the release of the people of God.

As an adult he has an identity problem after finding out about his Hebrew parentage, and eventually gets into trouble when he kills an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew workman. To save himself now, he must escape into the wilderness where he becomes a shepherd, and marries his employer's daughter.

Moses seems happy to have left the old life behind, and for forty years is content to live as a member of Jethro's family in the land of Midian. But God has other plans for Moses, and after attracting his attention through the burning bush, commissions him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt as a free nation. He reluctantly accepts, this is God commanding no less, and so returns to Egypt to make demands of Pharaoh for the release the Hebrews as God has instructed him.

After many signs and plagues to prove God is behind the demands Moses and his brother Aaron have made of Pharaoh, the

king's heart is even harder, so that it takes the death of the first born of Egypt to move him to agree. His son, and possibly his grandson were among those who perished on that fearful night.

This was also a great sign to the Israelites as they are commanded to keep the first Passover for the protection of their first born, and so the faithful are protected. Annually devout Jews still keep the Passover in remembrance of the grace of God on theirs, and their ancestors behalf so many generations ago.

So Moses led the people with all their livestock and possessions out of Egypt to the shores of the Red Sea. But Pharaoh changes his mind sending his army to bring them back.

God hasn't changed His mind though, opening a path through the Red Sea so that all the Israelites cross to the other side safely. As the soldiers attempt to follow, the sea returns and they are drowned.

Moses gathers the people to sing a song Exodus 15:1–21, I will sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously the horse and rider is thrown into the sea. Now see Revelation 15:2–4 they sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.

During their stay in the wilderness the Israelites learn many lessons from God. They are given the Ten Commandments for their protection, and yet continue to have rebellious hearts. Even Moses on occasion has times of disobedience. How patient and long suffering is our Heavenly Father with His people, both with them, and today with us and our fickleness.

It took 40 years in the wilderness for this nation to be prepared to enter the Promised Land, and by this time only three of the adults who had left Egypt were still alive. A whole new generation had grown up in the wilderness. For all this time they had known the providence of God. For food supply see Exodus 16:12ff. In the evening it is quail and in the morning it is bread the Lord has given you to eat And for water supply, Exodus 17:5–6. Strike the rock at Horeb and water will come out of it.

Moses was allowed to see the land but not to enter it. The leadership is handed over to Joshua under God's instruction. He was

known for his deep trust in God, and as ‘a man in whom is the spirit,’ Numbers 27:18. As a youth he lived through the bitter realities of slavery in Egypt, but also witnessed the supernatural plagues and the miracle of Israel’s escape from the army of the Egyptians. Later in the Sinai peninsular it was Joshua who led the troops to victory over the Amalekites. Exodus 17:8–13.

Joshua was elected to represent his own tribe Ephraim when 12 spies were sent into Canaan, and only he and Caleb were ready to follow God’s will to take possession of the land, see Numbers 14:26–34. Above all, he was God’s chosen servant to bring the work Moses had begun to completion, and establish Israel in the Promised Land. In the book of Hebrews we see him referred to as an O.T. type of Christ. Hebrews 4:1–8.

The story of Joshua is really about the Kingdom of God breaking into the world of nations at a time when national and political entities were viewed as the creation of the gods, and living proof of their power. Thus, the Lord’s triumph over the Canaanites testified to the world that the God of Israel is the one true living God, whose claim on the world is absolute.

The battles for Canaan were therefore the Lord’s holy war, undertaken at a particular time in the program of redemption. The conquered land itself would not become Israel’s national possession by right of conquest, but it belonged to the Lord. So the land had to be cleansed of all remnants of paganism.

War is a terrible curse that the human race brings on itself as it seeks to possess the earth by its own unrighteous ways. The God of the second Joshua (Jesus) is the God of the first Joshua also.

Although God for a time reaches out to the whole world with the gospel, and commissions His people urgently to carry His offer of peace to the all nations, the sword of His judgement waits in the wings – and His second Joshua will wield it. Revelation 19:11–16.

The account of the falling of the walls of Jericho show God is continuing to provide for His people, and encourage them to keep their faith in Him as their God and protector.

Once again we are confronted with a person who was not one of the children of Israel, yet believed in God – Jehovah, and responded to the request of the Hebrew spies in Jericho. . This woman’s name is Rahab who gets a mention in Hebrews II; 30–31. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with the disobedient because she had received the spies in peace. These men were here on God’s business, and she believed it.

It appears she was further rewarded for her faithfulness, for we read in the genealogy of Jesus found in Matthew’s Gospel she had married an Israelite called Salmon. They had a son named Boaz who also married an alien called Ruth, and their son Obed was the grandfather of King David. Matthew 1:5–6.

These accounts show us that Gentiles as well as Jews were recipients of that constant grace of God.

Study No 9

PRIESTS

Bible Reading: Hebrews 4:14–5:10.

Where do we first find mention of a priest in the Old Testament? In Genesis 14 there is an account of a battle between neighbouring kings with the consequence of the captivity of Abraham's nephew Lot. Abraham, with the aid of God is able to rescue Lot, and on his way home meets Melchizedek King of Salem who was said to be a priest of God Most High. This King/Priest gives Abraham food and wine, and Abraham in return gives to the priest a tenth (tithe) of all that he has. [see Gen. 14: 18–20]

In the book of Hebrews we find more about this priest Melchizedek, and are informed that this is the kind of priest Jesus is, not of the Aaronic priesthood established in the wilderness. Note that as Melchizedek is both king and priest this is not often so, but in the case of Jesus He is equally King, Priest and Prophet.

Let us look at the forming of the Aaronic priesthood noting the difference between it and that of Melchizedek, and finally the priesthood in the Church today.

A simple definition of a priest as appointed for the People of God is to be found in Hebrews 5:1–4 A (high) priest is one chosen from among mortals and put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf to offer gilts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

We meet another priest when Israel is in the wilderness. The father-in-law of Moses called Jethro comes to visit. See Exodus 18 where he is called a Priest of Midian. When he hears of how God was with Israel when they escaped from Egypt he brings a burnt offering to God. Later he gives wise counsel to Moses before departing.

Now we come to the appointment of priests for Israel recorded in Exodus 28, and then in chapter 29 Aaron and his sons are to be ordained as the first priests of the nation. This is then confirmed in chapter 30 verse 30.

What is the role of a priest? First and foremost a priest is a servant of God. The same could be said of a prophet so we will note the distinction between the two. Both receive their appointment from God, Dent. 18:181; Heb. 5:4. But the prophet was appointed to be God's representative with the people, to be His messenger, and to interpret His will. He was primarily a religious teacher. The priest, on the other hand, was man's representative with God. He had the special privilege of approaching God, and of speaking and acting in behalf of the people.

Looking again at that classical passage regarding a priest found in Hebrews 5 lets note the following elements. The priest is taken from amongst men to be their representative. This appointment is only made by God. He is active in the interest of men in things that pertain to God, that is, in religious things. His special work is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He also makes intercession for the people (11th. 7:25), and blesses them in the name of God, (Lev. 9:22).

Turning to 1Peter in the New Testament we have reference to the new priesthood to supersede the Aaronic priesthood and meet the needs of the new people of God. This royal priesthood is to be made up of the whole body of believers. As priests the believers are to:

- (1) reflect the holiness of God and that of their High Priest, see 1:15; Heb.7:26; 10:10.
- (2) Offer spiritual sacrifices, 2:5.
- (3) Intercede for man before God and,
- (4) represent God before man.

