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**Daily Manna devotions: Editor's Choice  
Archive for January to December 2023**

**Old and New Testament teachings**  
As requested by the late Fred Morris, author and founder of Manna Publications (USA)

See: <http://manna-publications.org.uk/Daily-Weekly-Devotionals.shtml>

**Bible quotations used by Fred Morris are mainly from the NIRV New International Readers Version (1998) published at that time by Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., London. Used with permission.**

**Use "CTRL F" to search for key words or phrases**

**2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023.**

2 Chronicles 33 records the reign of King Manasseh of Judah around the year 700 BC. 'The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people. But they did not pay any attention to Him. So the LORD brought the army commanders of the king of Assyria against them. They took Manasseh as a prisoner... to Babylon. Manasseh asked the LORD his God to show favour to him. He prayed to Him. When he did, the LORD felt sorry for him. He answered his prayer. He brought him back to Jerusalem and his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God... Manasseh got rid of the strange gods... Then he made the LORD's altar look like new again. He sacrificed friendship offerings and thank offerings on it. He told the people of Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.'

Hebrews 13. "Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to welcome strangers. By doing that, some people have welcomed angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were in prison with them. And remember those who are treated badly as if you yourselves were suffering. All of you should honour marriage. You should keep the marriage bed pure. God will judge the person who commits adultery. He will judge everyone who commits sexual sins. Do not be controlled by love for money. Be happy with what you have. God has said, 'I will never leave you. I will never desert you.' (Deuteronomy 31:6.) So we can say boldly, 'The Lord helps me. I will not be afraid.' (Psalm 118:6,7.)"

*Thank You Father God for these important guidelines for this New Year. Whether we are in leadership or not, help us to be Your humble servants as followers of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023.**

2 Samuel 12 is the story of King David's sin against his neighbour because of the envy of his wife Bethsheba. God's prophet Nathan came to David to tell him a parable about a favourite sheep much loved by its owner. A stranger stole it to cook a meal for a friend. David said to Nathan, "The man who did this deserves to die!" (12:5) Nathan told David he was the man in the story who deserved to die. "You made sure that Uriah, the Hittite, would be killed in battle. You [then] took his wife to be your own." (12:7,9) David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD God Almighty." (12:13)

Mark 16:9-16. On the third day after the burial of Jesus, He 'appeared first to Mary Magdalene. He had driven seven demons out of her... She went and told those who had been with Him... They heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen Him. But they did not believe it. After that, Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them. This happened while they were walking out in the country. The two returned and told the others about it. But the others did not believe them either. Later Jesus appeared to the eleven [disciples] as they were eating. He spoke firmly to them because they had no faith... He said to them, "Go into all the world. Preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptised will be saved. But anyone who does not believe will be punished."

*Thank You heavenly Father for Your faith and favour shown to King David and to Mary Magdalene. Thank You that Your forgiveness and salvation is offered to the highest and the lowest in*

*society. Help us to believe, obey and resist temptation and fulfil our calling to preach to and baptise sinners who repent and believe. Amen.*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Ezekiel 36:8-11 gives God's prophecy for the land of Israel after the exile. "Mountains of Israel, you will produce branches and bear fruit for my people Israel. They will come home soon... Farmers will plough your ground. They will plant seeds in it. I will multiply the number of people who live in... I will increase the number of your people and animals... I will help you succeed more than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD God Almighty." This prophecy was fulfilled 50 years later when the people of Israel returned to Jerusalem and is being renewed today.

Acts 13. The Jewish apostles and followers of Jesus Christ went out from Jerusalem to preach the Good News of Christ's salvation for all who believe in Him. 'In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers... While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke. "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me. I have appointed them to do special work." The prophets and teachers fasted and prayed. They placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul. They went to Cyprus. They arrived at Salamis. There they preached God's word in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. They travelled across the island until they came to Paphos.' (13:1-6) From there they crossed over into what is now Turkey and preached the Good News. Despite the persecution, "The word of the Lord spread through the whole area." (13:49)

*Heavenly Father, thank You for Your delight in fulfilling Bible prophecy including the preaching of the Good News in and beyond Jerusalem to this day. Bless the believers and keep them safe under persecution. Amen.*

#### **5<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

2 Chronicles 34:29-33. King Josiah 'called together all of the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the LORD's temple. The people went with him. So did the priests and Levites. All of them went, from the least important to the most important. The king had all of the words of the scroll of the Covenant read to them. The scroll had been found in the LORD's temple. The king ... agreed to the terms of the Covenant in front of the LORD. He promised to follow Him and obey His commands, directions and rules. He promised to obey them with all his heart and with all his soul... Then he had everyone commit themselves to the Covenant of the God of Israel. Josiah removed all of the statues of gods from the whole territory... Josiah had everyone in Israel serve the LORD their God.'

Romans 12:14-21. Paul instructs, "Bless those who hurt you... Be joyful with those who are joyful. Be sad with those who are sad. Agree with each other. Do not be proud. Be willing to be a friend of people who are not important... Do not pay back evil with evil... If possible, live in peace with everyone... Do not try to get even but leave room for God to show His anger... Scripture says, 'If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink... Do not let evil overcome you. Overcome evil by doing good.' "

*Encourage us this day, dear God our Father, to reach out to the least important and the most important in the land with the truth from Your word. Help us to believe it and apply it in our own lives with love, especially the Good News of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

1 Chronicles 23:1-5. 'King David made his son Solomon king over Israel. He gathered together all of the leaders of Israel, also the priests and the Levites. The Levites who were 30 years old was 38,000. David said, "From them, 24,000 will direct the work of the LORD's Temple. And 6,000 will be officials and judges. Another 4,000 will guard the gates. And 4,000 will praise the LORD with the instruments of music I have provided for that purpose." '

Romans 16:3-20 give the final greeting of Paul. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila. They work together with me in serving Christ Jesus. They have put their lives in danger for me. I am thankful for them. So are all the non-Jewish churches." Paul also greets a long list of people by name (16:5-15). He then adds, "I am warning you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who try to keep you from staying together. They want to trip you up. They teach you things opposite to what you have learned. Stay away from them. People like that are not serving Christ our Lord. They are serving only themselves... Everyone has heard that you obey God. So you have filled me with joy. I want you to be wise about what is good. And I want you to have nothing to do with what is evil. The God who gives peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

*Heavenly Father, we thank You for these records of the work of Your people down the centuries and note the importance of praise to You with musical instruments. We also note the concern of Paul to maintain Your Bible truth in the ministry of Christ among the fellowship of believers. Help us to stay wise and faithful with a strong desire to worship You in our meetings. Amen.*

### **9<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Ecclesiastes 5 & 6. These chapters show how the writer fluctuates between divine and human wisdom based on personal experiences and times of spiritual revelation. "I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink. It is good for him to be satisfied with his hard work on this earth... Sometimes God gives a man wealth and possessions. He makes it possible for him to enjoy them... All of those things are gifts from God. A man like that doesn't have to think about how his life is going. God fills his heart with joy." (5:18-20) However, "God gives a man wealth, possessions and honour... But God doesn't let him enjoy those things. Instead, strangers enjoy them. That doesn't have any meaning." (6:2) The writer concludes, "Who knows what is good for a man? He lives for only a few meaningless days. He passes through life like a shadow!" (6:12)

Revelation 3:1-6 gives the warnings of Jesus to the church fellowship in Sardis. "I know what you are doing. People think you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what is left, or it will die. You have not done all that My God wants you to do. So remember what you have been taught and have heard. Obey it! Turn away from your sins. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief."

*Heavenly Father, thank You again for Your written word to teach us how to obey and worship You and express our joy in Your salvation and ample provision. Shake us, wake us and make us "to think about how life is going" and be aware of what You have taught us and provided in our lives so that we may glorify You! Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Isaiah 65:21-25 (NIV) records this prophecy from God for Israel 700 years before He sent Jesus as their Messiah, which is still being fulfilled today. "My chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labour in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD God Almighty, they and their descendants with them."

James 5:7-11 (NIRV) says, "Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord Jesus comes. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its rich crop. See how patient he is for the fall and spring rains. You too must be patient. You must stand firm. The Lord will soon come back. Do not find fault with one another. If you do, you will be judged. And the Judge is standing at the door! Think about the prophets who spoke in the name of the LORD God Almighty. They are an example of how to be patient when you suffer. As you know, we think that people who do not give up are blessed. You have heard that Job was patient. And you have seen what the LORD God Almighty finally did for him. The LORD is full of tender mercy and loving concern."

*Heavenly Father, we praise and worship You for Your purposes prevailing today for Your special people Israel despite their past rejection of Your Saviour Jesus the Christ or Messiah. May all of us, Jews and Gentiles alike, prepare for His second coming and work together to uphold Your truth and purpose and provision for families of believers who put their trust in You and Your Son. May we, like Job, despite our sin and suffering, know your blessing through patience, obedience and faith. Amen.*

### **11<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Genesis 43 reveals the beginning of God's purpose for the family of Jacob (Israel) to live in Egypt for 10 generations before settling in the Promised Land of Canaan. Jacob told his sons to return to Egypt. "Go back to the man [Joseph] at once. May the LORD God Almighty cause him to show you mercy." (43:14). When they arrived at Joseph's house, the manager told them not to be afraid. "Your God, the God of your father" had gone before and provided for them. (43:23) Then 'the manager took the men into Joseph's house. He gave them water to wash their feet. He provided feed for their donkeys [for] they were going to eat there.' (43:24-25)

1 Corinthians 10:1-13. Paul speaks of the time when the people of Israel left Egypt for Canaan under Moses but built an idol to worship. "God was not pleased with most of them. Their bodies were scattered all over the desert." (10:5-7) "Those things happened to them as examples for

us. They were written down to warn us who are living at the time when God's work is being completed. So be careful. When you think you are standing firm, you might fall. You are tempted in the same way all other human beings are. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted any more than you can take. But when you are tempted, God will give you a way out so that you can stand up under it." (10:11-13)

*Heavenly Father we thank You for reminding us from Scripture how You prepared the way for Your people to prosper nearly 4000 years ago. And yet, as Paul reminds us, they sinned and many never reached the Promised Land. Thank You for Your mercy in Christ our Saviour. At this "time when God's work is being completed", may we turn our backs on temptation so that Christ's suffering is not in vain. For His sake. Amen.*

### **12<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Ezekiel 14:1-11 records a warning to God's people against idolatry. This included idols in a person's heart. God made it clear that He wanted to recapture the hearts of His people. Ezekiel told them, "Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!" This was because idol worship was like a 'stumbling block' in destroying true fellowship and worship of God. The warning was also for anyone who taught lies and gave untrue prophecies. The false prophet in God's eyes "will be as guilty as the one who consults him". But if the people repented, "they will be My people and I will be their God".

Philippians 3:3-11. Paul confesses his wrong ways and beliefs of his old lifestyle. "I thought things like that were for my benefit. But now I consider them to be nothing ... compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. To know Him is the best thing of all. Because of Him I have lost everything. But I consider all of it to be rubbish so I can get to know Christ. I want to be joined to Him. For me, being right with God does not come from the Law. It comes because I believe in Christ. It comes from God. It is received by faith. I want to know Christ better. I want to know the power that raised Him from the dead. I want to share in His sufferings. I want to become like Him by sharing in His death. Then by God's grace I will rise from the dead."

*Father God, search our hearts and reveal what we need to confess to become holy people free from 'stumbling blocks' that hinder our true fellowship and worship. Grant too that we see clearly the need to reject any false teaching and teachers of today. In the blessed name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Exodus 17 is when the people of Israel received God's provision for their new beginnings in the wilderness by providing manna and quail to eat. But they complained to Moses because they needed water. Moses replied, "Why are you arguing with me? Why are you putting the LORD God Almighty to the test?" ...Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "They are almost ready to kill me by throwing stones at me." The LORD answered Moses... "Take in your hand your wooden staff. Go! I will stand there in front of you by the rock at Mount Horeb. Hit the rock. Then water will come out of it for the people to drink." (17:2-6) Later, Moses held up the same staff to win the battle against the Amalekites (17:8-13)

Philippians 1. Paul longs for the very best for the new believers. "I pray that your love will grow more and more based on knowledge and understanding. Then you will be able to know what is best. You will be pure and without blame until the day Christ returns. You will be filled with the fruit of righteousness produced by Jesus Christ. All of those things bring glory and praise to God." (1:9-11) He rejoiced that Christ was being preached even though he was in prison and others had tried to take his place.

*LORD God Almighty, thank You for these examples of Moses and Paul who knew and understood Your purpose and provision despite opposition from Your people. From their strong and faithful leadership came new beginnings to impact the world with Your truth. May "our love grow more and more based on knowledge and understanding" of Your truth. Enable us to live and speak the Good News of this same truth and of Your salvation in Christ alone. Amen.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Psalms 84 (NIV). The writer addresses the LORD God Almighty. "Blessed are those whose strength is in You... They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God Himself." (84:5,7) "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favour and honour; no good thing

does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O LORD Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in You." (84:10-12)

2 John verses 5-11. "I am writing a command we have had from the beginning. I'm asking that we love one another. The way we show our love is to obey God's commands. He commands you to lead a life of love... Many people try to fool others ...Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for. Make sure that you get your complete reward. Some people run ahead of others and do not follow the teaching of Christ. People like that do not belong to God. But those who follow the teaching of Christ belong to the Father and the Son."

*Father God, thank you for these teachings which remind us not to "run ahead" in our own strength or yield to the deceit of others. May we find our strength and trust is in You alone, choosing loving and humble "doorkeeper" roles. Enable us to focus on showing Your love to others through "the teaching of Christ" so that our "walk is blameless". Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Psalm 86:11-13. Kind David said, "LORD, teach me how You want me to live. Then I will follow Your truth. Give me a heart that doesn't want anything more than to worship You! LORD my God... I will bring glory to You forever. Great is Your love for me. You have kept me from going down into the grave."

Luke 13:31-35 captures the personal feeling of Jesus about Jerusalem and its inhabitants. He brushes aside the wrong advice of the Jewish leaders and the persecution of Herod the Roman Governor and ignores the suggestion He should go somewhere else (13:31). Instead, He confirms he will stay and continue His ministry of driving out demons and healing people (13:32). He then weeps over Jerusalem, past, present and future. "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and throw stones in order to kill those who are sent to you. Many times I have wanted to gather your people together like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. But you would not let me! Look, your house is left empty. I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the LORD.' " (Psalm 118:26)

*Father God, confirm as You did with Your servant David and Your Son our Saviour, the need to live as "You want me to live", ignoring wrong advice and the risk of persecution. Confirm then Your anointing on our ministry to practise and teach Your Truth and the Good News of salvation through Christ alone. Also, help us and the world to understand the significance of Your role for Jerusalem, past, present and future. For the sake of the One who was crucified there by the authorities, as prophesied, and rose victorious over death for our eternal salvation. Come again soon Lord Jesus, back to Jerusalem! Amen.*

### **18<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Nehemiah 1 & 2 records how Hanani came from Judah at the time of Israel's exile in Babylon and spoke to Nehemiah. He explained that the remnant of Jews were in great trouble and Jerusalem was in ruins (1:1-3). This caused Nehemiah to weep and repent to God Almighty for His special people failing to obey His instructions given to Moses (1:4-7). He then reminded God that He had also said to Moses, "But if you return to Me, I will bring you back. If you obey my commands, I will gather you together again. I will bring you back from the farthest places on Earth. I will bring you to the special place where I have chosen to put my Name." God then gave Nehemiah the opportunity to gain permission from King Artaxerxes in Babylon to journey back to Jerusalem to inspect and rebuild the walls (Chapter 2).

Luke 9:57-62 records the warnings of Jesus on three occasions to believers who wanted to follow Him. "Foxes have holes. Birds of the air have nests. But the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." He said to a second man, "Let dead people bury their own dead. You go and tell others about God's kingdom." To a third man He said, "Suppose you start to plough and then look back. If you do, you are not fit for service in God's kingdom."

*Thank You Father God for how You revealed Your truth at crucial times to people like Nehemiah regarding the need to weep and repent on behalf of believers who have sinned or allowed corruption into their meetings and buildings. Help us to heed the warnings of Jesus and go forward to declare Your truth and call for repentance to rebuild Your Church in readiness for Christ's return. Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Psalms 146 to 150. Each of these psalms begins and ends with "Praise the LORD!" which in Hebrew is "Hallelu Yah" or "Hallelu Yahweh". These words are the origin of the word "Hallelujah". These five psalms encourage the reader to focus fully on the wonder and righteousness and love of our Father in Heaven, His creation and His words of truth revealed through His Spirit to mankind. These psalms are filled with the words that God wants to hear from His people. He wants us to praise Him with all our heart and strength. Hallelujah!

Hebrews 10:19-25 follows on from the declaration of the truth of God at work within His people who have been saved through believing in the sacrifice of God's only Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. "Brothers and sisters, we are not afraid to enter the Most Holy Room. We enter boldly because of the blood of Jesus... So let us come near to God with an honest and true heart and with a faith that is sure and strong. Our hearts have been sprinkled [with the blood of Christ]. Our minds have been cleansed from a sense of guilt... Let us hold firmly to the hope we claim to have... Let us consider how we can stir up one another to love. Let us help one another to do good works. Let us not give up meeting together.... Let us do it all the more as you see the day coming when Christ will return."

*We praise you, Yahweh, in these difficult days caused by our failure to care for Your creation and obey Your words of truth given down the ages. Enable us to believe in Your forgiveness and mercy and live the resurrection life given through the sacrifice of Jesus, persevering with acts of kindness, meeting together and encouraging other believers, caring for them and the world around us. Hallelujah! Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Ezekiel 24:14. Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, God's people were condemned for their sins. "I have spoken. The time has come for Me to act. I will not hold back. I will not feel sorry for you. I will do what I said I would do. You will be judged for your conduct and actions. I am the LORD," Ezekiel told them that they would have a new sign after the exile for people to know the LORD God Almighty (14:27).

Galatians 3:11-14 explains that the righteous will live by faith in Christ "so that the blessing given to Abraham would come to non-Jews through Christ. He did it so that we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by believing in Christ."

*Father God, thank You for Your Old Testament laws that serve to know Your truth and purpose even to this day. Thank you that they pointed to the need of a Saviour who sacrificed His life on our behalf that we may live successful lives of faith and not failure in our obedience to the laws. Thank You for the warning and example of believers who did fail in their obedience to You by seeking other lifestyles that did not glorify You. May the Spirit of Christ now live in Your people so that we may freely worship You and witness to You in joy for all to see and know the Creator and His Saviour. May we therefore live to see public repentance for sin and receive Your redemption and avoid the judgement we all deserve. Meanwhile, keep us strong under the persecution of unrighteous leaders and all who oppose Your Bible truth and who reject the Good News of salvation through Christ alone. May our lifestyles be a "new sign" and witness to the Holy Spirit at work in our lives to Your glory through faith in Christ. Amen.*

### **23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023.**

Amos 9:8-15 is one of many prophecies concerning Israel's punishment for their sins and lack of obedience to the commandments given through Moses. God Almighty told them through Amos, "I will give an order. I will shake the people of Israel among all of the nations... All of the sinners among My people will be killed with swords. They say, 'Nothing bad will ever happen to us.' " The message also includes the prophecy of Israel's restoration. "The time will come when I will rebuild David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places. I will rebuild what was destroyed. I will make it what it used to be. Then My people will take control of those who are left alive [and] possess all of the nations that belong to Me... I will bless them with great success again. They will rebuild the destroyed cities and live in them." God's people rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ, and Jerusalem was destroyed again by the Romans in AD 70 and the land of Israel was occupied by aliens for many centuries. Despite this, God's prophecy remains true to this day. "They will never again be removed from the land I have given them." (9:15)

1 Corinthians 10:31-32. Paul says, "Do everything for the glory of God. Do not do anything that causes another person to trip and fall. It doesn't matter if that person is a Jew or a Greek [Gentile] or a member of God's church."

*Thank You Father God for Israel's worldwide role despite many rejecting Moses and Your Law and rejecting Your Son whom You sent for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. Open our eyes to what you are doing today in Israel and the church of Jesus Christ. "Rebuild David's fallen tent" and "possess all of the nations that belong to Me" through accepting the Good News of Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. For His sake, who suffered for our sins. Amen.*

### **24<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Leviticus 19 contains many basic laws additional to the Ten Commandments given 3500 years ago which reveal God's understanding and concern, still very important for today. "Do not seek revenge or hold anything against one of your people. Instead, love your neighbour as you love yourself. I am the LORD God Almighty. Obey My rules. Do not let different kinds of animals mate with each other. Do not mix two kinds of seeds and then plant them in your field. Do not wear clothes that are made out of two kinds of cloth." (19:18-19)

Revelation 9:18-21 given to John nearly 2000 years ago describes what happens because of the disobedient nature of mankind. "A third of all people were killed by the three plagues ... The people who were not killed by these plagues still did not turn away from what they had been doing. They did not stop worshiping demons. They kept worshiping statues of gods made out of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. The people also did not turn away from their murders, witchcraft, sexual sins and stealing."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for Your everlasting commandments for true believers to follow who live in the midst of the trouble caused by evil and disobedience. Forgive us when we despair or fail to live and portray our resurrected lives through the power of the promised Spirit, the compassion of Christ our Saviour and Your truth and wisdom recorded in the Bible. Help us to believe that every action we take and word we say under the guidance and empowering of Your Holy Spirit, however simple and basic, will have an everlasting impact now and in the coming Kingdom of Jesus. For Your glory. Amen.*

### **25<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

1 Chronicles 22 to 29 describes the guidance God gave King David for his son Solomon to take on the work of the first Temple in Jerusalem. "You are going to have a son. He will be a man of peace... His name will be Solomon. I will give Israel peace and quiet while he is king. He will build a house for My Name. He will be my son. And I will be his father. I will make his kingdom secure over Israel for forever." (22:9-10) Then follows what David did to fulfil the purpose of God as an everlasting legacy in Jerusalem, the city of David, despite many centuries of corruption and destruction. During the reign of King David, over 3000 years ago, he arranged the tasks of the Levites, priests, singers, gatekeepers and treasurers. Also the administrators (officers, judges and overseers). "Seventeen hundred able men were responsible in Israel west of the Jordan for all the work of the LORD and for the king's service." (26:30, NIV)

Revelation 19:6-10 describes the worship of God Almighty. "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude. 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride [the followers of Jesus Christ] has made herself ready... Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'"

*Thank You Father God for Your eternal purpose through Your servant David to establish Your Kingdom on Earth through his Jewish family and the Christian church down the centuries, despite the disobedience of Your chosen people. Renew our own faith to "rejoice and be glad" and acknowledge we are "invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" Hallelujah! Amen.*

### **26<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Leviticus 13 describes God's guidance for men and women with various skin infections. They must isolate themselves for a period of time and then be examined by a priest. At the very worst, they must remain in isolation and cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" when anyone approaches them. The following chapter describes the necessary cleansing procedures and the sacrifices to offer before the LORD their God for their physical and spiritual healing.

Romans 9:27-33; 10:1-4. Paul, a devout Jew, records the truth of God regarding the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'The number of people from Israel may be like the sand by the sea. But only a few of them [a remnant] will be saved.' (Isaiah 10:22,23) Paul continues, "Those who are not Jews did not look for a way to be right with God. But they found it by having faith. Israel looked for a law that could make them right with God but they did not find it. Why not? Because they didn't look for it by faith ... but by works." (Romans 9:30-32) "With all my heart I long for the people of Israel to be saved. I pray to God for them. I can give witness about them that they really want to serve God... They tried to get right with God in their own way. They didn't do it in God's way. Christ has completed [fulfilled] the Law. So now everyone who believes can be right with God." (10:1-4)

*Thank You our God Almighty, for revealing Your truth for healthy and righteous living as well as Your Good News of eternal salvation in Jesus Christ who is the fulfilment of the Old Testament laws. Keep us aware of Your basic Bible teachings that bring health and wisdom whilst trusting in Christ as Saviour. Like Paul, who was unaware of Your future punishment, encourage us now to pray for Your people Israel. Amen.*

### **27<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Deuteronomy 30 promises prosperity after repenting and turning back to the LORD God Almighty. God told Moses, "I have told you about all of those blessings and curses. The LORD will bring them on you. Then you will think carefully about them everywhere the LORD your God scatters you among the nations. You and your children will return to the LORD your God. You will obey Him with all your heart and with all your soul in keeping with everything I am commanding you today. When all of that happens, the LORD your God will bless you with great success again and be very kind to you. He will bring you back from all of the nations where He scattered you... He will bring you to the land that belonged to your people long ago. You will take it over and make you better off than your people were. He will increase your numbers more than He increased theirs. The LORD your God will keep [circumcise, NIV] your hearts from being stubborn... Then you will love Him with all your heart and with all your soul and you will live."

Philippians 3:1-11. Paul says, "Watch out for those dogs who do evil things. When they circumcise, it is nothing more than a useless cutting of the body. But we have been truly circumcised. We worship God by the power of His Spirit. We boast about what Christ Jesus has done. We do not put our trust in our weak human nature." Paul then goes on to confirm his salvation is not through circumcision of the flesh but of the heart.

*Thank You heavenly Father for promising prosperity through repentance and faith in Your Bible truth and in Christ our Saviour. Change our hearts so that we do not strive in our own strength to become prosperous. Open our eyes to the need to reject false prosperity teaching and become truly rich in Your blessings. Amen.*

### **30<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

Daniel 9:21-27 records Angel Gabriel's message to Daniel of the seventy 'sevens' during which God will forgive Israel's sins, restore Jerusalem and send His Messiah. But Gabriel also warned that after the future Messiah departs, the city and the sanctuary will be destroyed. God will also put an end to sacrifice and animal blood offerings. However, "an abomination that causes desolation" will be set up and war will continue to the end (as taught by Jesus Himself, Mark 13:1-8). But God will also "confirm his covenant" with His people (Daniel 9:26-27).

Mark 11:20-25 gives the teaching of Jesus regarding the curse He placed on the fig tree that was not bearing fruit. It had produced leaves and flowers without supplying the fruit which was its purpose in life. He encouraged His followers to have faith in the changed lives He will bring to curse or bless people provided they do not doubt in their hearts, even to move mountains! However, Jesus warned His followers, "forgive anyone you have anything against. Then your Father in heaven will forgive your sins." (11:25).

*Dear God, thank You for confirming to us Your teachings from Jesus 2000 years ago and what you revealed to Daniel 500 years before through Your Angel Gabriel. Enable us to understand that what is happening in Jerusalem today is a part fulfilment of these prophecies. Also "to have faith in the changed lives" that Jesus promised His followers through His sacrificial death and resurrection and Holy Spirit power sufficient even to "move mountains"! Keep reminding us to "forgive anyone you have anything against" that we may stand firm and effective to the end. Amen.*

### **31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.**

Psalms 92:1-8 (NIV). "It is good to praise the LORD and make music to Your name, O Most High God, proclaiming Your love in the morning and Your faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. For You make me glad by Your deeds, LORD. I sing for joy at what Your hands have done. How great are Your works, LORD, and how profound Your thoughts! Senseless people do not know and fools do not understand, that though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed forever. But You, O LORD God Almighty, are forever exalted."

Hebrews 2:5-10 also quotes from the Psalms in the words of King David. "What is man that You are mindful of him, the Son of Man that You care for Him? You made Him [for a time] a little lower than the angels; You crowned Him with glory and honour and put everything under His feet.' (Psalm 8:4-6) In putting everything under Him, God left nothing that is not subject to Him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to Him. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because He suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone... It was fitting that God... should make the author of their salvation perfect through what He suffered."

*Thank You Father God for inspiring us to joyfully worship You daily with love, praise, singing and musical instruments. Thank you especially that You sacrificed Your Son, our Saviour, by making him "a little lower than the angels" so that "He might taste death for everyone, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory." Reveal more of Yourself through Your written word especially through the teachings of Jesus and the inner dwelling of His Spirit, for all who believe He is Your promised Messiah. Amen.*

### **1<sup>st</sup> February 2023.**

Jeremiah 33:10-21 (NIV) records the words of God Almighty. "In the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted... there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices... of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, 'Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; His love endures forever.' For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before." (33:10-11) But God also gave this warning: "If you can break My covenant... then My covenant with David My servant... and the priests ministering before Me, can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne." (33:20-21).

Mark 11:7-10 records the triumphant entry of Israel's Messiah, our Saviour, into Jerusalem. 'When they brought the colt [young donkey] to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, He sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest Heaven!"'

*Thank You Father God for reminding us of Your amazing purposes in life and the people and world You have created. Purposes to praise You and Your blessing on all who are part of Your worldwide covenant and salvation through Christ alone. Thank you also for Your warning not to break Your covenant which risks experiencing the despair of Your covenant with us being broken. Open our eyes to see Your blessings today and prepare us for the destruction caused by disobedience, as in past times. Establish Your authority and power within Your Church and its ministering priests for the promised everlasting kingdom of David and Jesus our King. Amen.*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023.**

Job 9-11. Job complained to God about his sad circumstances. "If I say, 'I will forget about all of my problems and change my frown into a smile,' then I would still be afraid I would go on suffering. That is because I know You would say I had done something wrong! In fact, You have already said I am guilty." (9:27-28) He then makes a statement that hints of the need for a Saviour and Mediator and Someone who would take on his punishment. "I wish someone would settle matters between us. I wish someone would force us to work things out. I wish someone would keep God from punishing me." (9:33-34) His friend Zophar understands only in part the mercy of God. "Here is what I want you to know. God has forgotten some of your sins!" (11:6)

Luke 9:29-36 records the transfiguration of Christ on a mountain top, witnessed by Peter, James and John. 'Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in shining glory. Jesus and the two of them

talked together. They spoke about His coming death. He was going to die soon in Jerusalem.' (9:30-31) 'A voice came from the cloud. It said, "This is my Son, and I have chosen Him. Listen to Him." '

*Thank You Almighty God for revealing Your plans of salvation in Christ alone. Thank You for Your Old Testament commandments that reveal the need for obedience but also "a Saviour and Mediator and Someone who would take on our punishment". Thank You Almighty God for the New Testament record of what the three disciples witnessed. This confirms Your eternal plan of salvation in Christ alone for ALL our sins, not just some of them! Thank You that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, our sins have not only been forgiven and forgotten but He serves as our Mediator. How? He took the punishment for us. Wow!*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023.**

Numbers 16:1-5 records the time of Korah's rebellion against the leadership of Moses. 'Korah and certain men from the tribe of Reuben turned against Moses... and 250 men of Israel joined them. All of them were known as members of the ruling body... "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy and the LORD is with them. So why do you put yourselves above the LORD's people?" When Moses heard what they said, he fell with his face to the ground. Then he spoke to Korah and all of his followers. "In the morning, the LORD will show who belongs to Him. He will show who is holy." The rest of the chapter records God's punishment for Korah and his followers and upholds the faith and authority of Moses as Israel's leader at that time.

Matthew 27:57-66 confirms the miracle of God's intervention to secure the safe keeping of the body of Jesus before His resurrection. Joseph from Arimathea 'went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body ... and placed it in his own new tomb... He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there across from the tomb.' (27:57-61). The next day Pilate ordered the tomb to be sealed and guarded by a Roman soldier. On the day after the Sabbath, the two Mary's went back to the tomb and there was an earthquake and an angel of God rolled back the tomb and said "He is risen!" (28:1-6).

*Thank you Father for these records showing Your direct intervention regarding the purpose and provision of Your chosen leader, Moses, and Your chosen Messiah, Jesus Christ. Increase our awareness of your direct intervention in these final days regarding Your purposes and provision through Your chosen people. Increase our faith to believe you will defeat those who oppose Your truth and its fulfilment even if they are deceiving everyone as "members of the ruling body". Amen.*

### **6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Isaiah 13:9-11. Isaiah records what the LORD God Almighty is prepared to do to destroy the wicked people on Earth. These words were prophesied around 700 BC regarding Babylon: "The day of the LORD is coming. It will be a terrible day. The LORD's burning anger will blaze out. He will make the land dry and empty. He will destroy the sinners in it... The sun will be darkened and the moon will not shine. The LORD will punish the world because it is so evil... He will put an end to the boasting of those who are proud. He will bring down the pride of those who do not show any pity [mercy]."