Study 10

JUDGES

Bible Readings: Judges 2:16–19 Hebrews 11: 32–40.

In the book of Hebrews we find reference to some of this group of persons specially chosen by God to lead the Israelites in difficult times. You would probably recognise the names Gideon, Samson, and maybe Barak, but surely the name of Deborah should be along side of his, as she was the judge while he captained the army.

Let us then go back to the Old Testament to see what purpose God had in appointing these judges. The title describes the leaders Israel had from the time of the elders who outlived Joshua, until the time of the monarchy. Their principal purpose is best expressed in Judges 2:16, Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them (His people) out of the hands of the raiders (their enemies, v18)

Because of the apostasy of His people God permitted the oppressors, but then raised up deliverers so that He was ultimate Judge and Deliverer. Judges 11: 27.

Two things we should note at this point, (a) however much the Israelites might have fretted for a king of their own, at this time they had no other king but God Himself. (b) This was in a special way the Old Testament age of the Spirit. God's Spirit enabled men and women to accomplish feats of victory in the Lord's Holy Wars against the powers that threatened His Kingdom. See Judges 3:10; 6:4; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6; 15:14; and 1 Sam. 10:6; 11:6; 16:13.

Now we must realise the judges were not all 'good guys' all of the time. Some made very bad mistakes and personal judgements; but God appointed them when the need arose, to do a job for Him, and they each accomplished that task even though sometimes reluctantly.

What then was their primary function? To bring righteousness and justice to the land where the Jews resided. Sometimes this meant with wise council and at other times by the overthrow of the enemies of God and His people.

On nearly all occasions when judges were appointed the Jews had turned to idols and other gods of their neighbours, and then become oppressed by these same neighbours. So when they in their fickleness couldn't stand this affliction any more, they turned and called upon God to rescue them. God, on hearing their plea would raise up a judge.

These judges acted as governors under God. Some were prophets like Deborah who had Barak as captain of the army to lead the troops against Sisera and the Canaanites. Others were warriors such as Jephthah the Gileadite, and Samson son of Manoah a Danite, and still others fanners like Gideon.

In Judges 11:27 the God of Israel is called "The Judge". God's judgements" form part of that instruction which is known as the law (torah) of Jehovah. (cf. Ps 19:9; 119:7)

Throughout Judges the fundamental issue is the Lordship of God in Israel, i.e. Israel's acknowledgment of and loyalty to His rule. His Kingship over Israel had been uniquely established by the covenant at Sinai (Ex 19:24), which was later renewed by Moses on the plains of Moab (Dt.29) and by Joshua at Shechem (Jos.24)

After Israel was established in the promised land through the ministry of Joshua, her pilgrimage ended. The Lord's land, where she was to enter into her rest, lay under her feet, it remained only for her to occupy it. The time had come for Israel to be the kingdom of God in the firm of an established commonwealth on earth.

But in Canaan she quickly forgot the acts of God that had given her birth, and had established her in the land. Consequently she lost sight of her unique identity as God's people, chosen and called to be His army and loyal citizens of His emerging kingdom. She stopped fighting the Lord's battles, turned to the gods of Canaan, rejecting God's laws for daily living.

Only by the Lord's sovereign use of a foreign oppressor to chastise His people – thereby implementing the covenant curses (see Lev.26:14–45; Dt.28:15–68) – and by raising up these judges as deliverers when His people cried out to Him, did He maintain His kingship in Israel and preserve the embryonic kingdom from extinction.

Study 11

PROPHETS

Bible Readings: I Samuel 1: 1–28.

In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes. Judges 21: 25.

This is a stark statement when analysed because it ignores the Kingship of God denying His constant care and provision for their every need, and inferring that without an earthly king they are left to their own devices to do what they please.

The priests and judges have operated as God's agents in the midst of the people, but they are still not satisfied, and want a king like their neighbours imagining they have been deprived by this oversight on God's part.

Well God in His patience is to give them further support with the inclusion of prophets to speak on His behalf, so that the people will not be able to say they have no instruction or guidance in their time of need. God's wisdom for all occasions would be transmitted to them through these chosen persons, who would have an ear to hear the very voice of God speak, and so be the medium between God and His people.

The prophet then is one divinely called of God and speaks forth from God, and not necessarily about things future but even regarding current events. It was the duty of the prophet to reveal the will of God to the people. This might be done in the form of instruction, admonishing and exhortation, glorious promises, or stern rebukes. They were ministerial monitors of the people, the interpreters of the law, especially in its moral and spiritual aspects. It was their duty to protest against mere formalism, to stress moral duty, to urge the necessity of spiritual service, and to promote the interests of truth and righteousness.

If the people went astray they had to call them back to the law, and to announce the coming terror of the Lord upon the wicked. But their work was intimately related to the promise, the gracious

promises of God for the Future. It was their privilege to picture the glorious things which God had in store for His people. It is also evident from scripture that the true prophets of Israel typified the great coming prophet of the future, Dent. 18:15 of Acts 3: 22–24, and that He was already functioning through them in the days of the Old Testament, 1 Peter 1:11.

Turning to I Samuel we have the record of the cursing of the priest Eli because of his wicked sons. Eli was both a priest and judge see 1 Sam.4:18 *He (Eli) had judged Israel forty years*. The death of Eli marked the end of an era that had begun with the death of Joshua and the elders who had served with him. (see Joshua 24: 29–31)

Hannah, a devout woman of prayer, is blessed with a son after being considered barren, and this precious gift she returns to God with thanksgiving. And so Samuel is placed in service to the ailing Eli. Hannah is one of a list of women who were thought barren through age or otherwise, whom God chooses to bring forth sons to serve His purposes.

God has once again chosen a man before he is even born to serve Him, and so Samuel becomes a prophet of the Living God. Later we find that in his latter years Samuel appoints his sons as judges for Israel, 1 Samuel 8:1. But his sons did not walk in his ways, 1Sam. 8:3. So like Eli's sons, his sons failed him.

This caused the people to be stronger in their demand for a King, and even though Samuel stood firm God eventually instructed him to give them what they ask, but to spell out the consequences first. So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king. 1Sam. 8:10.

God chose Saul a Benjaminite, an outstanding man both tall and handsome to be the first king of Israel. Read I Samuel 9–10. One point we should note in this narrative is Saul's meeting with a band of prophets, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit enabling him to prophecy also. In those days there was what was known as a school of the prophets especially under Elijah. Regarding Saul's experience we can see that God enabled His servants to fulfil various roles on

different occasions, but this was His doing and not for them to presume upon. This surely is true as well today.

The prophets didn't often have easy lives. Having been set aside by God to communicate His messages to His people, sometimes by action but mostly by word, they were more often ill received, rejected, and at times even killed. God was certainly long suffering with His chosen people however fickle and rebellious they became, and persisted in supplying prophets to warn them of their folly in dealing with other nations and false gods.

There were false prophets also operating such as Balam, but God was even able to force them to prophecy accurately when He so desired it. When the people wouldn't listen and hardened their hearts against the prophets and so against the word of God, they were forced to suffer the consequences, such as the time when many were taken into captivity in Babylon. Much of the Old Testament revolves around the prophecies concerning this happening and the actual seventy years of this captivity. But even then God provided His people with prophets such as Daniel and the priest Ezekiel.