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 2:2. Paul says, "You suffered terribly [from persecution]. Even so, you welcomed our message with the joy the Holy Spirit gives. So you became a model to all the believers in the lands of Macedonia and Achaia [Greece]... You know what happened earlier in the city of Philippi. We suffered, and people [Jews and Gentiles] treated us badly there. But God gave us the boldness to tell you His Good News. We preached to you even though people opposed us strongly."

*Heavenly Father, Your Bible reminds us of how You destroyed the wicked people at the time of Noah as well as the people of Babylonia two millennia later. Your people suffered but survived in Your mercy, as did many of the believers at the time of Paul when he preached the Good News of Jesus Christ. Dear God, in these days of increasing evil and persecution, help us to be "models to all the believers in the lands" many of whom are young in their faith as were the Thessalonians. Show us how to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ and share Paul's basic teaching and to witness our faith even in the face of death, by living holy lives, longing for the return of Christ our Saviour. So prepare us to be bold and joyful as we await your final judgement! Amen.*

### **7<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Leviticus 14:10-32 gives God's instruction to Moses for cleansing of innocent sins and diseases. The person seeking forgiveness and cleansing must wash and wear clean clothes then bring

two male lambs to the priest to sacrifice as a burnt offering to "make atonement". The person must also bring oil for the priest to place on their right ear, thumb, big toe and on their head. In this way the person was cleansed from innocent pollution and would stand holy before God Almighty and be acceptable to mix with the other people of God. If the person was too poor to bring two lambs, they were permitted to bring two doves or pigeons (v.22).

Galatians 4:8-20 is where Paul expresses his sorrow and fears regarding the believers who were "turning back to weak and worthless beliefs. Do you want to be slaves to them all over again?" (v.9) "You welcomed me as if I were an angel of God. You welcomed me as if I were Christ Jesus Himself. What has happened to all of your joy? ...Have I become your enemy now by telling you the truth? Those [wrong] people are trying hard to win you over. But it is not for your good. They want to take you away from us. They want you to commit yourselves to them." (v.13-17)

*Thank You Father God for revealing Your desire for us to live clean and pure lives within and without, as instructed 3500 years ago at the time of Moses. This enabled Your people to mix freely with each other under the guidelines You gave at that time. Thank You that through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, we have been forgiven and cleansed and our trust is in Him for our healing within and without. Thank you that His sacrifice was to "make atonement" for all who repent, including the poorest of people, innocent or not. May we mix joyfully with all true believers and not be led astray. Amen.*

### **8<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Leviticus 25:8-54 describes the Year of Jubilee for Israel to be celebrated every 50 years as a time of plenty and provision for everyone including the poor and the strangers in the land. Also to give freedom to all in slavery or in prison and all who were in debt. This avoided what often happens today: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This principle was endorsed by Isaiah, the prophet of God (Isaiah 61:1-2) and by Jesus, Israel's Messiah (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus said, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me. He has anointed Me to tell the Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to announce freedom for prisoners. He has sent Me so that the blind will see again. He wants Me to free those who are beaten down [oppressed] and declare the time of the LORD's favour."

Revelation 18 describes the destruction of Babylon. "How terrible it is for you, great city! All who had ships on the sea became rich because of her wealth!" (v.10) In the following chapter, the Apostle John hears a great Hallelujah Chorus in Heaven. "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. The way He judges is true and fair. He has judged the great prostitute. She polluted the earth with her terrible sins. God has paid her back for killing those who served Him." (19:1-3)

*Father God, we praise You for under-standing the needs of the poor, oppressed and persecuted. We thank you for the evidence of your mercy and deliverance for Your people in the past, and Your provision of Israel's Messiah for the salvation of all mankind now and in the future. Grant us faith to trust in your "true and fair" provision now in the midst of corruption and prophesied famines, earthquakes, untimely deaths and evil rulers. For the sake of Jesus Christ who died for all "who are oppressed" and who will "declare the time of the LORD's favour". Amen.*

### **9<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Nehemiah 1:1-7. Nehemiah was in exile in Babylonia. "I was there in the 20th year that Artaxerxes was king... At that time Hanani came from Judah... I asked him about the Jews who were left alive in Judah and about Jerusalem. He said to me, 'Some of the people who returned are still alive... But they are having a hard time. People are making fun of them. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down. Its gates have been burned with fire.' When I heard about those things, I sat down and wept... I didn't eat any food. And I prayed, 'LORD, You are a great and wonderful God. You keep the covenant You made with those who love You and obey Your commands. You show them Your love. Please pay careful attention to my prayer. See how Your people are suffering. Please listen to me... I am praying for the people of Israel. We Israelites have committed sins against You. All of us admit it. I and my family have also sinned against You... We haven't obeyed the commands, rules and laws You gave Your servant Moses.' "

Acts 8:26-40 is the account of how an angel of God sent Philip to go from Jerusalem to the road to Gaza. There he met an important official from the palace in Ethiopia. He had just left Jerusalem where he had been worshipping God in the Temple. Philip then explained to him the Good

News about Israel's promised Messiah written in Isaiah 53:7-8. The man asked Philip to baptise him, then he went on his way to Ethiopia rejoicing.

*Thank you Heavenly Father for putting the longing in people's hearts to be in Your will to worship You and seek Your forgiveness for themselves and on behalf of other believers. Grant us the faith and compassion to reach out in prayer for those who need Your saving grace. Prepare those of us whom You need to journey near and far with the Good News of Jesus, like Philip and the Ethiopian officer. Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Psalm 36 renounces the work of the wicked: "His mouth speaks words that are evil and false. He has stopped being wise. He has stopped doing good. Even as he lies in bed he makes evil plans. He commits himself to a sinful way of life. He never says no to what is wrong." (v.1-3) However, the writer acknowledges the unfailing love of God. "How priceless Your faithful love is! Important and ordinary people alike find safety in the shadow of Your wings... You let them drink from Your river that flows with good things. You have the fountain of life. We are filled with light because You give us light. Keep on loving those who know You. Keep on doing right [showing righteousness] to those whose hearts are honest." (v.7-10)

John 11:1-6 records the lead-up to the raising of Lazarus from death which prompted the persecution of Jesus. 'A man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived... Their brother Lazarus was sick in bed. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus. "Lord," they told him, "the one you love is sick." When Jesus heard this, he said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory. God's Son will receive glory because of it." Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. But after he heard Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was for two more days.'

*Thank You Father God for your unfailing love for "important and ordinary people alike". Thank you that love is the foundation for experiencing the light of Your truth and Your righteousness "to those whose hearts are honest". Thank You that the love of Jesus for Lazarus and his sisters demonstrates this through waiting for the best time to take action for Your glory since "You have the fountain of life". Support us in timely acts of love which is our basis for ministry, despite the "work of the wicked" which prompts persecution. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Ezekiel 10:1-19 gives the vision of God to the prophet Ezekiel. "Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim. It moved to the doorway of the Temple. The cloud filled the Temple. And the courtyard was full of the brightness of the glory of the LORD." (v.4). "I looked up and saw four wheels beside the cherubim... Each wheel appeared to be inside another wheel. The wheels could go in any one of the four directions the cherubim faced." (v.9-10). "Then the cherubim rose from the ground... When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved... Then the glory of the LORD moved away from the doorway of the Temple. It stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, they spread their wings and rose from the ground. As they went, the wheels went along with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD's house. And the glory of the God of Israel was above them." (v.15-19). It was a further 20 years before Ezekiel had another vision of the glory of God returning to the Temple for ever. (43:1-12).

Revelation 21:1-1-4 gives the vision of God to the apostle John about the New Jerusalem. "I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth. The first Heaven and the first Earth were completely gone... I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. It was coming down out of Heaven from God. It was prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne. 'Now God makes His home with the people. He will live with them. They will be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sadness. There will be no more crying or pain.' "

*Grant us Almighty God an understanding of these important visions. For the sake of Jesus who suffered much for their fulfilment. Amen.*

### **14<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Exodus 20:2-12 provides the Ten Commandments of God which were given to Moses 3500 years ago and were central to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles (Mark 10:10; Romans 13:9). When they were given to Moses, 'the people saw the thunder and lightning. They heard the trumpet.

They saw the mountain covered with smoke. They trembled with fear and stayed a long way off... Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to put you to the test. He wants you to have respect for Him. That will keep you from sinning." ' (Exodus 20:18-20)

Acts 7:30-53 is where the apostle Stephen addresses the Jewish leaders about the role of Moses 1500 years before. "God Himself sent Moses to rule the people of Israel and set them free. He spoke to Moses through the angel who had appeared to him in the bush. So Moses led them out of Egypt. He did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and for 40 years in the desert. This is the same Moses who spoke to the people of Israel. 'God will send you a Prophet,' he said. 'He will be like Me. He will come from your own people... He received living words to pass on to us. But our people refused to obey Moses.'" (v.30-38) Stephen went on, "You people! You won't obey! You are stubborn! You won't listen! You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit! ...They even killed those who told about the coming of the Blameless One. And now you have handed Him over to His enemies. You have murdered Him. The Law you received was brought by angels. But you haven't obeyed it." (v.51-53) Stephen was stoned to death for saying this (v.54-60).

*Dear God, thank You for Your written Law. Help us to believe and uphold Your truth and share the Good News of Jesus Christ, "the Blameless One", whatever the cost. Amen.*

### **15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

2 Samuel 23:2-4 records the words of King David. "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me. I spoke His word with my tongue. The God the Rock of Israel said to me, 'A king must rule over people in a way that is right [righteous]. He must have respect for Me when he rules. Then he will be like the light of morning at sunrise when there are no clouds. He will be like the bright sun after rain that makes the grass grow on the Earth.' "

1 John 4:1-6. "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit. Put the spirits to the test to see if they belong to God. Many false prophets have gone out into the world. How can you recognize the Spirit of God? Every spirit that agrees that Jesus Christ came in a human body belongs to God. But every spirit that does not agree with this does not belong to God. It is the spirit of the great enemy of Christ. You have heard that the enemy is coming. Even now he is already in the world. Dear children, you belong to God. You have not accepted the teachings of the false prophets. That is because the One who is in you is more powerful than the one who is in the world. False prophets belong to the world. So they speak from the world's point of view and the world listens to them. We belong to God. And those who know God listen to us. But those who do not belong to God do not listen to us. That is how we can tell the difference between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of lies."

*Come anoint Your people with Holy Spirit power, love and mercy, heavenly Father, that we may proclaim Your truth and wisdom unhindered by the wickedness that denies your existence and authority. Show mercy to all who deliberately or innocently fail to respect You. For the sake of Jesus we ask. Amen.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Jeremiah 29:10-14. The LORD God Almighty spoke these words to the Jewish exiles through His prophet Jeremiah. "You will be forced to live in Babylonia for 70 years. After they are over, I will come to you. My gracious promise to you will come true. I will bring you back home. I know the plans I have for you. I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come. When you will call out to Me you will come and pray to Me and I will listen to you. When you look for Me with all your heart, you will find Me. I will be found by you and I will bring you back from where you were taken as prisoners. I will gather you from all of the nations. I will gather you from the places where I have forced you to go. I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you away."

Acts 7:48-50 is where Stephen reminded God's people of His words to Isaiah in 66:1-2. "The Most High God does not live in houses made by human hands. As God says through the prophet, Heaven is My throne. Earth is under My control. What kind of house will you build for Me? Where will my resting place be? Did not My hand make all these things?" Even Solomon knew his God was far bigger than the Temple he built (1 Kings 8:28).

*Heavenly Father, thank You for reaching out to Your people in times of need to bring hope of forgiveness, understanding, purpose and provision. May our faith be in You and not in our great plans, buildings and institutions or indeed our crumbling society. In Your mercy, as we seek You with*

*all our heart, establish new beginnings as we put our trust in Jesus our Saviour and await His return to build anew His Kingdom on Earth. Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Ezekiel 34 gives God's prophecy to Ezekiel in 587 BC that the leaders of Israel were like unfaithful shepherds who only looked after themselves (v.2). "You have not made the weak ones in the flock stronger. You have not healed the sick. You have not bandaged those that are hurt. You have not brought back those that have wandered away. You have not searched for the lost. When you ruled over them, you were mean to them. You treated them badly. So they were scattered because they did not have a shepherd... I am against the shepherds. I will hold them accountable for My flock. I will stop them from taking care of the flock... I will save My flock from their mouths. My sheep will no longer be food for them. I myself will search for My sheep and I will look after them." (v.4,10-11). "I will be their God. And my servant from David's line will be prince among them. I have spoken. I am the Lord." (v.24). "You are my flock, the sheep of My pasture. You are My people and I am your God." (v.31 NLT).

Hebrews 10:10,12 says, "We have been made holy because Jesus Christ offered His body... Jesus our priest offered one sacrifice for sins for all time. Then He sat down at the right hand of God." Our Christ fulfils the prophecy given to Jeremiah: "I will put my laws in their hearts. I will write my laws on their minds. I will not remember their sins anymore. I will not remember the evil things they have done." (10:16; Jeremiah 31:33).

*Thank You once again heavenly Father for Your prophecies in the Old Testament fulfilled through David's line by Israel's Messiah and Christ. Thank You for renewing Your covenant again and again with those who remain faithful. May we see You stop the unfaithful "from taking care of the flock" and prove You are our God. Thank You that "we have been made holy". Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> February 2023.**

Deuteronomy 9:26 to 10:5. Moses asked God to forgive His people for building the golden calf to worship on the way to the Promised Land. "LORD and King, do not destroy Your people... You used Your mighty hand to bring them out of Egypt. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Forgive the people of Israel for being so stubborn. Do not judge them for the evil and sinful things they have done." (9:26-27) Then God spoke to Moses, "Carve out two stone tablets, just like the first ones. Then come up to Me on the mountain and make a wooden chest. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Then you must put the tablets in the chest." So Moses did what God asked and He wrote on the tablets the Ten Commandments (10:1-4).

1 Timothy 2:1-8 records 1500 years later, Paul's instructions to Timothy. "First, I want all of you to pray for everyone... Give thanks for them including kings and all who are in authority. Pray that we will live peaceful and quiet lives. And pray that we will be godly and holy... He wants them to come to know the truth. There is only one God. And there is only one go-between for God and human beings, Christ Jesus. He gave Himself to pay for the sins of everyone... I was appointed to be a messenger and an apostle to preach the Good News... I want men everywhere to pray. I want them to lift up holy hands. I do not want them to be angry when they pray. I do not want them to argue."

*Thank You Father God for listening to the prayers of people like Moses and Paul for all "to come to know the truth" and "to preach the Good News" of Jesus Christ. Forgive us for looking back instead of pressing forward to receive Your version of the Promised Land for each believer in our nation. Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> February 2023.**

Jeremiah 51:34-37. The people of Jerusalem said (595 BC): "Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia, has destroyed us... Like a snake he has swallowed us up. He has filled his stomach with our rich food. Then he has spit us out of his mouth. May the people of Babylon pay for the harmful things they have done to us. May those who live in Babylonia pay for spilling the blood of our people." So the LORD said, "I will stand up for you. I will pay the Babylonians back for what they did to you. I will dry up their water supply... Babylon will have all of its buildings knocked down. It will be a home for wild dogs. No one will live there. People will be shocked at it. They will make fun of it."

1 Corinthians 1:17-24. Paul said, "Christ did not send me to baptize. He sent me to preach the Good News, not the wisdom that people commonly use... The message of the cross seems foolish to those who are lost and dying. But it is God's power to us who are being saved. It is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of those who are wise. I will do away with the cleverness of those who think they are so smart.' (Isaiah 29:14) ...Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish? God wisely planned that the world would not know Him through its own wisdom. It pleased God to use the 'foolish' things we preach to save those who believe... We preach about Christ and His death on the cross. That is very hard for Jews to accept. And everyone else thinks it's foolish. But there are those God has chosen, both Jews and Gentiles, to whom Christ is God's power and God's wisdom."

*Praise You O God for this reminder of Your power to overcome evil and Your mercy to save those who believe. In Your mercy, save those who are being persecuted today. Amen.*

## **22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023.**

Isaiah 30 [NIV] records the words of the Lord God Almighty to His people. "Woe to your obstinate children who carry out plans that are not Mine (v.1). Because you have rejected My message and relied on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall that collapses suddenly" (v.12-13). "In repentance and rest is your salvation; in quietness and trust is your strength" (v.15). "The LORD longs to be gracious to you; He rises up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice... How gracious He will be when you cry for help! Although the LORD gives you 'bread of adversity' and 'water of affliction', your teachers will be hidden no more... your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, 'This is the way; walk in it!' " (v.18-21).

Hebrews 10:8-18 [NIRV] describes the new covenant with God through Christ. "You didn't want sacrifices and offerings even though the Law required people to bring them. Then He [Jesus] said, 'Here I am. I have come to do what you want.' ...We have been made holy because Jesus Christ offered His body once and for all time. Day after day every priest stands and offers the same sacrifices again and again. But they can never take away sins. Jesus our [high] priest offered one sacrifice for sins for all time. Then he sat down at the right hand of God... By that one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit ... says, 'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts. I will write my laws on their minds. I will not remember their sins anymore. I will not remember the evil things they have done' (Jeremiah 31:33-34)."

*Thank You Father God for reminding us "This is the way; walk in it!" and that Jesus "has made perfect forever those who are being made holy". Amen.*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023.**

Genesis 24:14-21 records the time when Abraham's top servant went to search for a wife for Isaac in the town where Abraham's relatives lived in Nahor. He prayed that "when I speak to a young woman [at the well of Nahor] and say, 'Please lower your jar so I can have a drink', she will say 'Have a drink of water and I will get some for your camels too.' Then let her be the one You have chosen for Your servant Isaac." Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out. She had a water jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah. Milcah was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor... The servant hurried to meet her. "Have a drink, sir," she said... After she had given him a drink, she said, "I will get water for your camels, too." In this way, Rebekah's act of kindness brought her into God's covenant with Abraham and his future family in the line of King David and Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah.

Matthew 21:42-43 records the words of Jesus 2000 years later to the religious leaders in Jerusalem. "Have you never read what the Scriptures say, 'The Stone the builders didn't accept has become the most important Stone of all [a cornerstone]. The Lord has done it. It is wonderful in our eyes'? (Psalm 118:22,23) So here is what I tell you. The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you. It will be given [only] to people who produce its fruit."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for Abraham's servant who faithfully prayed for a sign to confirm he was in Your will. His faith continued the fulfilment of Your plan to save the world through Israel's Messiah, Jesus Christ, who became the most important cornerstone in Your Kingdom. Prompt us to pray and encourage "acts of kindness" and extend Your Kingdom to continue Your covenant through Your purpose and provision in Christ. Amen.*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.**

Jeremiah 29:4-13 reminds us again of the gracious promises of God Almighty for His people who were punished for their disobedience. His instructions through Jeremiah while they were still in exile included "build houses, settle down, plant gardens and eat what they produce, get married and have sons and daughters... Do not let the number of your people get smaller. Also work for the success of the city I have sent you to. Pray to the LORD for that city. If it succeeds, you too will enjoy success." Also, God warned, "Do not listen to people who try to explain their dreams to you. All of them are prophesying lies to you in My name. I have not sent them... I know the plans I have for you. I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come. Then you will call out to Me and pray to Me and I will listen to you. When you look for Me with all your heart, you will find Me."

Galatians 3:11-14 also reminds us of God's promises for true believers. "Scripture says, 'Those who are right with God will live by faith.' (Habakkuk 2:4) The Law is not based on faith. Christ set us free from the curse of the Law. He did it by becoming a curse for us. It is written, 'Everyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse.' (Deuteronomy 21:23) Christ Jesus set us free so that the blessing given to Abraham would come to non-Jews through Christ. He did it so that we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by believing in Christ."

*Father God, thank You for sending Jesus to fulfil the righteousness of Your Law in our lives through His crucifixion, forgiveness and the promise of the Holy Spirit for all who believe He is Your Son and Saviour. Grant us hope to proclaim these Old and New Testaments truths this day. Amen.*

### **6<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Deuteronomy 1 to 11 records how Moses reminded the children of Israel of the sins of their fathers 40 years before in wanting to go back to live in Egypt and also their rebellion in worshipping Egyptian gods instead of Yahweh, the LORD God Almighty. Moses read again the Ten Commandments (Chapter 5) so that "you and your children and their children after them might fear the LORD your God... and enjoy long life... Love the LORD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (6:1-4). Moses also said, "Remember how the LORD has led you all the way in the desert these forty years to humble you and to test you in order to know what is in your heart whether you would keep His commands" (8:1-3). "Love the Lord your God and keep His requirements" (11:1).

Mark 13:1-13. 'Jesus was leaving the temple... He said, "Not one stone here will be left on top of another." Later, Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, across from the Temple. Peter, James, John and Andrew asked, "Tell us when will these things happen?" Jesus said to them, "Keep watch! Be careful that no one fools you... You will hear about wars... Do not be alarmed... the end still isn't here. Nation will fight against nation... There will be earthquakes in many places. People will go hungry. All of those things are the beginning of birth pains. Watch out! You will be handed over to the local courts... You will stand in front of governors and kings because of Me. In that way you will be witnesses to them. The Good News has to be preached to all nations before the end comes... Do not worry ahead of time about what you will say. Just say what God brings to your mind at the time... The one who stands firm to the end will be saved.' "

*Help us Lord Jesus to take note of these things! Thank You. Amen.*

### **7<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Ezekiel 18 declares some of the teaching of God Almighty 600 years before His Son, Jesus the Christ, began His ministry on Earth. "When you turn away from your sins and live, that makes Me very happy... Turn away from your sins and all the evil things you have done! Then sin will not bring you down... Let Me give you a new heart and a new spirit. Then you will be faithful to Me." (18:30-31)

Mark 1 records the early stages of the ministry of Jesus. He went to the region of Galilee to proclaim the Good News of God and to repent. He then called His disciples to leave what they were doing and to follow Him (1:14-17). He then went to Capernaum to teach in the synagogue there. The people were amazed at His teaching (1:21-22). He spoke against evil spirits. They obeyed Him and news spread quickly throughout the region (1:27-28). He then visited the home of one of the disciples whose mother was ill in bed. With compassion, He healed her and that evening many people came to the house and He healed the sick and drove out many demons (1:29-32). Early the next morning after prayer, He moved on to other villages to preach. "This is why I have come" (1:35-38).

*We praise You God our Father for establishing Your truth in love from the beginning through Your prophets like Ezekiel and finally offering Your own flesh in Jesus to minister in person before dying on the cross for our sins. Make us ready to follow and suffer as His disciples did, to teach Your truth and preach the Good News and perform miracles through the power and compassion of Your Spirit. May many be amazed and choose to follow Jesus and teach, preach, heal the sick and cast out demons in the name of Jesus. Grant us a new heart and spirit within as we put our faith in You. Amen.*

### **8<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Jeremiah 9 shares with us God's feelings regarding the sins of His people. "Their mouths shoot out lies like arrows. They tell lies to gain power in the land. They go from one sin to another. They do not pay any attention to Me." (9:3) "I will put them through the fire to test them. What else can I do? My people are so sinful!" (9:7) "My people have turned away from My Law I gave them... They have not obeyed Me." (9:13) "Do not let a wise man brag about how wise he is... He should boast that he has understanding and knows Me. I want him to know that I am the LORD... I am always kind, fair and right... [But] the days are coming when I will judge My people. I will punish all those who are circumcised only in their bodies." (9:23-25)

Acts 7:44-51 confirms God's truth through the apostle Stephen. "Long ago our people had with them in the desert the holy tent where the tablets of God's covenant were kept... They brought it with them when they took the land of Canaan... The tent remained in the land until David's time... David asked if he could build a house for the God of Jacob. Instead, it was Solomon who built it for him. But the Most High God does not live in houses made by human hands. As God says through the prophet Isaiah, 'Heaven is My throne. The Earth is under My control. What kind of house will you build for Me? ...Did not My hand make all these things?' You people are stubborn with uncircumcised hearts. You will not listen! You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit!"

*Thank You Lord Jesus, that You suffered and died for us that we should all become God's people. Forgive us for failing to obey the truth of Father God and the understanding give by Your promised Holy Spirit. Change our hearts, O God! Amen.*

### **9<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Isaiah 43:18-25 records God's warning to His people. "Forget the things that happened in the past... I am about to do something new... Do you not see it coming? I am making a way... for the people I made for Myself. I want them to sing praises to Me. Yet you have not prayed to Me as you should... You have made Me tired with the wrong things you have done. I am the One who wipes out your lawless acts. I do it because of who I am. I will not remember your sins anymore!"

Hebrews 10:16-25 confirms God's purpose and provision for all believers. "I will put My laws in their hearts. I will write my laws on their minds. I will not remember their sins anymore (Jeremiah 31:33-34). Where those have been forgiven, there is no longer any offering for sin. Brothers and sisters, we are no longer afraid to enter the Most Holy Room. We enter boldly because of the blood of Jesus... It has been opened for us through the curtain... So let us come near to God with an honest and true heart. Let us come near with a faith that is sure and strong. Our hearts have been sprinkled. Our minds have been cleansed from a sense of guilt... Let us hold firmly to the hope we claim to have. The One who promised is faithful. Let us consider how we can stir up one another to love... Let us not give up meeting together... Let us encourage each other with words of hope. Let us do it all the more as you see the day coming when Christ will return."

*Thank You again our Father God for encouraging us with Your words of love and forgiveness. Help us to put behind us our guilt and shame and understand more and more what you have changed in our hearts and minds through Christ our Saviour. Prompt us to encourage others as we await His return. Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Genesis 31 describes how Jacob took his two wives and children and servants and flocks of sheep away from Laban to return home after 20 years working for him. Laban chased after them. But God spoke to him overnight not to say anything against Jacob that would hinder the purposes of God for the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to live in the land we know as Israel. God's will prevailed for the safe-keeping of Jacob's growing family and nothing was heard of Laban again.

Romans 12:1-8. "Brothers and sisters, God has shown you His mercy. So I am asking you to offer up yourself to Him ... as a holy sacrifice pleasing to God... Do not live any longer the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to prove His plan [for you] is good and pleasing and perfect... Do not think of yourself more highly than you should... Remember the amount of faith God has given you. Each of us has one body with many parts. And the parts do not all have the same purpose... But in Christ we are one body. And each part of the body [of Christ] belongs to all the other parts. We all have different gifts. Do you have the gift of prophecy? Then use it in keeping with the faith you have! Is it your gift to serve? Then serve! Is it teaching? Then teach! Is it encouraging others how they should live? Then encourage them! Is it giving to those who are in need? Then give freely! Is it being a leader? Then work hard at it! Is it in showing mercy? Then do it cheerfully!"

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the gifts You have given us. Intervene when we think too highly of ourselves so that Your will prevails, not ours. Open our eyes to the selfish way Labor hindered Your will for the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Job 32 to 42. After Job asked God for answers to his many questions (31:35) his friend Elihu tried to tell him "God is beyond our understanding!" (36:26) But then the LORD God Himself spoke to Job: "Who are you that obscures [hinders] my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?" (38:2-4) God continued to speak to Job for the next three chapters. Then Job replied, "You asked me 'Who are you that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?' I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know... Therefore I despise myself and repent." (42:1-6)

Luke 5:15-26. 'The news about Jesus spread even more. Crowds of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to be by Himself and pray. One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law ... came from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. The power of the Lord God Almighty was with Jesus to heal the sick.' (15:15-17) This was the occasion when a paralysed man was let down through a hole in the roof to be healed. Jesus said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven" and the Pharisees thought, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus then healed the man and everyone was amazed.

*Father God, forgive us when we think or speak without your divine understanding, like Job's friends or the Pharisees at the time of Jesus. Help us to listen and look to hear and see what you are saying and doing so that we do not obscure or hinder Your plans for today. Empower us for the healing and salvation ministry You have called Your people to do in the mighty name of Jesus. Grant us times when we withdraw to pray and listen. Amen.*

### **14<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Job 38 gives more detail of Almighty God's questions. For example: the dimensions of our planet Earth (v.4); the extent of the oceans and the clouds it produces to recycle the water in the form of refreshing rain (v.8-9); the features of the Earth [as seen from above] like clay formed under a seal (v.14); the under-water springs and deep ravines in the oceans (v.16); the source of light and darkness (v.19); the source of snow, hail (v.22), rain, dew, ice and frost (v.28-30); the apparent movement of the stars and the laws that control them (v.31-33). Then God asks: "Who can count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens? (v.36-37). Who provides food for ravens when their babies ...have nothing to eat? (v.41). Three more chapters of questions follow!

Hebrews 9:11-15 explains, "When Christ came to be the High Priest of the good things that are already here... He did not enter by spilling the blood of goats and calves. He entered the Most Holy Room by spilling His own blood. He did it once and for all time. He paid the price to set us free from sin forever... The people are sprinkled to make them holy. That makes them clean on the outside. But Christ offered Himself to God without any flaw through the power of the eternal Holy Spirit. How much more will His blood wash from our minds our feelings of guilt for committing sin! Sin always leads to death but now we can serve the living God. That is why Christ is our go-between [mediator] of the new covenant... He died to set us free from the sins committed under the first covenant."

*Heavenly Father, we think we know so much compared to Job 3,500 years ago and yet we still need more of You divine understanding. Forgive us for living at times under the old covenant and restore our true relationship with You through Christ's mediation for us. Amen.*

### **15<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

1 Chronicles 1 to 9 records the genealogies of Israel from Adam, Noah, Abraham and the twelve tribes through Jacob's sons. It focuses on the genealogy of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin 8:1-39 and 9:35-44. In Chapter 10 it records how Saul took his own life.. It concludes, 'Saul died because he wasn't faithful to the Lord. He did not obey the word of the LORD God Almighty. He even asked for advice from a medium... He did not ask the LORD for advice. So the LORD put him to death. He turned the kingdom over to David. David was the son of Jesse' from the tribe of Judah (10:13-14).

1 Timothy 3:8-13 gives Paul's instruction regarding church leaders and their wives. "Deacons must be worthy of respect. They must be honest and true. They must not drink too much wine. They must not try to get money by cheating people. They must hold on to the deep truths of the faith. Even their own minds tell them to do that. First they must be tested. Then let them serve as deacons if there is nothing against them. In the same way, their wives must be worthy of respect. They must not say things that harm others. In anything they do, they must not go too far [show self-control]. They must be worthy of trust in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife. He must manage his children and family well. Those who have served well earn the full respect of others. They also become more sure of their faith in Christ Jesus."

*Thank You Father for the amazing records of Your special people from the creation of Adam which also confirm the punishment we deserve when we fail to obey You. Help us to grow in faith and good behaviour as we seek to live, teach and preach Your truth and the Good News of salvation through trust in Jesus and His promise of eternal life in Heaven. Amen.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Ezekiel 28:24-26. Hidden among various prophecies against the enemies of Israel is a prophecy for the country of Israel itself. "The people of Israel will no longer have neighbours who hate them... Then Israel will know that I am the LORD and King... I will gather the people of Israel together from the nations where they have been scattered. I will show that I am holy among them. I will let the nations see it. Then Israel will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob. My people will live there in safety... I will punish all of their neighbours who told lies about them. Then Israel will know that I am the LORD their God."

Mark 1:39-45. 'Jesus travelled all over the region of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues. He also drove out demons. A man who had a skin disease came to Jesus... "If you are willing, You can make me clean." Jesus was filled with compassion. He reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing. Be clean!" Immediately the disease left him and he was healed. Jesus sent him away with a strong warning. "Do not tell this to anyone but go and show yourself to the priest as Moses commanded. It will be a witness to the priest and the people that you are clean." But the man went out and started talking freely, spreading the news to everyone. So Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside. Still the people came to Him from everywhere.' A few days later Jesus ministered to a paralysed man and told him his sins were forgiven before healing him (2:1-12).