In 2Kings we find events in the life of Elisha who followed after Elijah as a prophet. He purifies water, has a run in with some juvenile delinquents of the day, helps a widow in debt get clear by the sale of oil, and gives mouth to mouth resuscitation to the Shunammite's son. Not to leave out the healing of Naaman and the miracle of the floating axe head. Some of these prophets surely live busy exciting lives.

Staying with Elisha look at 2Kings 6 and see the occasion when the prophet prays for the eyes of his servant to be opened to see the protection of God against an enemy force, and his eyes were opened to see the mountain full of horses and chariots of war all around Elisha verse 17.

During the period between the OT and the NT there seems to be very little evidence of prophecy. Who was the prophet we first encounter in the New Testament? Was he the only one?

Study 12

KINGS

Bible Reading :

As we saw when looking at the prophets Saul was the first chosen king of Israel, and a favourite with the people, but as he grew in self importance he defied the instructions of God to the point where he became constantly disobedient. At this time God instructed Samuel to anoint another to be the king of God's choosing, later to be known as a man after God's heart.

This man was the shepherd boy David son of Jesse. For the genealogy of David see Ruth 4: 13–22. By His choice between these two men Saul and David, God reveals the criteria to be a true king, to shepherd the flock with compassion and be prepared to put your life on the line for their preservation. The opposite to lording it over them in a dictatorial fashion, but to serve them with wisdom and competence.

Now the national kingdom of Israel was in reality one in which God was King, lawgiver, and Judge. So the earthly king was only a vicegerent holding only a delegated authority of Jehovah. He is appointed to any out the will and execute the judgements as a representative of the King. This was to be only a symbol, and a shadow of the type of that glorious reality, especially as it was destined to appear in the days of the New Testament. Out of the womb of Israel the spiritual reality of the kingdom was to come forth and assume an existence independent of the Old Testament theocracy.

The spiritual character of the kingdom known as the kingdom of God or of heaven stands forth far more clearly in the New Testament than it does in the Old, where Christ now becomes its mediatorial King.

Returning to David, he certainly wasn't perfect making many mistakes and foolish decisions when resorting to his own initiative. A low point is recorded when he became involved in an adulterous

relationship with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite. When Bathsheba informs David that she is pregnant he sends for her husband, a soldier, to come home from the battle field, giving Uriah opportunity to spend time with his wife thereby covering David's sin. This plan fails, so now the king resorts to a more evil devise to have Uriah killed. God uses Nathan the prophet to confront David with the depth of his sin to bring him to repentance. The first son of this relationship is taken from David, but God accepts the repentance of this man and acts with grace towards him. He is promised that the next son of this now legitimate marriage was destined to be successor to his father, and so Solomon became king upon the death of David.

He in many ways was a good king, and was able to maintain peace with his neighbours for the most part throughout his reign.

It is in his life time the temple is built, and Solomon's prayer of dedication of this structure is important as recorded in 1Kings 8:22ff and 2Chron. 6:12ff. This prayer by Solomon reflects an awareness of the covenant obligations the Lord God had placed on His people, and a knowledge of the consequences that disobedience would entail.

Solomon also acknowledged that even though God had chosen to dwell among His people in a special and localised way, He far transcended containment by any thing in all creation.

After the death of Solomon the nation eventually split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, with separate kings. Some of these kings were good, and many bad so that the people of God were subject to much trial and tribulation under the rule of these kings who, for the most part, refused to listen to the voice and wisdom of God as conveyed to them through the various prophets, appointed by the Lord for the preservation of this people of promise.

So, from the days of Solomon to the seventy years exile, and then the eventual return of the people to the promised land with the rebuilding of the temple and the city walls, so that the nation is once more established, God was in all these events with a view to continuing His plan towards the coming of the promised Messiah.

Study No 13

The Babe of Bethlehem

Bible Readings : Isaiah 9:6-7 Luke 1 & 2

For a child has been born Jim us a son given to us: authority rests upon his shoulders: and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his Kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time onward and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9: 6-7. The Lord of hosts will give you a sign Look a virgin is with child and shall bear a. son and shall give him the name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14. (cf Matthew 1: 22-23)

The record in Luke's gospel tells of the conception and births of two boys related to each other as cousins, with a space of six months between them. If it wasn't for the involvement of the angel Gabriel and his pronouncements concerning those births, it would appear on the surface to be a normal, and even common occurrence. I myself am one of two cousins born approximately six months apart, and we have been close all of our fives like brother and sister.

But as we mad on we find other distinctive and unusual features in this story. Zechariah has trouble believing the angel because both he and his wife Elizabeth are in the twilight years of life. Note verse 13 of Luke 1, *your prayer has been heard*. How often do we pray without expecting or believing in an answer? For his unbelief Zechariah is struck dumb and will remain so until after the birth of his son. Remember Adam and Eve, unbelief can bring about all sorts of trials and consequences.

Mary is also confronted by Gabriel, an angel from the presence of God, and told about her pending conception by the Holy Spirit, and of the birth of her son who was to be King.

By all accounts there has been a long gap in Israelis history since they have known a genuine valid prophet or king, but in this short space of time both are to be raised up by a divine act of God.

There are three songs in this chapter which tell the story of the founding of the New Covenant. The first is the song of Elizabeth prompted by the Holy Spirit as baby John leaps for joy in her womb at the close proximity of God's chosen Messiah. Then Mary responds with her own song. Later, after the birth of John, Zechariah acts in belief and obedience by the naming of his son receives back his voice, and also and also bursts forth into song. One of the happenings often associated with revivals is the canting forth of new songs.

At the birth of Jesus (meaning 'Yahweh will save us) angels once again communicate with men, this time to a group of shepherds, telling them about the baby and where to find Him. Once again a sign is employed to emphasise this unique event.

And when the baby Jesus was presented at the temple, Simeon, a devout righteous man) endowed with discernment by the Holy Spirit, also bursts into song at the sight of the infant Christ. Anna, another representative of the remnant true Israel and its divine ideal and purpose, also recognised the baby Jesus as a special gift from God.

Mary has been told by Gabriel that the Lord God will give him, the son she is to give birth to the *throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, his kingdom will never end*. In Matthew's gospel the advent of the birth of this baby is heralded by a star, and a few subjects of other nations were guided by it to the presence of the infant king.

This gospel by Matthew reveals Jesus as realising in his person, and enunciating in His teaching, the great principles which had been the peculiar deposit and glory of ancient Israel. They were created a nation for the revelation of the beauty and beneficence of the kingdom of heaven established on earth, and in this gospel the King is seen and heard enunciating its laws, distributing its benefits, and laying its foundations in His life and death.

The title Kingdom of heaven is peculiar to Matthew in the New Testament and is based on Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14, 27. It refers to the Messianic Kingdom promised in the Old Testament, and although to be experienced as a literal earthly kingdom, never the less it would be based on spiritual principles, and would demand a right relationship

with God's liar entrance. This is why both John and Jesus called upon their hearers to repent.

As simple men and women were moved in wonder at the birth of Jesus. The underworld of evil was also moved to its very centre, and found vent for its anger through the false king Herod. And so we have the record of his slaughter of the innocent infants, and in the words of the commentator Campbell Morgan 'both heaven and hell were moved at Jesus' coming'.

Here we are reminded of our first study where we see the red dragon *standing in front of the woman who is about to give birth so that he might devour her child the moment he is born*. (Rev 12:4b)

So the promise of Genesis 3 and the account of Revelation 12 meet at this point in time, and the salvation of all things and for all time to be realised in this man born in Bethlehem.

Study No 14

The NAZARENE, TEACHER from GALILEE

Readings: Mark 6:1–6. Hebrews 4:14– 5: 10. Revelation 17:14; 14: 11–16

The two boys, born only months apart as we have seen in our previous study, are now grown men.

The purpose for both their lives unfolds before us in the Gospel records.

John comes out of the wilderness moved by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Word of God, and once again a true prophet has been raised up for the Jews. All of his hearers who receive his words in belief he baptises in the river.

Jesus comes to hear this proclamation by his cousin John and is consequently baptised, not as a symbol of cleansing for His own unbelief and disobedience, but as an affirmation of John's preaching and that all men and women need to respond to this truth while there is yet time.

John the Baptist recognises Jesus of Nazareth as the *Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world*. How did John view Jesus? As the suffering servant of Isaiah chosen for sacrifice? Or as the Lamb/Son of the Father with all authority to overthrow all the enemies of His Father's kingdom and then rule supreme? This latter is surely the image we find in Revelation where the Lamb will ultimately defeat all those who oppose His Father.

Maybe John's message, *repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, would give us a clue. When Jesus commences His ministry He preaches the same message. "Wake up and listen a new thing is taking place in your midst!"

Where God once communicated with His people and through them to all peoples everywhere using Judges, Priests, Prophets, and even Kings, now He is to bring revelation to all who will have ears to hear and eyes to see by His Son.

A true prophet has come in John the Baptist, but now one who is Prophet, Priest and King has come, so that all who have held these roles legitimately up to this time have been pointing forward to this day, when all their efforts have found there meaning in this Chosen One of whom God says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"

Let us look at Jesus from the perspective of these roles. First can He be called a Judge in the mould of the O. T. Judges appointed by God? Look back to our study on the Judges and judges 2:16. What did the Judges do that was outstanding? They saved the people by defeating their enemies who were harassing them. They were specially selected servants of the one true King of Israel, Spirit filled and empowered to defeat these powerful enemies that threatened His (Gods) Kingdom. How does Jesus line up with this definition?

For our example we will look to Mark 121–34. The teacher from Nazareth confronts evil spirits and demons and defeats them. And in Mark 5 we have the account of the healing of the sick woman and the raising of the dead girl further evidence of the Holy Spirit in action in Him. In verse 34 of Mark 5 we have these words "Daughter your faith has made you whole (lit. saved you) go in peace and be healed of your disease". We need to note here that Jesus wasn't a faith – healer as such, see the amount of the boy in Mark 9:1411:

The assertion Jesus makes is that Faith or belief is necessary to confront any obstacle and especially where evil spirits are in opposition to God's servants. This faith is not in the ability of a teacher or prophet sack as John by his disciples. When Jesus commands faith it is with final to believe with or without a sign as with the Centurion, Matthew 8:10, and Bartimaeus, Mat. 9:29. Jesus says " have faith in God . Mk 11:22. In other words men must trust God. Faith was a frequent subject in the teaching of Jesus.

Well if Jesus is a Judge can He also be a **Prophet**? He certainly infers that He is as recorded in Matthew 13:57 and Mark 6:1–6, see also Luke 13:33. The statement in Deut 18, about a future prophet, would seem to be pointing forward to the coming of a special chosen one with power and authority such as Jesus exercised during His

ministry. Peter makes mention of this in his discourse in Acts 3:22–26 echoed by Stephen Acts 7:37, (c.f. John 6:14; 7:40) Throughout His ministry people recognised Him as a prophet Matt.21:11, 46, Lk. 7:16; 24:19, Jn. 3:2; 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17.

In the O.T. a prophet was appointed by God to be His representative with the people, His messenger, and to interpret His will. He was primarily a religious teacher. This surely fits Jesus. John records some testimonies by Jesus as to being the sent one. John 5:31–47; 7:16–19; 12:44–50.

Now to the **priestly office** of Jesus. The Old ‘testament predicts and prefigures the priesthood of the coming redeemer, see references in Psalm 110:4 and Zechariah 6:13. Also the O.T., priesthood and especially the high priest prefigured a priestly Messiah. In the New Testament only one book – Hebrews, is Jesus named as a priest and repeatedly. Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 5:5; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1. Yet many other books refer to the priestly work of Christ. This work was two fold according to scripture. Foremost He was to offer an all sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. As was the role of the priests to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin.

The striking thing in scripture as to this priestly work of Christ is that He appears both as priest and sacrifice. So turning to Hebrews He is described as our only real, eternal, and perfect High Priest, appointed by God, who takes our place vicariously, and by His self-sacrifice obtains a mat and perfect redemption for us. Heb. 1:10; 7:1–28; 9:11–15; 9:24–28; 10:11–14, 19–22; 12:24.

Paul in his epistles refers to the priestly work of Christ. Rom. 3:24–25; 5:6–8; I Cor. 5:7; 15:3; Eph. 5:2. And John likewise. Jn. 1:29; 3:14; I Jn. 2:2; 4:10. See also Peter. IPet. 2:24; 3:18.

The fact that Jesus Christ was anointed to a three-fold office as Prophet, Priest, and King finds its explanation in the fact that Adam (Man) was originally intended for this same three-fold office and work. As created by God he was Prophet, Priest, and King and endowed with knowledge, understanding, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the rest of the creational order. Sin brought ignorance, blindness, error, untruth, unrighteousness guilt and moral

pollution. Along with this came misery, death and destruction. Hence it was necessary that Christ the second or last Adam should be true Prophet, Priest and King. As such He represents God with man, man in the presence of God, and as King He exercises dominion over all restoring the original dominion of man.

It is extremely important for us, the current people of God and His Church, to recognise our Lord Jesus as the one who embodies all of these functional roles on our behalf, so that we are not looking for them among men, thereby to be led astray by the counterfeit as described in Revelation. Do we need a Judge, Prophet, Priest and King? Well we have them all in Jesus Christ, and He has entrusted their functions to us as His body to minister to the Nations of the whole world. We will pick this up in a later study.

Jesus as King. Firstly as the eternal Son and thereby part of the Holy Trinity He shares dominion over all God’s creatures. His throne is established in the heavens and His Kingdom rules over all. (Psalm 103: 19) Secondly He has kingship especially related to us, that is His royal rule over His people or the Church. It is both a spiritual kingship and a mediatorial kingship, relating to the spiritual realm, and to be established in the hearts and lives of believers.

Spiritual because His kingship bears directly and immediately an a spiritual end, the salvation of His people, and because it is administered, not by force or external means, but by the Word and the Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and wisdom, of justice and holiness, of grace and mercy.