*Oh God, we look forward to the completion of prophecy for Israel in the troubles that lie ahead. Meanwhile, as we await the return of their Messiah, may we engage unhindered in His calling to teach and preach Your truth and offering free salvation in His name, with many miracles to follow. Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Numbers 16 records the rebellion of Korah and 250 leaders of the children of Israel against Moses before they entered God's Promised Land of Canaan. Earlier the ordinary people had rejected the plan to enter Canaan (Chapter 14). Before that there was rebellion in the family of Moses from Aaron and Miriam (Chapter 12). Korah's reason for his rebellion was that he and the other community leaders were equally holy to Moses so they should share in the same power and authority. They said, "You have gone too far! ...Why do you put yourselves above the LORD's people?" When Moses heard what they said, he fell with his face to the ground. Then he spoke to Korah and all of his followers. He said, "In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to Him. He will show who is holy... You

have gone too far!" (16:3-7) Moses knew they were opposing God's purpose for Israel. After meeting before the LORD God Almighty at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, God caused an earthquake to happen which swallowed up Korah and two other rebels and their families. He then consumed with fire the remaining 250 rebels. (16:23-35)

Philippians 2:12-15 gives Paul's warning to the church. "My dear friends, you have always obeyed God. You obeyed while I was with you. And you have obeyed even more while I am not with you. So continue to work out your own salvation. Do it with fear and trembling. God is working in you. He wants your plans and your acts to be in keeping with His good purpose. Do everything without finding fault or arguing. Then you... will be children of God without fault in a sinful and evil world."

*Thank You God for Your clear warning to all believers, whether individual families, fellowship and community leaders or church members in general, to "do everything without finding fault or arguing". Help us avoid "going too far"! Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Amos Chapter 4 gives God's warning to His special people five times. "You still have not returned to Me!" God then reminded His people "I brought Israel up from Egypt... I am their LORD and King. My eyes are watching the sinful kingdom of Israel... But I will not totally destroy the people of Jacob... I will shake the people of Israel." (9:7-9) God's prophecy through Amos ends, "They will never again be removed from the land I have given them." (9:15)

Galatians 3:21-29. Paul says, "So is the Law opposed to God's promises? Certainly not! ...But Scripture announces that the whole world is a prisoner because of sin so that what was promised might be given to all who believe. This promise comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Before faith in Christ came, we were under the Law, locked up until [fullness of] faith was made known. The Law was put in charge until Christ came. He came so that we might be made right with God [justified] by believing in Christ. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the control [supervision] of the Law. You are all children of God by believing in Christ Jesus... Now there is no Jew or Greek [Gentile]. There is no slave or free person. There is no male or female. Because you belong to Christ Jesus, you are all one. You who belong to Christ are now Abraham's seed. You will receive what God has promised."

*Father God, thank You for Your everlasting love for Your special people Israel. Thank You that those who have put their faith in Israel's Messiah are now "Abraham's seed". Thank You that we all have been "saved from Egypt" where it was a land of refuge, much food and peace, but also foreign gods and persecution. We thank You for the everlasting salvation promised in Your word that is fulfilled through faith in Christ Jesus. Shake us and make us faithful and loving disciples. Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> March 2023.**

Jeremiah 42 records the time when some of the Israelites tried to escape from exile in Babylon by moving to Egypt. They said to Jeremiah, "Please listen to our appeal. Pray to the LORD your God. Pray for all of us who are left here... that He will tell us where we should go. Pray that He will tell us what we should do... We will do everything the LORD your God sends you to tell us to do... And we will obey Him." Jeremiah gave them God's answer. "Do not be afraid of the king of Babylonia... I am with you. I will keep you safe from his powerful hands. I will show you my loving concern. Then he will have concern for you. And He will let you return to your land." However, they rebelled and moved to Egypt, worshipped their gods, and perished when the king of Babylon attacked Egypt (43:10-13). The Prophet Jeremiah was rejected but he remained faithful to the LORD God Almighty at a great time of disobedience.

Acts 28:23-30 records the final words written about Paul in Rome. 'Using the Law of Moses and the Prophets, he tried to get them to believe in Jesus. Some believed what he said... "The Holy Spirit was right when He spoke to your people long ago that you will hear but never understand. You will see but never know what you are seeing.... Here is what I want you to know. God has sent His salvation to people who are not Jews. And they will listen!" '

*Heavenly Father, Your word does not tell us what happened to Your servants Jeremiah and Paul. But thank You for their faithfulness in teaching Your truth and preaching the salvation you chose for Your people in saving a remnant and in sending us Jesus Christ as Messiah and Saviour of the world. Enable us to be obedient to Your word in preparing the way for Christ's return at this time of great rebellion, disasters and persecution of the faithful. Amen.*

### **March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023.**

Micah Chapter 2 records the word of the LORD to His prophet Micah regarding the plans of mankind and of Almighty God. "How terrible for those who make evil plans before they even get out of bed! ...They do it because they have the power [and freedom] to do it." (2:1) Therefore the LORD said, "I am planning to send trouble on you... You will not live so proudly anymore." (2:3) God also promised, "I will ...bring together you who are the remnant of Israel... I will open the way for you to return." (2:12) Then God also promised "The One who breaks open the way will go in front of you and will break through the gate to go free. Your King will pass through the gate in front of you. I the LORD will lead the way." This is a prophecy about Jesus, Israel's future Messiah and King, with the LORD God Himself leading His people.

Hebrews 9:11-15. "Christ came to be the High Priest of the good things that are already here... He did not enter by spilling the blood of animals. He entered by spilling His own blood. He did it once and for all time to set us free from sin forever. The blood of animals was sprinkled on people... That makes them 'clean' on the outside. But Christ offered Himself to God without any flaw [fault]... So how much more will His blood wash from our minds our feelings of guilt for committing sin! Sin always leads to death. But now we can serve the living God. That is why Christ is the go-between of a new covenant. Now those whom God calls to Himself will receive the eternal gift He promised, since Christ has died to save them. He died to set them free from the sins they committed under the old covenant."

*Thank You God our Father for revealing once again Your purposes for those who put their faith in You and Your Saviour, Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

### **23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.**

Exodus 19:1-6. 'Exactly three months after the people of Israel escaped from Egypt, they came to the Desert of Sinai... They camped there in front of Mount Sinai. Then Moses went up to God. The LORD spoke from the mountain. "Here is what I want you to say to My people, 'You have seen for yourselves what I did to Egypt... Now obey Me completely. Keep My covenant. If you do, then out of all of the nations you will be My special treasure. The whole Earth is Mine. But you will be ...My holy nation.' " ' This covenant looks back to the purpose of God in saving Noah and his family from the Flood and then calling Abraham to establish Israel in the land of Canaan and then saving Jacob and his family from slavery in Egypt. It looks forward to eternal salvation from spiritual slavery for all of the family of Abraham, including Gentiles who seek forgiveness through faith in Israel's Messiah.

Matthew 19:17-22. Jesus said to a rich man in Israel, "If you want to enter the Kingdom, obey the commandments... Do not commit murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not give false witness. Honour your father and mother. And love your neighbour as you love yourself." "I have obeyed all those commandments," the young man said. "What else do I need to do?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell everything you have. Give the money to those who are poor. You will have treasure in Heaven. Then come and follow Me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad. He was very rich.

*Father God, help us to see the full extent of Your purpose to bring salvation to the human race You created, to establish worship of the Creator and to show compassion towards other believers. Encourage us to go beyond the teachings of the Ten Commandments and seek fully to live Christ-like lives. For His sake and glory, Amen.*

### **24<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Jeremiah 51:49-52 records the prophecy of the LORD God Almighty regarding the return of the remnant of Israel after their punishment in Babylon. "Babylon's people have killed My people Israel and people all over the Earth. So now Babylon itself must fall. You who have not been killed in the war against Babylon, leave! Do not wait! ...Remember Me and think about Jerusalem." The people of Judah will reply, "No one honours us anymore. People make fun of us... People from other lands have entered the holy places of the LORD's house." Then the LORD announced, "But a new day is coming." God's last words through His prophet Jeremiah were, "Babylon will sink down and will never rise again." (51:64.).

Revelation 18 records the words of God's angel to the Apostle John regarding today's 'Babylon'. "Babylon the Great has fallen! She has become a ...place for every evil spirit... All the

nations have drunk the strong wine of her terrible sins. The kings of the earth take part in her evil ways. The traders of the world grow rich from her great wealth." Then John heard another voice from Heaven saying, "Come out of her, My people. Then you will not take part in her sins. You will not suffer from any of her plagues."

*Father God, these are amazing revelations to Jeremiah and John regarding the original Babylon and the 'Babylons' of today! Uphold the true and righteous remnant of believers in our suffering caused by sins and disobedience and the corruption of Your truth. May the national and world leaders in governments, churches and businesses refuse to yield to the lies of those seeking to impose non-biblical standards in our schools, health services, social care and environmental matters. Deliver us from dictators, terrorists and activists who persecute believers so that Your truth and the Good News of Your salvation through Christ alone will be freely declared once again across our corrupted planet Earth in preparation for revival and Christ's return to Jerusalem to reign. Amen.*

### **27<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Jeremiah 41 records how the leaders in Israel reacted badly against the forces of Babylon before their exile to Babylon took place. The Jewish leaders cruelly fought amongst themselves, some supporting Babylon's choice of leader, some supporting their own choice of leader. This disastrous conflict resulted in some of the Jews running away to Egypt. However, this was not in God's purpose for the salvation of Israel. On the way to Egypt, they met with Jeremiah in the vain hope he would support them. But the outcome of rebelling against Jeremiah and the Babylonian empire was even more disastrous than trusting in God's plan of redemption for Israel at that time.

Philippians 3:8-11. Paul says, "I consider everything to be nothing compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. To know Him is the best thing of all. Because of Him, I have lost everything. But I consider all of it to be rubbish so I can get to know Christ. I want to be joined to Him. For me, being right with God does not come from the Law. It comes because I believe in Christ. It comes from God. It is received by faith. I want to know Christ better. I want to know the power that raised Him from the dead. I want to share in His sufferings. I want to become like Him by sharing in His death. Then by God's grace I will rise from the dead."

*Father God, thank You for telling us through Paul to avoid conflict by seeking Your will for the good of others. Help us to see Your plans for the future of Israel, Your Church and Your Kingdom on Earth, even if it means suffering like Christ did for the sake of the remnant of true believers. Help us to be careful not to oppose Your plans of punishment and salvation for today as in Jeremiah's day and in Paul's day, even if it means "sharing in Christ's suffering" for the world. Amen.*

### **28<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

Leviticus 24:16-23 records Almighty God's instruction to give the people the punishment they deserved if they blasphemed His holy name. This applied to both Jews and Gentiles who lived in the nation of Israel. It also applied for murder and injury of people and their flocks. The punishment the offenders deserved was on the fair basis of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth". In the year 1490 BC, Moses told the Israelites to do as the LORD commanded.

James 5:1-6 warns the rich businessmen, "Cry and sob, because you will soon be suffering. Your riches have rotted. Moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver have lost their brightness. Their dullness will give witness against you. Your wanting more and more will eat your body like fire. You have stored up riches in these last days. You have even failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields. Their pay is crying out against you. The cries of those who gathered the harvest have reached the ears of the Lord who rules over all. You have lived an easy life on Earth. You have given yourselves everything you wanted. You have made yourselves fat like cattle that will soon be butchered. You have judged and murdered people who are not guilty. And they were not even opposing you."

*Dear Father God, we thank You for the mercy You have offered for punishment we deserve for sinning against You and Your people and strangers in our midst. Thank you that Jesus spoke against those who sought revenge and instead taught mercy and forgiveness in His sermon on the mount. We acknowledge we have sinned and deserve the punishment that Jesus suffered on our behalf. May we repent and show His compassion to all around us, whether we are businessmen or in leadership roles or working together in serving others, whilst there is time. Forgive us when we turn away from anyone who needs us, whoever they are. Prompt us to go back to them in mercy! Amen.*

### **29<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

1 Kings 8:22-66. King Solomon prayed for himself and his father David and for the new temple and the people of Israel. He then praised God and said, "All of the nations on Earth will know that the LORD [Yahweh] is God. They will know that there is no other god." (8:60) The people 'asked the LORD to bless the king... They were glad. Their hearts were full of joy.' In the following chapter, God warned Solomon, "If you turn away from Me, or your sons turn away from Me. If you refuse to obey the commands and rules I have given you and you go off to serve other gods and worship them. Then I will cut Israel off from the land I gave them. I will turn My back on this temple... Then all of the nations will laugh and joke about Israel... They will ask, 'Why has the LORD done a thing like this to this land and temple?' They will answer, 'Because they have deserted the LORD their God.'" (9:6-9)

Hebrews 8:7-13 explains that there was nothing wrong with God's first covenant with His people Israel, but God found fault with the people at the time of His prophet Jeremiah and said, "A new day is coming... I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel... My new covenant will be different because they did not remain faithful to My old covenant... I will put My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be My people... Everyone will know Me, from the least important of them to the most important. I will forgive their evil ways and not remember their sins anymore." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

*LORD God Almighty, forgive us our sins which cause other nations to ridicule us! Establish Your Bible truth in our hearts and minds and convict us that You long for us all to live under Your new covenant through salvation in Christ alone. Amen.*

### **30<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Job 34:13-37 records the advice of Elihu at the time when Job believed he was innocent of sin. "The Mighty One would never treat people unfairly... If He really wanted to, He could hold back His Spirit and Breath. Then everyone would die and return to the dust!" (34:13-15) "Some say to God, 'I am guilty of sinning but I will not do it anymore. Show me my sins that I am not aware of. If I have done what is wrong, I will not do it again.' But you refuse to turn away from your sins. So God will not treat you the way you want to be treated. You must decide, Job. I cannot do it for you." (34:31-33) But Elihu was prepared to judge Job further and further because he thought God should test him more and more! (34:35-36)

Revelation 12:10-12. The Apostle John heard a loud voice from Heaven. "Now the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God have come. The authority of His Christ has come. Satan, who brings charges against our brothers and sisters, was thrown down. He brings charges against them before our God day and night... [However] they overcame him by giving witness about Jesus to others. They were willing to risk their lives, even if it led to death. So be joyful! But how terrible it will be on Earth! The devil has come down to you. He is very angry and knows his time is short."

*Heavenly Father, thank You that in this day and age You have fully revealed Your truth about Yourself, Satan and Jesus. Help us to stop judging ourselves and others by Elihu's standards and believe that Satan's control over us is limited as it was over Job. Meanwhile, help us to persevere and act in mercy through the indwelling Holy Spirit's wisdom, power and compassion promised by Jesus our Saviour, and not judge others "further and further because we think God should test them more and more"! Amen.*

### **31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.**

1 Samuel 14:24-48 reveals how King Saul was desperate to win the battle against the Philistines and foolishly commanded his men to fight and win without stopping to eat. "You must not eat until I have paid my enemies back for what they did. If you do, may you be under a curse!" (14:24) His son Jonathan did not hear the command of his father and ate honey (v.27). When God revealed this to Saul, he vowed to kill his own son instead of repenting of his folly (v.44) but his soldiers refused to obey his order to do this (v.45). Despite Saul's shame before his people, God still used Saul to defeat the enemies of Israel but he became more unpopular with the people and was warned by God's prophet Samuel about the unwise decisions he made without faith in Almighty God.

Romans 9:30-33. Paul asks, "What should we say then? Those who are not Jews did not look for a way to be right with God. But they found it by having faith. Israel looked for a law that could make them right with God. But they did not find it. Why not? Because they did not look for it by faith [in God's provision]... They tripped over the Stone that causes people to trip and fall. It is written,

'Look! In Zion I am laying a Stone that causes people to trip. It is a Rock that makes them fall. The one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.' " (Isaiah 8:14;28:16) This prophecy referred to Israel's Messiah whom many in Israel rejected but whom many from other nations trusted.

*Thank You Father God for the benefit of the Scriptures, in seeing both wisdom and folly in Your people and their leaders, as upheld by Samuel and Isaiah. Help us not to be shamed nor stumble over Your provision in Christ but to pray for true repentance and faith for ourselves, our leaders and our people. Amen*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023.**

Daniel 4:1-27. King Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel his dream about a majestic tree that reached to the sky for the world to see, but someone came to cut the tree down to its stump (4:10-15). Daniel told the king the tree was a picture of him. "You will be driven away from your people. You will live like the wild animals and eat grass just as cattle do... Then you will recognize that the Most High God rules over all of the kingdoms of men... But He gave a command to leave the stump of the tree along with its roots. That means your kingdom will be given back to you. It will happen when you recognize that the God of Heaven rules. So, stop being sinful. Do what is right. Give up your evil practices. Show kindness to those who are being treated badly." (4:25-27) It happened just as Daniel prophesied. After a number of years, the king testified, "I was put back on my throne... Now I give praise and honour and glory to the King of Heaven." (4:36-37).

Titus 2:11-15. "God's saving grace has appeared to all people. It teaches us to say no to godless ways and sinful longings. We must control ourselves. We must do what is right. We must lead godly lives in today's world. That is how we should live as we... wait for Jesus Christ to appear in all His glory. He is our great God and Saviour. He gave Himself for us. By doing that, He set us free from all evil. He wanted to make us pure. He wanted us to be His very own people. He wanted us to long to do what is good. These are the things you should teach."

*Help us heavenly Father to believe You are in control over world leaders and events in these final days as in the time of Your prophet Daniel. Meanwhile, help us to take note of your servant Paul's words to Titus. Amen.*

### **4<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Malachi 3:1-7 is God's answer to the question "Is God really fair?" 400 years before the birth of Christ. "I will send my Messenger. He will prepare My way for Me... But who can live through the day when He comes? He will be like a fire that makes things pure. He will act like one who makes silver pure. And He will purify the priests. Then the LORD's people will bring offerings ...acceptable to Him... So I will come and judge you." [Then follows a list of wrong doings.] "I am the LORD. I do not change... Return to Me. Then I will return to you," says the LORD who rules over all.

2 Corinthians 12:5-10. Paul says, "I will boast only about how weak I am... Then no one will think more of me than he should because of what I do or say. I could have become proud of myself because of the amazing and wonderful things God has shown me. So I was given a problem [a 'thorn in the flesh'] that caused me pain from Satan to make me suffer. Three times I begged the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak.' So I am very happy to boast about how weak I am. Then Christ's power can rest on me. Because of how I suffered for Christ, I am glad that I am weak and suffer hard times. I am glad when people insult me and make things difficult. I am glad when people persecute me. For when I am weak, I am strong."

*Lord Jesus, come purify Your priests and Your people of today just as Father God promised You would do many years ago! Encourage us to know we need to believe His warning, "Return to Me. Then I will return to you." Keep us humble, so that "when I am weak, I am strong." Amen.*

### **5<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Deuteronomy 6:1-6. After reading out the Ten Commandments (5:1-21), Moses quotes: "Make sure you follow every command I am giving you today. Then you will live and increase your numbers. You will enter the land the LORD God promised with an oath to your people long ago. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way. He guided you in the desert for these 40 years. He wanted to take your pride away. He wanted to put you to the test and know what was in your hearts. He wanted to see whether you would obey His commands... He let you go hungry. Then He gave you manna to eat... Deuteronomy 6:1-6. After reading out the Ten Commandments (5:1-

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### **6<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Leviticus 14:1-32 reminds us that God's people were 'sent outside the camp' if they developed an infectious skin disease. For cleansing and healing, they were required to bring sin offerings to the priest and also a lamb as a burnt offering to the LORD. For those who were poor, they were allowed to sacrifice doves or pigeons. Moses explained to them, "The priest will sacrifice the doves or the young pigeons that the person can afford. One is for a sin offering. The other is for a burnt offering. The priest must offer them together with the grain offering. In that way he will pay for the person's sin in God's sight. He will do it to make him 'clean'. Those are the rules for anyone who has a skin disease. They are for people who cannot afford the regular offerings that are required to make them 'clean'." They were then healed and restored to God and His people. This was the provision of God Almighty for the next 1500 years until after the time of Christ.

Hebrews 10:5-10. "When Christ came into the world, He said [to His Father in Heaven], 'You did not want sacrifices and offerings. Instead, You prepared a body for Me. You were not pleased with burnt offerings and sin offerings. Then I said, here I am. It is written about Me in the scrolls. O God, I have come to do what You want.' (Psalm 40:6-8) ...We have been made holy by what God wanted. We have been made holy because Jesus Christ offered His body once and for all time."

*Thank You God for reminding us that we were 'outside the camp' until You provided the final sacrifice that brought redemption for all of Noah's family, not just the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Thank You too, that You laid down the principle thousands of years ago that Your cleansing and salvation is for rich and poor alike. Thank You for Jesus. Amen.*

### **7<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Jeremiah 51:50-53 confirms God's plans for the remnant of Israel at the time of their exile in Babylon. "You who have not been killed in the war, leave now! In a land far away remember Me and think about Jerusalem. The people of Judah say, 'No one honours us anymore. People make fun of us... People from other lands have entered the holy places of the LORD's house.' But a new day is

coming," announces the LORD God Almighty. "At that time I will punish the gods of Babylon. And all through its land the wounded people will groan."

Revelation 2:2-7 gives the words of Jesus to the church at Ephesus. "I know what you are doing. You work long and hard. I know you cannot put up with those who are evil. You have tested those who claim to be apostles but are... liars. You have been faithful and have put up with a lot of trouble because of Me. You have not given up. But here is something I hold against you. You do not have as much love as you had at first... Turn away from your sins. Do the [good] things you did at first. If you don't, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place... Those who have ears should listen to what the Holy Spirit says to the churches. I will allow those who overcome to eat from the tree of life in God's paradise."

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your reminder of Your eternal covenant with Israel at this time of much danger. Keep them safe whilst awaiting their Messiah's return to Jerusalem. Meanwhile, may the worldwide church of Jesus Christ "work long and hard", resisting the evil surrounding them and the deceit of those who deny Bible truth. Encourage us to "work long and hard" and renew our "first love" for Christ our Saviour and believe "a new day is coming"! Keep us alert "to what the Holy Spirit says". Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Esther 2:5-18 describes the events that led up to Esther, cousin of Mordecai, a devout Jew, becoming the Queen of the vast empire of the Medes and Persians around 510 BC. This enabled Mordecai to tell her about the plot to kill the Jews living in the empire at that time. She told the king who issued a law to protect the Jews (chapter 8). This led to many people choosing to adopt the faith of the people of Israel in the LORD God Almighty for their own safe keeping!

Acts 17:16-34 records the opportunity Paul was given to speak about God Almighty and Jesus Christ. "Men of Athens! I see that you are very religious in every way. As I walked around, I looked carefully at the things you worship. I found an altar with 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD' written on it. Now I am going to tell you about this 'unknown god' that you worship. He is the God who made the world... He is the LORD of Heaven and Earth. He doesn't live in temples built by hands... From one man He made all the people of the world... God did this so that people would seek Him... They would find Him even though He is not far from any of us. In Him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His children'. Yes, we are God's children. So we should not think that God is made out of gold or silver or stone... He commands all people everywhere to turn away from their sins. He has set a day when He will judge the world fairly. He has appointed a Man to be its judge. God has proved this to all people by raising that Man from the dead!"

*Father God, we praise You for using Mordecai and Paul to uphold the true faith of Your chosen people which led to the world knowing about You and Jesus our Saviour.*

### **11<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Isaiah 22 records how God lamented over the pending destruction of Jerusalem (v.4). "You didn't look to the One who made it all possible. You didn't pay any attention to the One who planned everything long ago" (v.11). But God vowed He would re-establish the throne of King David. "At that time I will send for Eliakim. The LORD will ... hand authority over to him. Eliakim will be like a father to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. The LORD will give Eliakim the key of authority in David's royal house. No one can shut what he opens. And no one can open what he shuts. The LORD will set him firmly in place like a peg that is driven into a wall... A new day is coming" (v.20-25).

Revelation 1:5-8. The Apostle John wrote down, "Give glory and power to the One who loves us! He has set us free from our sins by pouring out His blood for us. He has made us members of His royal family. He has made us priests who serve His God and Father. Give Him glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds! Every eye will see Him. Even those who pierced Him will see Him. All the nations of the earth will be sad because of Him. This will really happen! Amen. The LORD God Almighty says, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. I am the One who is, and who was, and who will be.' "

*Father God we thank You for Your words of encouragement because of Your everlasting love and covenant with Your people and all who believe in Jesus Christ as Messiah and Saviour of the world. We look forward to the further development of Your plans for Jerusalem and its impact on the rest of us. Help us to believe "a new day is coming" and prepare the way for the return of Jesus our Saviour. Amen.*

## **12<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Joel 2:28-32. The LORD God Almighty says, "After that, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will have dreams. Your young men will have visions. In those days I will pour out My Spirit on those who serve Me, men and women alike. I will show wonders in the heavens and on Earth. There will be blood and fire and clouds of smoke. The sun will become dark. The moon will turn red like blood. It will happen before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. Everyone who calls out to Me will be saved. On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem some of my people will be left alive. I have chosen them. That is what I have promised."

Mark 1:43-45 records these words after Jesus healed the man with leprosy. 'Jesus sent him away at once. He gave the man a strong warning. "Do not tell this to anyone but go and show yourself to the priest. Offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded. It will be a witness to the priest and the people that you are 'clean'. But the man went out and started talking immediately. He spread the news to everyone. So Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. He stayed outside in lonely places. But people still came to Him from everywhere.'" ' This is followed by the story of Jesus healing the paralytic man.

*Heavenly Father, bring works of Your Spirit in these days which will demonstrate the power and compassion of Christ at work in and through His followers, "before the great and terrible day of the LORD". May we be keen to spread the Good News of Jesus in preference to keeping to the old traditions like the healed man in the story. "Pour out Your Spirit" on us as we work, witness and pray for others, for the sake of Jesus who suffered much that we might live resurrected lives. Amen.*

## **13/4/23.**

Amos 1. Before condemning Israel and Judah, Amos condemns Israel's neighbours for "triple sins" – Damascus, Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab. He follows this with a call to Israel to repent from their own "triple sins" (5:6). "Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (5:23-24 NIV) He also speaks of the day of Israel's restoration from Babylon to Jerusalem (9:11-15).

1 Peter 1:1-5 speaks of God's new dispersion of His people to spread the Good News of Israel's Messiah. "I am an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am sending this letter to you, God's chosen people... You are scattered all over Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia [Minor] and Bithynia. You have been chosen in keeping with what God the Father had planned. That happened through the Spirit's work to make you pure and holy. God chose you so that you might obey Jesus Christ. He wanted you to be made clean by the blood of Christ. May more and more grace and peace be given to you. Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy He has given us a new birth and a hope that is alive because Jesus rose from the dead. He has given us new birth so that we might share in what belongs to Him. It is a gift that can never be destroyed. It can never spoil or even fade away. It is kept in Heaven for you. Through faith you are kept safe by God's power. Your salvation is going to be completed. It is ready to be shown to you in the last days."

*Thank You again heavenly Father for the awareness of Your love and mercy as well as judgement. May we take seriously the call to repent and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ our Saviour in these "last days". Amen.*

## **14<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Jonah 4 is where Jonah became angry with God for changing His mind and sparing the destruction of the great and sinful city of Nineveh after all he had suffered in the belly of the great fish! 'He prayed to the LORD God Almighty and said, "LORD, isn't this exactly what I thought would happen when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to run away to Tarshish. I knew that You are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You do not want to destroy them." The LORD replied... "Nineveh has more than 120,000 people. They cannot tell right from wrong. Nineveh also has a lot of cattle. So should I not show concern for that great city?" '

Titus 2:11-15 says, "The saving grace of God has appeared to all people. It teaches us to say no to godless ways and sinful longings. We must control ourselves. We must do what is right. We must lead godly lives in today's world as we wait for the blessed hope God has given us waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in all His glory. He is our great God and Saviour. He gave Himself for us. By

doing that, He set us free from all evil... He wanted us to long to do what is good... Cheer people up and give them hope. Correct them with full authority."

*Thank You Father God for Your everlasting love and mercy for the people You have created! Forgive us for not showing the love and compassion You have, nor understanding the ways You use to bring awareness of Your readiness to forgive others. May we "long to do what is good" and not despair like poor old Jonah did after all he suffered! For Christ's sake who suffered much more for the salvation of those whom You long to save. Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

2 Chronicles 33:10-17. In the year 698 BC, 'The LORD spoke to King Manasseh and His people. But they didn't pay any attention to Him. So the LORD brought the army commanders of the king of Assyria against them... When Manasseh was in trouble, he asked the LORD his God to show favour to him... Manasseh prayed to Him [and] the LORD felt sorry for him. He answered his prayer. He brought him back to Jerusalem and his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God. After that, Manasseh ... got rid of the strange gods. He removed the statue of one of those gods from the LORD's temple. He also removed all of the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem... Then he made the LORD's altar look like new again. He sacrificed friendship offerings and thank offerings on it. He told the people of Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel. The people continued to offer sacrifices at the high places but offered them only to the LORD their God.'

James 2:5-10. "My dear brothers and sisters, listen to me. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world's eyes to be rich in faith? Has He not chosen them to receive the Kingdom? Has He not promised it to those who love Him? But you have put poor people down. Are not the rich taking advantage of you? ...Are they not speaking evil things against the worthy name of Jesus? Remember, you belong to Him. The royal law is found in Scripture. It says, 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' (Leviticus 19:18) If you really keep that law, you are doing what is right. But you sin if you do not treat everyone the same."

*Father God, help us to value Your "royal law found in Scripture" and show mercy to the poor, and so avoid being under the control of the rich in the land or under threat from enemy "commanders". Amen.*

### **18<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

2 Samuel 5:22-25. 'Once more the Philistines came up... So David asked the LORD for advice. The LORD answered, "Do not go straight up. Instead, circle around behind them. Attack them in front of the balsam trees... I will strike down the Philistine army." So David did just as the LORD had commanded him. He struck down the Philistines.' The following chapter gives the account of David instructing his men to move the Ark of the LORD God Almighty to Jerusalem in 1042 BC.

Galatians 2:15-21. Paul says, "We who are Jews by birth... know that no-one is made right with God by obeying the Law. It is by believing in Jesus Christ. So we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus. That is so we can be made right with God by believing in Christ, not by obeying the Law. No one can be made right with God by obeying the Law... Because of the Law, I died as far as the Law is concerned. I died so that I might live for God [since] I have been crucified with Christ. I do not live any longer but Christ lives in me. My faith in the Son of God helps me to live my life in my body. He loved me. He gave Himself for me. I do not reject the grace of God. What if a person could become right with God by obeying the Law? Then Christ died for nothing!" Paul explains in the following chapter the purpose of the Law. "It was added because of human sin... to control us until the promised Seed [Christ the Messiah] had come." (3:19)

*Thank you God for revealing to David, Your chosen King, the value of seeking You and acting in faith and then establishing a constant reminder of Your presence among Your people nearly 3000 years ago. Thank You too for Paul's understanding for the new covenant which applies to all peoples who put their trust in Israel's Messiah. Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Ezra 6:15-22. After the return of the Jews from exile, 'the temple was completed [rebuilt in Jerusalem]. When the house of God was set apart, the people of Israel celebrated with joy... They sacrificed 100 bulls, 200 rams and 400 male lambs... Those who had returned from Babylonia [then] celebrated the Passover Feast. The priests and Levites ...killed the Passover lamb for everyone who had returned from Babylonia... They ate it together with all those who had separated themselves

from the practices of their neighbours. The people worshiped the LORD God Almighty. He is the God of Israel. For seven days they celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread because the LORD had filled them with joy.' It was during Passover week 500 years later that Jesus and His disciples celebrated 'the Lord's Last Supper' before He was crucified as the Lamb of God for the sins of all who believe He is the Son of God.

2 Timothy 2:14-19 gives more of Paul's advice. "Keep reminding the believers of these things. Warn them not to argue about words. That doesn't have any value and only destroys those who listen. Do your best to please God. Be a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed. Teach the message of truth correctly. Stay away from godless chatter. Those who take part in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like a deadly sickness... They destroy the faith of some. But God's solid foundation stands firm... All who say they believe in the Lord must turn away from evil."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the opportunity You gave to forgive and re-establish Your chosen people in Jerusalem. Through them You have given us all hope in receiving Jesus Christ, your Passover Lamb, as Saviour. Enable us to put into practice the advice of Your servant Paul that many more will understand Your Bible truth and receive the Good News of Jesus Christ as Saviour through what happened during Passover week 2000 years ago. Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Isaiah 57:14-21 records God's comforting words to the faithful believers and also warnings to the evil-doers. "I live in a high and holy place. But I also live with anyone who turns away from their sins. I live with anyone who is not proud. I give new life to them. I give it to anyone who turns away from their sins. I will not find fault with My people forever. I will not always be angry with them. If I were, I would cause their spirits to grow weak. The very breath of life would go out of the people I created... I turned My face away from them because I was angry for they kept on wanting their own way. I have seen what they have done. But I will heal them. I will guide them. And I will comfort them just as I did before... But those who are evil are like the rolling sea. Its waves stir up mud... There is no peace for those who are evil."