This Kingdom is both present and future. As present it is ever developing spiritual reality in the hearts and lives of men and women and as such exercises in a constantly widening sphere. Jesus and the apostles clearly referred to the Kingdom as already present in time, see Matt 12:23; Luke 17:21; Col. 1:13. It is also a future hope, an eschatological reality, in fact this aspect of the Kingdom is more prominent in scripture, Matt. 7:21–22; 19:23; 22:2–14; 25:1–13; Luke 22:29–30; 1Cor. 6:9; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Thess. 2:12; 2Tim. 4:18; Heb. 12:28; 2 Peter. 1:11.

Essentially the future Kingdom will consist like that of the present, in the rule of God established and acknowledged in the hearts of men and women. But at the glorious coming of the Lord Jesus Christ this will be perfected, for the now hidden forces of the Kingdom will stand revealed, and the spiritual rule of Christ will find its consummation in a visible and majestic reign.

Study No 15

THE CROSS and RESURRECTION

Readings : John 1: 1–18, John 3: 11–21, John 11: 21–27

We will look to John to see where the Cross and Resurrection fit into God's plan of salvation, because as C K Barratt in his Gospel according to St John writes, 'the history he (John) remolds is the history of God's saving activity directed to the needs of men, and he never thinks of it in any other terms'. And C. Ryder Smith agrees – 'The whole of the 4th Gospel is a book of salvation!'

There is nothing in John like Romans 3:21ff where in a few verses Paul draws on justification, redemption, propitiation, the righteousness of God, the blood of Christ and more to bring out his meaning. This is not John's way. His themes are fewer, but they run through his Gospel. And all he writes is written in the light of Christ's work for men.

Whenever John speaks of love it is love illuminated by the cross that he has in mind. Whenever he speaks of life it is the life that has been won by Christ to which he refers. His themes may not be many but they are seen in the light of the cross.

To begin with John makes it quite clear that unless sin is dealt with men will perish eternally. The giving of the only begotten Son preserves believers from this. But a plain implication of John 3:16 is that those who do not believe don't have everlasting life. They perish. This text is usually cited to show God's love and the wonder of the provision He has made for man's salvation in Christ, but it shouldn't be overlooked that the love of which it speaks is directed towards saving men and women from a terrible end. All such are in danger.

It is clear John views sin very seriously. He sees men divided according to their attitude to Jesus Christ. So characteristic is this of Christ's impact on men that He can be said to have come into the world expressly for judgement. "For judgement I came into the world

that they which don't see may see and those that see may become blind" Jn 9:39). You see when the light came into the world it is inevitable that those who prefer darkness are shown up for what they are (Jn 3:19)

In regard to condemnation John sees it as present and is equally sure salvation is the present possession of the believer. This is not to deny John sees a glorious future waiting for the believer in a life beyond death, and this life cannot be destroyed by death. Eternal life is no less real and permanent because its possessor will one day pass through the doorway we call death. (see Psalm 23.) Concerning this life being a present possession see the following passages. John 1:12; 3:16, 36 ; 6:33, 40, 47.

We need to be assured of this fact stated by Leon Morris in his book 'The Cross in the New Testament', 'that salvation is so closely connected with Christ, that when a man's will is against coming to Him, then that man is excluded from the possibility of salvation. Throughout this Gospel the priority of the divine is insisted upon. Salvation is simply not a human possibility at all.

John's whole Gospel is concerned with the way in which God has brought men life through sending His Son. (Jn 20:31).

Now the Jews were very proud of Moses and of their place as custodians of the Law he gave. And they interpreted this Law as pointing men to salvation by their own merits. John agrees the Law was given by Moses (Jn 1:17) but that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' He didn't deny the Law given By Moses was of divine origin. His Gospel shows he was always respectful of it. But he saw it not pointing to salvation by human effort but to Christ. See his reference to Phillip and Nathanael We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth". (Jn 1:45) So the Old Testament in John's view prepares the way for the coming of Jesus.

John tells us his aim in writing his Gospel was 'that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah)'. (Jn 20:31). Now as we know the Messiah is a figure foretold in the O.T. The Jews lovingly went through the prophecies that spoke of His coming looking

longingly for Him. When John speaks of his aim as showing that Jesus was the Christ, then, he spoke of the way in which he understood the scriptures to foretell His coming and this was the will of God. The purpose of God is foreshadowed in the O.T. with Israel and its religion, but that purpose is realized in Jesus Christ. And specifically John sees the will of God to issue in the Cross. In the best known text in scripture we read "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.*" (Jn 3:16)

Leon Morris on this verse says:

'Salvation is not something wrung from an unwilling God by the desperate intervention of a compassionate Son who took pity on those subject to His Father's destroying wrath. Salvation proceeds rather from the loving heart of God the Father Himself. It is an expression at once of His love and His righteousness. This is a precious truth and it must never be lost sight of'.

John isn't only concerned for the Jews, to him there is only one God who is working out His purposes in the events of Calvary on behalf of all mankind. In John 4:42 the Samaritans refer to Christ as 'indeed the Saviour of the world; and in Jn 3:17 John tells us 'God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world but that the world should be saved through Him'

Life through death is one of John's great themes. Taking the words of Jesus in one discourse on this subject He says He came 'that they might have life abundantly' then goes on – "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep'? (Jn 10:10f) see also Caiaphas' statement Jn 11:50, and Jesus concerning a grain of wheat Jn 12:24. It is clear in this Gospel that the death of Christ is closely linked with the gift of life in Christ. Our life purchased at the cost of His death. Twice He said that He is life, to Martha Jn 11:25 "*I am the resurrection and the life*", and to the disciples Jn 14:6 "*I am the way the truth and the life.*"

He has life in Himself which is the gift from the Father and which is like the life that the Father has also in Himself (Jn 5:24, Jn 6:57). He lives because of the Father. No one else is in a position to

give life for no one else has life in this way, stressing the uniqueness of the life that He gives. When He speaks of life as knowing the Father and Son (Jn 17:3) it is quality rather than quantity of life that He has in mind.

Barclay in his commentary on John would remind us that,

‘endless life could as easily be hell or heaven the idea behind eternal life is the idea of a certain quality a certain kind of life To enter into possession of that kind of life which is the life of God. It is to be lifted up above mere human, temporary, passing transient things, into that joy and peace which belongs to God Himself’.

John has a good deal to say about love. It is dearly most important to him, but his ideas must be understood in the light of his own expressions and not according to modern thought on the subject. He relates love specifically to the Cross as these three passages show. John 3:16 which we can’t get away from, John 13:1 and John 15:13. But for him the Cross is not simply a demonstration of love. Apart from the Cross we would perish.

E.J. Cornell on love in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* says. ‘Salvation was conceived by the love of God. The Father planned salvation; the Son executed it; and the Holy Spirit applies it.’

In other words the Cross which shows us the love of God is the very thing that shows us also the concern God has for righteousness and the peril all men are in on account of their sin. Love as John sees it isn’t indiscriminate sentimentality. It has a regard for moral purposes, and for the moral law that sinners have broken. All men were under condemnation on account of sin, but Jesus Christ took their place and made a way of escape for them. See P.T. Forsyth in *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*.(p. 314).

‘The consummation of the historic union of grace and judgement was in the death of Christ. And as the grace of God was on Christ, and not only through Christ on us, so also the judgement of God was on Christ and not only through Christ on us. That is the serious solemn point, disputed by many, and to be pressed only with a grave sense that it alone meets the moral

demand of holiness and completes it. Christ not only exercises the judgement of God on us; He absorbs it, so that we are judged not only by Him but in Him. And so in Him we are judged unto Salvation. “ The chastisement of our peace was on Him”.

All this means that when John thinks of the atonement as proceeding from the divine love he doesn’t think of it along the lines of ‘moral’ or ‘subjective’ theories. For him the love of God is seen in saving us from real danger. This love copes with the situation posed by man’s sin in such a way that neither the divine demand for righteousness and justice nor the sinners best interest are overlooked.

Let’s close with this quote from B.F. Westcott in his *Victory of the Cross*.

‘John’s passion narrative is from beginning to end a revelation of majesty. No voice of suffering no horror of thick darkness, find a place in it the Cross is the symbol of Christ’s throne from which He reigns, till the last enemy shall be subdued, with a sovereignty new, and universal, and present, and divine’.

Study No 16

The Church and the Children of God**Bible Readings: I Peter 1: 1–23.**

Introduction: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has gone the new has come! 2 Cor. 5:17. c.f. Gal. 6. 15.

The real New Age had arrived with the coming of Jesus the Christ, – new King – Messiah– Son of God– Son of Man.(Heb. 1:1–3) . In 1 Cor. 2:6–9, Paul writes of the passing of this age. It may be stretching things to say that Jesus was the new Abraham, man of faith and righteousness; new Isaac, son of promise; new Jacob/Israel, foundation stone of the people of God; new Moses to lead the people out of captivity, and new Joshua to load the people into the promised land, and overthrowing the enemies of Clod. (We find mention of Moses in Heb 3 and Joshua in Heb. 4:5)

But He certainly is the new Adam, (Rom. 5:12ff), and the new high priest, (Heb 4:14–5:10, & Heb. 7). To continue this theme on the new age, in Hebrews chapters 8 and 9 we find Christ being mediator of a New Testament / Covenant (9:15) (c.f. 2Cor. 3:6). What else is new? In John 13 Jesus presents a new commandment (c.f. Jn.2), while Peter writes of the new birth (1 Peter 1:3), and a new heaven and new earth (2Pet. 3:13) (c.f. Isa.65:17: Rev. 21:1), and Paul writes of a new man in (Eph. 2:15 and Col. 3:10). Finally in Revelations we have a new name (2:17) (c.f. Isa. 62:2), new Jerusalem the city of Cod (3:12), new song (5:9; 14:3), then in (21:5) He who is seated on the throne said: “I am making everything new!” and Heb. 10:20 . *A new and living way.*

...Now we come to the ‘New Church’ which would suggest that there was an ‘Old Church’ The Greek word *ekklesia* (church) in the septuagint of the OT denotes the actual meeting together of the

people; these were the children of Israel, called ones, to be the people of God.

At first it most likely meant all of Israel in all of time later to be, more precisely with meeting for religious purposes. Still later the true Church of the Jews was the truly faithful within Judaism. The word *ekklesia* for the most part in the New Testament denotes the (new) Church. Jesus was the first to use it and applied it to the company that gathered about Him, (Matthew 16 :1f), recognising Him publicly as their Lord, and accepting the principles of the kingdom of God. It was the *ekklesia* of the Messiah the true Church of Israel, or the true Israel.

So Jesus has called together a small group of faithful followers and instructs them in the things of the Kingdom. They are His special disciples later to be known as Apostles and are to be the foundation stones of the new Church. It will be on their preaching and teaching that the Church will be founded. It might be going too far to say those apostles chosen personally by Jesus were the ‘New Prophets’ of the New Covenant, but they certainly had some of the same qualifications, and the words of many of them are recorded for the benefit of the Church even up till this day standing alongside those of the Old Testament Prophets.

We could turn to the book of Acts to see the explosive formation of the Church, and the part the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus, had to play empowering the members of this early Church in its activities: as it entered into the action of mission, commenced by Jesus Christ, and entrusted to them to continue. This was not really a new mission, but a renewal of the mission of God with and through His people to bring all nations to righteousness and justice through His reconciling work of Grace. This is all very relevant but I want to concentrate on another aspect of the Church as the children of God.

‘When Israel was a youth I loved him and out of Egypt I called my Son’. Hos 11:1. God the Father planned to have sons, this was so in the Old and New Testament. You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:26. This sonship is by adoption. (Gal.4:4–6. See also Eph. 1:3–6. And so on our part we have a glorious

inheritance, Eph.1: 11–14, 18. (c.f 1 Peter 1:3–5;Gal. 4:7 ; Col. 1:12).

See what love the Father has given us that we should be called the children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved we are Cod’s children now [1John 3:1–2a]

Remember the special emphasis John made in his gospel as he strives to convey to his readers the centrality of the Cross and Resurrection for a future genuine relationship with God. Well here again in this letter we Find the same high–lighting of these subjects.

(1)	Light–	1John 1:5–7; 2:8–10.
(2)	Love –	I John 4:75:3.
(3)	Life–	1John 5:1 1–20.
(4)	Faith/Belief –	1John 5:4–13.
(5)	Hope –	1John 3:3.
(6)	Righteousness and Justice –	1John 2:29–3:12.

When we look back to the beginning of all things and see God raise a man from the very dust of the earth, out of His creation, this Adam was designed to be son of God. Not The Son as an integral part of the Trinity, but yet son of God the heavenly Father in every other way. And even to have communion with the Trinity. Now the last Adam has made this possible once more for those who by faith believe the truth. We have died to our old father the devil and have been born again to a new relationship with God; by adoption we are truly His children.

This is God’s doing and His alone.

The children love to serve the Father. The sons delight to work alongside of the Father in His mission, for His glory.

When I read the above I realized that to be faithful to our continuing theme of prophet, priest and king we would have to add something more to our study, for even though we are the children of God and

can enjoy this delightful filial relationship with our heavenly Father, we are still responsible to be in the action of our Father’s mission, participators and not just spectators. What Jesus came to do and still does we must also do. So as He is equally Prophet, Priest and King, we co–joined with Him as His body can do no less than exercise these ministries and to function accordingly we are equipped by the Holy Spirit.

Let us then look at ourselves as the community of the family of God. His children, living in this world as a distinct community like Israel was, to bring to bear on the nations the Word of God that would either bring to them freedom, redemption, salvation and peace, or condensation, judgement, and much suffering.

Geoffrey Bingham, in his study ‘The Radical People: The New Race’ in the *1985 Summer School*, calls the Church the (a) Prophetic Community, (b) Priestly Community, and (c) Kingly (Kingdom) Community.

- The **prophetic** preaching is the direct communication of God’s mind (Word) to the hearers. See Acts 1:8 (witnesses), Acts 2:17f, Exodus 7:1, Numbers 12:6, Jer.23:23ff, 1 Peter 4:11, and also Rev. 1:2, 6:9, 12:11 19:10.
- The **priestly** community ministers in the New Temple. See 1Peter 2:4–10, Heb.13:15–16,, Romans 15:16f. Isa. 56:6–8 ICor. 3:16–17; 6:19–20, 2Cor. 6:6.
- Then the **kingly** community is the community of Christ the King, and all are ‘Sons of the Kingdom’. They proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom.