Revelation 9:20-21; 10:6-7. A sixth angel appeared to the Apostle John to prophesy: "The people who were not killed by these plagues still did not turn away from worshiping demons... nor turn away from their murders, witchcraft, sexual sins and stealing." A seventh angel then spoke to John. He made a promise in the name of the One who lives for ever. He said, "There will be no more waiting! But in the days when the seventh angel is ready to blow his trumpet, the last part of God's plan [the 'mystery of God', NIV] will be carried out. God told all this to the prophets who served Him long ago."

*Father God, we pray on behalf of our nation for forgiveness of sins down the ages that have caused You to say, "I turned My face away from them because I was angry". Make us faithful in declaring to the world the 'mystery of God' which is the Kingdom of Christ. Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> April 2023.**

Ecclesiastes 1 and 12. Solomon begins his writings by confirming, "I, the Teacher, was King over Israel in Jerusalem. I spent all of my time studying. I used my wisdom to check everything out. I looked into everything that is done on Earth. What a heavy load God has put on mankind! I have seen what is done on this Earth. It doesn't have any meaning. It's like chasing the wind. People cannot straighten things that are twisted. They cannot count things that do not even exist! I said to myself, 'Look, my wisdom has really been growing. In fact, I am now wiser than anyone who ruled over Jerusalem in the past. I have a lot of wisdom and knowledge.' Then I used my mind to understand what it really means to be wise... A lot of human wisdom leads to a lot of sorrow. More knowledge only brings more sadness." (1:12-18) Solomon concludes his writings by saying, "Here is the final thing I want to say. Have respect for God and obey His commandments... He will judge everything, good or evil." (12:13-14)

Acts 7:1-53 (NIV) records the famous speech of the apostle Stephen to the High Priest and Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. He recounted the truth in Scripture regarding God's special people the Jews from the time of Abraham and ended by saying, "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised! You are just like your ancestors: you always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One [Messiah]. And now you have betrayed and murdered Him! You, who have received the Law that was given through angels, have not obeyed it."

*Dear Father in Heaven, we thank you for the wisdom of Solomon and the understanding of Stephen. May our "uncircumcised hearts and ears" daily seek and find Your truth and purpose in life as given in the Bible, through Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **27<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

Ezekiel chapter 3. Ezekiel is told to eat a scroll full of God's truth and then he will be given the words to preach to sinners who disobey Almighty God's written word. The Spirit lifted him up and took him to the exiles in Babylon (3:1-15). "If you warn the righteous people not to sin and they obey, they will surely be saved and you also" (3:21). God then told Ezekiel, "When I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says', then whoever will listen, let them listen, and whoever will refuse, let them refuse, for they are a rebellious people" (3:27).

1 Corinthians chapter 5. Paul warns against anyone who is immoral. "Even though I am not there with you, I am with you in spirit. And I have already judged the man who did wrong, just as if I were there. When you come together in the name of our Lord Jesus, I will be with you in spirit. The power of our Lord Jesus will also be with you. When you come together like that, hand that person over to Satan. Then their sinful nature may be destroyed. Then his spirit will be saved on the day the Lord returns" (5:3-5). "Get rid of the old yeast. Be like a new batch of dough without yeast. That is what you really are, because Christ has been offered up for us. He is our Passover Lamb. So let us keep the Feast [of Unleavened Bread], but not with the old yeast... that is full of hatred and evil. Let us keep the Feast with bread made without yeast" (3:7-8).

*Heavenly Father, thank You for giving Bible readings which tell us to take in [eat] Bible Truth and to reject that what is old and unrighteous. As we meditate on the Passover Feast of Unleavened Bread may we also remember our Saviour, Your Passover Lamb. Teach us what to say to sinners that some might be saved. Amen.*

### **28<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

1 Samuel 18:17-30. King Saul became afraid of David because he could see the LORD God Almighty was with him. So he put David in charge of 1,000 men and sent him out to fight against the Philistines. But God kept David safe in every battle and Saul became even more afraid of David. So Saul promised his daughter to David if he fought even more battles with the Philistines. But David refused the king's offer because he felt too lowly to accept this offer so Saul's daughter was given to someone else. However another daughter of King Saul fell in love with David. So Saul agreed they should get married provided David went out to fight the Philistines yet again. Once again, God kept David safe in battle. King Saul knew that the LORD God was with David and he became more and more afraid of David. He remained an enemy of David for the rest of his life. But David became more and more successful in battles against the Philistines and David's name became known throughout Israel.

Luke 14:1-14 is the occasion when Jesus attended a banquet. During the meal, He asked the Pharisees whether it was good to heal someone on the Sabbath day. They did not reply so Jesus healed a man suffering with dropsy. It was the Sabbath day and the Pharisees still did not say anything to Jesus. This was the occasion when Jesus told them it was better to welcome the poor and the needy people when they invited guests to a banquet. The name of Jesus became known more and more throughout Israel but He became the enemy of the religious leaders.

*Heavenly Father, these stories warn us that when we do good, You are with us but we risk being judged by others who disagree. Help us to discern at all times what is right and obey Your voice within, whatever the personal sacrifice or cost. Amen.*

### **1<sup>st</sup> May 2023.**

Haggai 2:10-19. God tells Haggai "Ask the priests what the Law says. Suppose someone carries holy meat in the clothes he is wearing. And the clothes touch some bread or stew or other food. Do those things also become holy?" The priests answered, "No". "If someone is made unclean by touching a dead body and then touches one of those things. Does it become unclean too?" "Yes," the priests replied. Then the LORD said, "That is how I look at these people and this nation. Anything they do is unclean... From this day on, think carefully about the day when the foundation of My temple was laid... Until now, your vines and fig trees have not produced any fruit... But from this day on I will bless you."

John 17:11,20,21,26. Before Jesus was arrested, He prayed these words to His Father in Heaven for His eleven faithful disciples. "Holy Father, keep them safe by the power of Your name... Keep them safe so they can be one, just as You and I are one... I do not pray only for them. I pray also for those who will believe in Me because of their message. Father, I pray that all of them will be one. Just as You are in Me and I am in You, I want them also to be in Us. Then the world will believe that You have sent Me... I have made You known to them... Then the love You have for Me will be in them. I Myself will be in them."

*Heavenly Father, thank you for Your reminder that we are at risk of being 'unclean' in our work for You and worship of You. Assure us that in your mercy "from this day on I will bless you". Fulfil then today, the words in the prayer of Jesus, "Just as You are in Me and I am in You, I want them also to be in Us. Then the world will believe that You have sent Me." Amen.*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023.**

2 Kings 3 records how the kings and tribes of Judah and Israel went off to war without consulting God. They marched out across desert land, assisted by the Edomites, in order to defeat the Moabites. Progress was slow and their combined army ran out of water. Joram, the king of Israel exclaimed, "What should we do now? The LORD has called us three kings together. Did he do it only to hand us over to Moab?" (3:10). Jehoshaphat, the godly king of Judah, asked if there was a prophet of the LORD God Almighty to seek His help. Elisha was found and he announced, "The LORD says, 'Dig a lot of ditches in this valley. You will not see wind or rain. But this valley will be filled with water. Then you, your cattle and your other animals will have water to drink... He will also hand Moab over to you.' " (3:15-18) The next morning the armies of Israel, Judah and Edom were refreshed and defeated the Moabites.

Acts 3:42-47. 'The believers studied what the apostles taught. They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed. Everyone felt that God was near. The apostles did many wonders and miraculous signs... Their hearts were glad and honest and true. They praised God. They were respected by all the people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.'

*Almighty God, thank You for revealing to us the unity You established between those who believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Saviour. Forgive us when we set out in life to extend Your kingdom on Earth without seeking your guidance first. Unite us in studying Your Bible truth, in prayer and in fellowship meals together. Grant us the expectation of signs and wonders with many receiving Your salvation through faith in Jesus. May we feel that You are very near to us in these troubled days and remember always to daily seek Your guidance. Amen.*

## **3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.**

Jonah 3. God called Jonah a second time to go to Ninevah to proclaim His judgement. This time Jonah obeyed and on the very first day boldly told the people that God would punish the sinful city within 40 days (3:1-4). 'The people of Nineveh believed God's warning. They decided not to eat any food and put on black clothes from the least important of them to the most important. The king also took his royal robes off and dressed in black clothes... Then he sent out a message to the people of Nineveh. "Let people and animals alike be covered with black cloth. All of you must call out to God with all your hearts. Stop doing what is evil... God might take pity on us. He might turn away from His burning anger. Then we won't die." God saw what they did. They stopped doing what was evil. So He took pity on them. He did not destroy them as He had said He would' (3:8-10).

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17. Paul writes: "Brothers and sisters, the Lord loves you. God chose you from the beginning. He wanted you to be saved. Salvation comes through the Holy Spirit's work. He makes people holy through believing the truth. He chose you to be saved by accepting the Good News that we preach. You will share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So stand firm. Hold on to what we taught you... Our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father loved us. By his grace God gave us comfort that will last forever." Paul ends: "May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father comfort you and make you strong in every good thing you do and say."

*Dear God, have pity on us and make Your chosen preachers bold to preach salvation in Christ, that the people You have chosen "from the beginning" will repent and set examples to monarchs and leaders of church and state, to Your glory. Amen.*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Ezra 7 is at the time when King Artaxerxes reigned over the Jews who were exiled in Babylon. He instructed Ezra the priest to return to Jerusalem with other priests and Levites who wished to go with him and to take the Temple silver with them. "Work hard for the Temple of the God of Heaven. Do everything He has required. I do not want Him to be angry with my kingdom and the kingdom of my sons!" (7:23) "And you Ezra, appoint judges and other court officials... Those you appoint should do what is right and fair when they judge people... They should do it for everyone who knows the laws of your God. And I want you to teach the people who do not know those laws." (7:25)

Jude verses 20-25. "Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Let the Holy Spirit guide and help you when you pray. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring you eternal life. As you wait for His mercy, remain in God's love. Show mercy to those who doubt. Pull others out of the fire. Save them. To others, show mercy mixed with fear... Give praise to the One who is able to keep you from falling into sin. He will bring you into His heavenly glory without any fault and with great joy. Give praise to the only God. He is our Saviour. Glory, majesty, power and authority belong to Him. Give praise to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. Give praise to the One who was before all time, who now is, and who will be forever. Amen."

*Thank You heavenly Father for recording for us the amazing change of heart nearly 2500 years ago of the king of Babylon! May we pray and see changes of heart and behaviour in our leaders today as we "remain in God's love and show mercy to those who doubt." In showing Your mercy to others may we anticipate divine intervention! Amen.*

#### **5<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Isaiah 56:1-7 is where God promises salvation for all believers under the old covenant with His people Israel. "Suppose an outsider wants to follow the Lord. Then he should not say, 'The LORD won't accept me as one of His people.' ... I will bring them to My holy mountain of Zion. I will give them joy in My house and I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices on My altar. [Then] My house will be called a house where people from all nations can pray."

Philippians 1:3-11 are the words of Paul, a devout Jew, to the believers in Philippi who were Jews and Gentiles under the new covenant. "In my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. I am happy because you have joined me in spreading the Good News... I am sure that the One who began a good work in you will carry it on until it is completed on the day Christ Jesus returns... I love you with all my heart... I love you with the love that Christ Jesus gives. I pray that your love will grow more and more based on knowledge and understanding. Then you will be able to know what is best. You will be pure and without blame until the day Christ returns. You will be filled with the fruit of right living produced by Jesus Christ."

*Father God, thank you for Paul's words which confirm what is in Your heart for Your love to be established in the lives of "outsiders who want to follow Me and serve Me and love Me and worship Me." We know that in the same chapter, Paul had to consider how to deal with certain believers who "stir up trouble" (v.17). But help us to trust in Your acts of love and mercy to see many lives changed, whatever people's motives are, through faithful prayer with "people from all nations" before "Christ Jesus returns". Amen.*

#### **8<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Isaiah 43:12 says, "You are my witnesses that I am God," announces the LORD.

Acts 16:1-15. The apostle Paul went to Philippi on his second missionary journey. Philippi was the first city he visited after his vision of a man calling him to preach in Macedonia, north of Greece (16:6-10). He went there twice to preach (Chapters 16 and 20). It was the place where some of the European Jews first believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour. 'One of those listening was a woman named Lydia. She was from the city of Thyatira. Her business was selling purple cloth. She was a worshiper of Almighty God. The Lord opened her heart to accept Paul's message. She and her family were baptized. Then she invited us to her home' (16:14-15). Paul later wrote letters to the Jewish and Gentile fellowship of believers who lived in Philippi. The believers were united in worshipping together our LORD God Almighty and His Son our Saviour, Jesus the Christ or Messiah. (God and Jesus at that time were addressed by their Hebrew names Yahweh and Yeshua.)

*Almighty God, help us to trust in visions that only You give through Your Holy Spirit. Then grant us the strength and authority to preach Your truth whatever the consequences. We thank you*

*for the obedience of Paul in following Your Holy Spirit's guidance and for his perseverance in suffering opposition and even imprisonment through preaching Your Bible truth and salvation through Christ alone. We are amazed how Paul travelled a long way to Philippi and then met Lydia who was from Thyatira, which demonstrates how You bring together the people you want to be saved. And we thank you for the example of how Lydia was open to Paul's witness and she and her family believed in Your salvation through Jesus Christ and other Europeans followed in Your mercy. Amen.*

### **9<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Amos chapters 1 to 9 declares judgement on Israel's neighbours (chapter 1) before judging Israel (chapters 2 to 4). He calls for repentance in the name of the LORD God Almighty (chapter 5) so that "justice will roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream" (5:24 NIV). Finally the word of God through His prophet Amos declares, "I will restore David's fallen tent... and all the nations that bear My name" (9:11-12). "I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them" (9:15).

Acts chapter 12 is the record of the apostle Peter's miraculous escape from prison and King Herod. 'Peter was kept in prison. But the church prayed hard to God for him. It was the night before Herod was going to bring him to trial. Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. Two chains held him there. Lookouts stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared. A light shone in the prison cell. The angel struck Peter on his side. Peter woke up. "Quick!" the angel said. "Get up!" The chains fell off Peter's wrists. Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." Peter did so. "Put on your coat and follow me." (12:5-8) Peter then walked to the house where the believers were praying for him before he 'left for another place'. Herod ordered the prison guards to be executed but soon after, 'an angel of the Lord struck Herod down because he had not given praise to God. So he was eaten by worms and died. But God's word continued to increase and spread' (12:23-24).

*Dear Father God, thank You for Your written truth that reveals Your determination to save and bless Your people from the time of Noah to the present day, despite our disobedience and ability to know the difference between good and evil. May Your people worldwide uphold Your Bible truth and live righteous resurrection lives through Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Psalms 135:1-7. "Praise the LORD God Almighty! Praise the name of the LORD. You who serve the LORD, praise Him. You who serve in the house of the LORD, praise Him. You who serve in the courtyards of the temple of our God, praise Him. Praise the LORD, because He is good... I know that the LORD is great. I know that our LORD is greater than all gods. The LORD does anything he wants to do in Heaven and on Earth. He does it even in the deepest parts of the oceans. He makes clouds rise from one end of the Earth to the other. He sends lightning with the rain. He brings the wind out of His storerooms." Note that the following psalm says "His love endures for ever" 26 times!