This is how far they have come from their former depravity. So see Heb. 12:28,Col. 1:14, Matt. 8:12, Acts 3:25. In this Kingdom, God is Father, Christ is Lord (cf Eph. 5:5, 1Cor 15:24–28, Rev. 1:4, 17:14, 19:15). The new community ‘proclaims the Kingdom: I Pet. 4:9–10, Heb. 2: 11, 1 Cor. 4:20, Acts 8:5, 12, 19:8, 28:23, 31.

This New Community will reign; worship, and serve in Eternity. Rev. 1:4–5, 5:10, 20:4, 22:4–5. 7:14–15, 15:3, 20:3.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians.

I kneel before the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work in us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Study No 17

THE LION AND THE LAMB

Bible Readings : Micah 5. Isaiah 9:1–7, Genesis 49:8–10. Revelation 5:1–14, Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12, John 1:29–35,

Introduction: There are many references to lions in the Old Testament. It is recognised as a strong and dangerous adversary to be avoided if possible, but on occasions men would chose to fight with a lion to show their own strength. Samson in Judges 14 wrestles with a lion killing it and later making a riddle concerning its carcass. David claims to have slain a lion in protection of his flock. 1 Sam.17. Then in 2 Sam.23 Benaiah an officer in David's army kills a lion in a pit on a snowy day.

There are times recorded when God uses lions for judgement such as 'Kings 13 when the disobedient prophet meets a lion on the road, (see Goofs book and Martin's song.) Then in 1Kings 20; another disobedient man is killed by a lion, while 2Kings 17 tells of Gods judgement on the Samaritans using lions.

In the Psalms David uses the lions to depict the enemy while many of the prophets use the lion to illustrate their point as Hosea 5:14 will be like a lion to Ephraim like a young lion to the house of Judah, and we should all know the story of Daniel in the lions den.

The lion of Judah is first seen mentioned in Genesis 49:9ff Judah is a young lionhe crouches he lies down as a lion who dares to wake him up? (cf Num 24:9) In Ezekiel 19:1–9 Judah is pictured as a lioness mother of mighty kings (but not very successful) see vs 34 the lion (king) Jehoahaz is taken prisoner of Pharaoh Now to Egypt, 2Kings 23:33–34 while the second king vs 5–9 Jehoiachm was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnessar. 2Kings 24:15. Now see Micah 5:8–9 the remnant of Jacob, Judah (Israel) spiritual Israel is to become a great conqueror it shall be as a lion from whom none can deliver, as a mighty warrior who shall cut off his adversaries. This warfare will be

complete when 'the One' shall put all enemies under his feet ICor 15:25–28.

Returning to the prophecy in Genesis 49:9 this prophecy doesn't begin to come into time until the time of king David. The word *shiloh* could mean the one who brings peace referring to the Messiah see Rev. 5:5. As a lion he would pursue his enemies relentlessly until victory was his. Micah 5:8–9. An alternative interpretation or part thereof he comes whose right it is (to rule). See Ezekiel 21:27, c.f. Psalm 2:6 = *rightfully installed king*. Then look at Eze. 34:24–25 concerning the shepherd David (or son of) and the making of the covenant (new) of peace. And as God says through His prophet Ezekiel in f ax.:3622 thus says the Lord God "It is not for your sake O house of Israel that I am about to act but for My Holy Name

In 1 Chron. 14: 16–17 we have a passage concerning David as God's anointed king and it says *the Lord brought the fear of him (David) to all the nations*. In other words he was a lion to be feared. This was prophesied by Moses in His song Ex. 15:14–16 was renewed in Deut. 2:25, c.f. Rev 15:3–4.

The son of David–Lion of Judah. Isaiah 9:6–7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness ...The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish it. Isa 16:5 a throne will be established in loving kindness (covenant love) a judge will sit on it faithfully (In faithfulness) in the tent (house) of David He will seek justice and be prompt in righteousness. In Zech 9:9 we have the king who brings justice, the Messiah. Cf. Matt. 21:4–5 and John 12:15. Then in Matt. 21:9–15 he is the son of David. A reference to the Messiah is to be found in John 1:40 and John 4:25, 29.

In Revelation 5:5 we find the term Root of David and referring this back to Isaiah 11: 1–10 where it speaks of the Root of Jesse a prophecy looking forward to the ideal king in the line of David, we have a strong messianic reference. see Romans 15: 12

Study 18

THE LION AND TIME LAMB (2)

Bible Readings: Rev. 5: 1–14, Rev. 19: 6–9, Rev. 21: 8–14

The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said " Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ... The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by he said, "Look the Lamb of God!"

In Exodus 12 we have an account of the Passover where an unblemished lamb (without defect) see Lev. 22:18–25, 1Peter 1: 19, is to be slain and its blood displayed on the doorpost and lintel of the dwelling. Lev. 23:4ff, Deut. 16:1– 8, Num. 28:16–25. This shedding of blood for the most part in the Bible symbolizes a sacrifice as a substitute, one life laid down for another. See Lev 17:11, Heb. 9:22. 1John 1:7. (as in the atonement)

Regular sacrifices were also to be made daily, Numbers 28:3–8, one in the morning and one in the evening. But by the time of Ezekiel the requirement was 'morning by morning', Eze. 46:13 Like the words of the song say 'morning by morning new mercies I see.' cf Lam. 3:22–25.

The day of atonement is described in Lev.16. Two young goats (Lambs) without defect are chosen one to be sacrificed and his blood shed while the other is to be a scapegoat which is released into the wilderness symbolizing the carrying away of the sins of all the people out of their dwelling place.

Next we come to the passage in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 concerning the suffering servant his triumph and glory, or as one commentator puts it the 'divine servant's substitutionary atonement'. This was the passage being read by the Ethiopian eunuch when confronted by Phillip, Acts 8:32–33, with special reference to Isa. 53:7, like a lamb that is led to slaughter. The Psalmist in Ps. 44:22 and Paul in Romans 8:36 show this suffering is the lot of God's people, (both Jew and

Christian), we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered, a unique oneness with Christ. Yet we could never be chosen as an unblemished sacrifice of ourselves, only in Him. Note this passage in Rom. 8 also refers to the cross and resurrection (vs34).

Turning to Hebrews 9–10 the writer leads us through the ritual of the atonement inserting Christ as the high priest and the sacrificial lamb. In John 1:29&35 there is recorded this arresting statement by John the Baptist “Look, the Lamb of God!, and in the first instance adding, *who takes away the sin of the world*. This statement has been said to have been a combining of history (Ex. 12 & Lev. 16) and prophecy (Isa.53).

When we come to Revelation we find numerous references to the Lamb who is without much doubt the same one of John’s reference in Jn. 1. They begin at Rev.5:6. Note the lion and the Lamb are by inference one and the same, (the only one able to open the scroll).

Now listen to the song sung by the Four living creatures and twenty four elders which mentions those purchased with the blood of the Lamb who are kings and priests to rule on the earth (see greeting Rev. 1:4–6). Angels next join in the song, (v11) followed by all creatures, (v13).

In chapter 6 we have the opening of the seals, and in verses 15–17 mention of the wrath of the Lamb. This is followed in chapter 7 by the great multitude in white robes, see the promise in verses 15–17. In chapter 1.3:8 is the significant passage concerning the Lamb’s book of life.(see also 21:27) Next in chapter 14 is the Lamb with 144000, and chapter 15:3 the song of Moses and the Lamb. Chapter 17:14 sees the Lamb as overcomer. He is Lord of Lords and King of kings. The wedding of the lamb is presented in ch 19:6–9, blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. And in ch 21:9 the angel says ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ While vs 22–27 relate to the Lamb and the city which is The City. This theme is continued in Chapter 22:1–3.

And the evil spirits go out to gather the kings of the whole world for the battle on the great day of God Almighty... Then they gathered

the kings together to the place that is called in Hebrew *Armageddon*... They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of Lords and King of kings.

A final reading, from Isa. 11:1–10 Verse 6, The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the kid, the calf the young lion and fattling will be together a little boy will lead them.

Study No 19

THE END TIMES

Bible Readings: Rev. 19:1–16; Rev. 21:1–11; Rev.22:1–3, 16–21. Ps. 2:1–12.

Introduction: From the moment Adam and Eve turned from their natural relationship with God and their rightful position in creation, to follow the dictates of the devil, angels would have watched in horror as Satan and the sons of Adam wrought havoc and chaos on the face of planet earth. And it may have been with some amazement that they witnessed God choosing men and women out of this polluted corrupt humanity, to bring about His gracious action on all creation for its restoration.

The writer to Hebrews conveniently lists some of these persons for us in chapter 11. While others are to be found in the New Testament writings such as the apostles chosen by Jesus.

We are privileged to see the account of the angels and sense their excitement and joy at the birth of Jesus the Christ, and again they appear at His resurrection and ascension.

In the first chapter of 1Peter, concerning the wonderful salvation and hope we have received, he records, 'it has been a subject of inquiries and research by the prophets of old, and the angels also desired to look into these things'

The first words of the epistle to the Hebrews reveals two truths, the first being God; the second that God has revealed Himself. And two periods of revelation are referred to, that of 'old times', and that of 'at the end of these days.' These period are contrasted. The first was characterized by diversity. The new characterized by unity. The whole argument is to show the superiority of the word that has come through the Son.

His glories are set forth in a sevenfold description. He is (1) heir of all things, (2) Creator of the ages, (3) radiance of the glory of God,

(4) the very image of His substance, (5) the upholder of all things, (6) the purifier of sins, (7) joint ruler with the Majesty on high.

His superiority to all that had preceded Him is first shown with reference to angels. The argument occupies this and most of the next chapter. The subject is introduced by seven quotations from the Old Testament in which His relationship to God as Son, His superiority in the matter of divine service, and His sharing of the divine throne are set forth. Most of these quotes are from the Psalms. Ps 2:7; Ps. 97:7; Ps.104:4; Ps.45:6–7; Ps.102:25–27.

The book of Revelation echoes and fleshes out much of what the author of the letter to Hebrews says about Jesus Christ. We haven't the time in this study to look at much of this evidence further than what we have already seen in previous studies. So for the time we have left we will look at some of the promises concerning the "end times", and our part in them.

Passages such as John 14:1–5; Acts 1:11; 1Thess. 4: 16–18; Matt.24:29–31, tell us of the promised return of Christ for His Church, which has been a great hope of this body of people from the ascension till this very day. Then in the epilogue of Revelation, Rev. 22:6–21, we have the words of the Lord Jesus Christ affirming this promise, *I am coming quickly*.

We will turn to Rev. 19, to see some of the events of the 'end times'. Some commentators consider this chapter to refer to the second coming of Christ and break it up into three main sections, (a) announcements 1–10, (b) advent of Christ 11–16, (c) *armageddon* 17–21. In this chapter are the things leading up to the establishment of the Kingdom. First there are three great movements of praise. John describes them as 'the voice of a great multitude', 'the voice of many waters', 'the voice of mighty thunder'. This precedes the marriage of the Lamb. For our purpose we can see the bride of Christ as prophesied, 2Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 5:25–27, being made ready for her marriage to the Lamb. Rev. 19:6–9.

In the next passage 19:11–16 Christ is now seen riding on a white horse, coming down from heaven to 'judge and make war'. Here He is give the title 'Faithful and True', which was assigned to Him at the

beginning of this Revelation (1:5; 3:7,14). The phrase, in righteousness, is important. Judgement, throughout the Bible, is always identified with righteousness. This is exactly the phrase used by Paul in Acts 17:31. In fact this is the word used in the first reference to God as judge of all the earth, Gen.18:25. see also Ps. 9:4,8; 98:9.

Next Christ is given the great title, **The Word of God**, in Rev.19:13. As the Word of God He made the worlds. It was by the rejection of the Word that sin was brought into the world. By the word of God salvation is offered to men. Sin anarchy, godlessness and rebellion, are in one way or another the rejection of the Word of God. This Word now descends from heaven to fulfil prophecy, to destroy the enemies of God. To reveal to the universe, once and forever, the folly of resisting God's chosen Christ, and the indisputable pre-eminence of the **King of Kings and Lord of Lords...**

Because of our limited time we must move on to chapter 21. The overthrow of all evil has been viewed as a vision by John. Now the scene changes and he sees a new heaven and a new earth; far the first heaven and the first earth are passed away... The translation of the Greek word *kairos* by commentators such as (Swete) would suggest 'fresh life rising from the decay and wreck of the old world'.

Next John sees the ha/ vat); the new Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem was known as the Holy City , but this New Jerusalem is to be more truly holy as the place where God and the redeemed will dwell. Holiness, the great attribute of God, has been the divinely set goal for God's people from the beginning. As John saw the vision he heard a voice saying 'Behold /make a// things new'.

This new Jerusalem was prepared as a bride adorned for her husband see verses 2 and 9–10. One time in a woman's life she has a right to be extravagant, one time she prepares herself with the greatest of care, dressing beautifully and attractively as she can – at the time of her marriage. Even young women who have no apparent outward beauty have had it said of them, as they walk down the aisle to the wedding ceremony, "Isn't she beautiful!" As a bride adorns

herself for her husband, so will God adorn and beautify this 'city' for His loved ones. All the beautiful things in the world God made – sunsets, lakes, magnificent trees, mountains grand, waterfalls, clouds, flowers, snowflakes. And even more than we can imagine.

What will this city be like made by the Divine Architect!. No lies, no evil words ever spoken, no shady business deals discussed, no unclean picture will be seen, no corruption of life will ever be manifest. It will be holy because every one in it will be holy.

Finally, in chapter 22 we find John still gazing at the city, and he sees the great river of life. On its banks is the tree of life, yielding fruit for the healing of the nations. And once more the writer declares there will be no more curse. The great unveiling is accomplished. It ended with the declaration of the established Throne, and the unending reign of the saints.

In order that those who have received the unveiling should ever be on the alert, it is announced, "Behold I come quickly." After John's confession and the angels charge to him, we have further assurances of the quick, or sudden appearing of Christ. The coming of Christ is the pre-eminent theme of both the prologue and epilogue of this Revelation, (1:7; 22:7,12,20).

The three last words are first those of Christ, Yes,/ come quickly; second of the Church, Amen: come, Lord Jesus; and third of John, *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints*. This parting formula may be similar to that of other NT epistles , but not in this exact form. As this age draws to an end, and we see taking place some of the dreadful consequences of rejecting the Word of God, these three last words become increasingly precious and vital. Amen.