Philippians Chapters 3 & 4. Paul says, "Finally, my brothers and sisters, be joyful because you belong to the Lord. It is no trouble for me to write about these important matters to you again. If you know about them, you will have a safe path to follow [a safeguard, NIV]." (3:1) "Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again: 'Rejoice in the Lord!' Let everyone know how gentle [patient] you are. The Lord is coming soon. Do not worry about anything. Instead, tell God about everything. Ask and pray and give thanks to Him. Then God's peace will watch over your hearts and your minds because you belong to Christ Jesus. God's peace can never be fully understood." (4:4-7)

*Father God, help us to focus more and more on You and not be distracted by the world that You created which mankind has corrupted. Praise You for the wonders of Your creation that You told us to look after. We thank You for Your "love that endures for ever" especially through the sacrifice that Jesus made for our salvation. Grant us Your peace and more understanding as we "ask and pray and give thanks". Amen.*

### **11<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Leviticus 14 gives God's instructions to Moses for personal cleansing of skin infections and for the treatment required if there is mould growing in the home. They included making offerings to the Lord God Almighty and an examination by the local priest to confirm healing and cleanliness. There was special provision for the poor who could not afford the normal religious sacrifices (14:21-23).

Matthew 21:12-16 records the spiritual cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem by Jesus 1500 years later. 'Jesus entered the Temple area. He began chasing out all those who were buying and selling there. He turned over the tables of the people who were exchanging money. He also turned over the benches of those who were selling doves. He said to them, "It is written that the LORD said that My house will be called a house of prayer (Isaiah 56:7) but you are making it a den for thieves." Blind people and those who were disabled came to Jesus at the Temple and He healed them. The chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did. They also saw the children in the Temple area shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" When they saw all of this, they became angry. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked Him. "Yes," replied Jesus. "Have you never read about it in Scripture? It says, 'You have made sure that children and infants praise You.' " ' (Psalm 8:2)

*Father God thank You for Your purpose down the ages that rich and poor alike should live healthy, clean lives and live in homes free of unhealthy mould. Challenge us to help the poor, the blind and the disabled to live healthily and also to challenge them of the need for spiritual cleansing. Help us to witness and care for them all, ignoring any opposition, that even the children praise You for Jesus Christ at work in our midst. "Hosanna to the Son of David!" For His sake. Amen.*

### **12<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Exodus 16:4-10. 'The LORD spoke to Moses, "I will rain down bread from Heaven for you. The people must go out each day to gather enough bread for that day. Here is how I will put them to the test. I will see if they will follow my directions. On the sixth day they must... gather twice as much as on the other days." So Moses and Aaron spoke to all of the people of Israel. "In the evening you will know that the LORD brought you out of Egypt. And in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD. He has heard you say you are not happy... You will know that the LORD has heard you speak against Him. He will give you meat to eat in the evening. He will give you all of the bread you want in the morning... You are not speaking against us. You are speaking against the LORD!" ...While Aaron was speaking, they looked toward the desert. There was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud!'

1 Timothy 2:7-8 gives part of Paul's good advice to young Timothy. "I was appointed to be a preacher and an apostle to preach the Good News. I am telling the truth [in Christ, KJV]... God appointed me to be a teacher of the true faith to those who are not Jews. I want men everywhere to pray. I want them to lift up holy hands. I do not want them to be angry when they pray. I do not want them to argue."

*Father God, thank You for teaching us through Moses, Aaron and Paul to avoid praying in anger and complaining about Your chosen leaders, which risks us "speaking against the LORD" Himself! Open our eyes to see Your glory and your purposes that we may be found faithful and obedient to "the true faith" and thankful for Your provision of daily Manna from Heaven which is "in Christ" our Saviour. Amen.*

### **15<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Malachi 3:7-18. "You steal from Me when you do not bring Me a tenth of everything you produce... Bring the entire tenth to the storerooms in My Temple. Then there will be plenty of food. Put Me to the test. Then you will see that I will throw open the windows of Heaven. I will pour out so many blessings that you will not have enough room for them."

Mark 16:9-20 records the time just after the resurrection of Jesus when He appeared first to Mary Magdalene and then to the two followers on the road to Emmaus. 'The two returned and told the others about it. But the others did not believe them either. Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating. He spoke firmly to them because they had no faith... "Go into all the world. Preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved... In My name they will drive out demons. They will speak in languages they had not known before. They will pick up snakes with their hands. And when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them. They will place their hands on sick people. And the people will get well." When the Lord Jesus finished speaking to them, He was taken up into Heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere. The Lord worked with them. And He confirmed His word by the signs that went with it.'

*Thank You Father God for the words of Your prophet Malachi to remind us to worship you our Provider and give our money and talents in serving You. Thank You for the words of Your Messiah*

*Jesus to remind us to worship Him our Saviour and give our lives in serving others. Forgive our doubts and may we see Your provision and Your Holy Spirit power at work as promised. For the sake of our suffering Lord. Amen.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Deuteronomy 25:17-19 is where Almighty God paused in giving His law to Moses for His people of Israel. "Remember what the Amalekites did to you on your way out of Egypt. You were tired and worn out. They met you on your journey. They attacked everyone who was lagging behind. They didn't have any respect for God. The LORD your God will give you peace and rest from all of the enemies who are around you. He will do it in the land He is giving you to take over as your very own. Then you will wipe out the memory of the Amalekites from the earth. Do not forget to do it!"

Jude verses 20 to 25 says, "Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Let the Holy Spirit guide and help you when you pray. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring you eternal life. As you wait for His mercy, remain in God's love. Show mercy to those who doubt. Pull others out of the fire. Save them. To others, show mercy mixed with fear. Hate even the clothes that are stained by the sins of those who wear them. Give praise to the One who is able to keep you from falling into sin. He will bring you into His heavenly glory without any fault. He will bring you there with great joy. Give praise to the only God. He is our Saviour. Glory, majesty, power and authority belong to Him. Give praise to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. Give praise to the One who was before all time, who now is and who will be forever more! Amen."

*Dear God, thank You for these reminders not to grow weary in life's journey. Forgive us when we put ourselves and others at risk when we "lag behind". Help us to "build ourselves up in our most holy faith and let the Holy Spirit guide us when we pray". We praise You "through Jesus". Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

1 Kings 11 records the time around 3000 years ago when Israel worshipped idols under King Solomon. The ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled against the rule of Solomon. God allowed this but said, for the sake of King David, "I will give one of the tribes [Judah] to David's son. Then my servant David will always have a son on his throne in Jerusalem. The lamp of David's kingdom will always burn brightly in my sight. Jerusalem is the city I chose for My Name." (1 Kings 11:34-36) The tribe of Benjamin stayed with the tribe of Judah and Jerusalem, the 'City of David', became their central place of worship as God planned. God also said, "I will punish David's family because of what Solomon has done. But I will not punish them forever." (11:39)

Romans 15:7-21. Over 1000 years later, Paul said, "I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews. He teaches us ... that God will keep the promises he made to the founders of our nation. He became a servant of the Jews so that people who are not Jews [Gentiles] could give glory to God for His mercy. It is written, 'I will praise you among the Gentiles. I will sing praises to you.' (Psalm 18:49) ...The grace of God has allowed me to serve Christ Jesus among the Gentiles. My duty as a priest is to preach God's Good News [of salvation through Christ]. ...He has been leading those who are not Jews to obey God. He has been doing this by what I have said and done. He has given me power to do signs and miracles. He has given me the power of the Holy Spirit. From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum I have finished preaching the Good News about Christ."

*Thank You heavenly Father for preparing the way for the ministry of Christ our Saviour in Jerusalem to offer salvation to everyone around the world. Return soon, Lord Jesus! Amen.*

### **18<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Exodus 19:1-6 records the everlasting promise of the LORD God Almighty to the Israelites at the start of their journey to their promised land of Canaan. Exactly three months after the people of Israel left Egypt, they came to the Desert of Sinai... They camped there in front of mount Sinai. Then Moses went up to God. The LORD called out to him from the mountain. "Here is what I want you to say to My people who came from the family of Jacob [Israel]. Tell the Israelites, 'You have seen for yourselves what I did to Egypt. You saw how I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Myself. Now obey Me completely. Keep My covenant. If you do, then out of all of the nations you will be My special treasure... You will be a kingdom of priests to serve Me. You will be My holy nation.' "

Revelation 2:1-10 records the words of Jesus Christ given to John for the persecuted believers in Smyrna. "Here are the words of the One who is the First and the Last. He is the One who died and came to life again. He says, 'I know that you suffer and are poor. But you are rich! I know

the evil words of those who say they are Jews but are not. Their worship is satanic. Do not be afraid of what you are going to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you. You will be treated badly for a short time. Be faithful, even if it means death. Then I will give you the crown of life itself.' "

*Father God thank you for the reminder of Your everlasting truth for the future of Your people Israel and the faithful followers of Jesus our Saviour. Help us to stand up against any persecution of state leaders and disobedient religious leaders of today and freely uphold Bible truth and salvation through Christ alone. Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Ezekiel 16 gives the judgement of the LORD God Almighty regarding the sins of Jerusalem which He considered were worse than the people of Sodom (16:47). "You will be punished for your impure conduct... I will punish you in keeping with what you have done. I sealed with an oath the covenant I made with you. You hated that oath and you broke My covenant. But I will remember My covenant with you... It will last forever. Then you will remember how you have lived... Then you will know that I am the LORD God Almighty. I will pay for all of the sins you have committed. Then you will remember what you have done. You will be ashamed of it. Because of your shame, you will never speak against Me again."

1 Timothy 6:11-16. "But you, man of God, run away from all of those things. Try hard to do what is right and godly. Have faith, love and gentleness. Hold on to what you believe. Fight the good fight along with all other believers. Take hold of eternal life. You were chosen for it when you openly told others what you believe... Christ Jesus told the truth when He gave witness to Pontius Pilate. In the sight of God and Christ, I give you a command. Obey it until our Lord Jesus Christ appears. Obey it completely. Then no-one can find fault with it or you."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for Your clear warnings in Scripture, especially to those of us You have called to serve You. Ezekiel wrote down, "I will punish you in keeping with what you have done." Paul said, "You were chosen for it [eternal life] when you openly told others what you believe." Help us to put behind us the guilt and shame and judgement we deserve of past sins and instead witness our salvation in Jesus Christ. Thank You for the fulfilment of Your promise back in 600 BC to "pay for all of the sins we have committed". Amen.*

### **2nd May 2023.**

Genesis chapter 1 records the beginnings of the Universe that God created and in particular the creation of planet Earth. His Holy Spirit "hovered over the waters" waiting for the commands of God the Father spoken through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is "the Word of God". First, They created light out of darkness. Second, They separated the water above in the sky from the water below. Third, They separated land from water and created a wide range of vegetation with each species containing it's own unique seeds to produce more vegetation. Fourth, They created the two main sources of light for Earth, sun and moon, as well as the stars. Fifth, They created the sea creatures and the flying creatures with their own unique eggs to produce more of the same species. Sixth, They created land creatures, each with their own eggs and also said "Let Us make mankind in Our own image to rule over the whole Earth". They created both man and woman and blessed them and told them, "Have children and grow in number. Fill the Earth and bring it under your control." (1:26-28.)

John 17:20-26 gives the final prayer of Jesus about His disciples. "I pray for those who will believe in Me because of their message. Father, I pray that all of them will be one, just as You are in Me and I am in You. I want them also to be in Us. Then the world will believe that You have sent Me... It will also show the world that You have loved those you gave Me, just as you have loved Me. Father, I want them ...to see the glory You have given Me. You gave it to Me because you loved Me before the world was created. Father ...I will continue to show You to them. Then the love You have for Me will be in them. I Myself will be in them."

*Holy Triune God, thank You for these amazing words through Christ our Creator and Saviour. Amen.*

### **23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.**

Psalms 87 glorifies Zion, the city of Jerusalem. "The LORD God Almighty loves the city of Zion more than all of the other places where the people of Jacob [Israel] live... He says, 'I will include Egypt and Babylon [Iraq] in a list of those nations who recognize Me as King. I will also include

Philistia [Gaza] and Tyre [Lebanon], along with Cush [Ethiopia]. I will say they were born in Zion.' ...As they make music they will sing, 'Zion, all of our blessings come from you'."

John 15:1-8 is where Jesus says, "I am the true vine. My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch joined to Me that does not bear fruit. He trims every branch that does bear fruit to bear even more fruit... Remain joined to Me, and I will remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain joined to Me. I am the vine. You are the branches. If anyone remains joined to Me, and I to him, he will bear much fruit. You cannot do anything without Me. If anyone does not remain joined to Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away into the fire and burned. If you remain joined to Me and My words remain in you, ask for anything you wish. And it will be given to you. When you bear much fruit, it brings glory to my Father. It shows that you are my disciples."

*We thank You our God Almighty for the prophetic vision given to the psalmist of the day when the nations of the world will honour You and Jerusalem and its future King, Israel's Messiah. Thank You that Jesus Himself reminded His followers to "remain joined to Him" in order to bear much fruit. Remain "joined to us" that we may live fruitful lives to Your glory along with the nations of the world! Amen.*

### **24<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Jeremiah 4:22 records God's lament over His people. "My people do not know Me. They are children who do not have any sense or understanding. They are skilled [only] in doing what is evil. They do not know how to do what is good." Although God did not intend to destroy them all, those who were left would be punished (5:18). In addition to worshipping false gods and seeking immoral life styles, they had failed to care for the poor and orphans (5:28). Also, their priests ruled without God's authority and the people preferred it that way (5:31)!

Galatians 2:11-24 records Paul testimony of how God changed his old ways to bring personal salvation and hope to the world through preaching God's mercy in Christ. "The Good News I preached [of salvation in Christ] is not something a human being made up... Instead, I received it from Jesus Christ Himself. You have heard of my earlier way of life as a Jew. With all my strength I attacked the Church of God. I tried to destroy it... But God set me apart from the time I was born. He showed me His grace by appointing me... He wanted me to preach about Jesus among those who are not Jews... The members of Christ's churches in Judea did not know me in a personal way. They only heard others say, 'The man who used to attack us has changed. He is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they praised God because of me."

*Almighty God of Jews and Gentiles, Your concern and warnings as well as Your grace and mercy, recorded by Jeremiah 2650 years ago, remain true to this day! Help us to fully give up our old sinful ways including lack of care for the poor and needy. Also forgive us for preferring religious leaders who "rule without God's authority", just like Paul did when he persecuted followers of Christ. Forgive us and empower us in the true Gospel! Amen.*

### **25<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Genesis chapter 2 records that our Triune God (Father, Son and Spirit) rested after creating the Universe and our planet Earth. 'God blessed the seventh day and made it holy [a Sabbath]. He rested on it.' (2:3) Then it describes the special 'Garden of Eden' for Adam and the various plants, animals, insects, fish and birds He created (2:8). At that time on the rest of the planet, 'bushes had not appeared in the soil. Plants had not come up in the fields. The LORD God had not sent rain on the soil. There were no people to work the ground.' (2:5-6) 'The LORD God gave the man a command. He said, "You can eat the fruit of any tree that is in the garden. But you must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you can be sure that you will die." Then God created a woman from the rib of Adam (2:21-22) and said, "She will be named 'woman', because she was taken out of a man. That is why a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. The two of them will become one." ' (2:23-24) At that time they were still naked and felt no shame. (2:25). In God's grace, there was no Law.

Romans 6:15-23 says, "Should we sin because we are no longer ruled by Law but by God's grace? Not at all! ...You can become slaves of sin. Then you will die. Or you can be slaves who obey God. Then you will live a godly life...You have been set free from sin. You have become slaves to right living... The benefit you gain leads to holy living. And the end result is eternal life... God gives you the gift of eternal life because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done."

*Praise be to God who has freed us from His Law, by God's grace in Jesus our Saviour! Amen.*

### **26<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Genesis chapter 9 gives God's covenant with Noah after He saved him and his family from the flood that destroyed the evil on Earth after ten or more generations of Adam and Eve's family. 'God gave His blessing to Noah and his sons and instructed them to have children and grow in number to fill the Earth... "Every living thing is under your control and it will be food for you"' (9:1-3). God then promised never to send another flood to destroy Earth (9:11).

John 14:15-22 is where Jesus promises to send His Holy Spirit to establish His Father's love in the world that They together had created. "If you love Me, obey My commands. I will ask the Father and He will give you another 'Friend' to help you and to be with you forever. That 'Friend' is the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him. That's because the world does not see Him or know Him. But you know Him and He will be in you. I will not leave you like children who do not have parents. I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me anymore. But you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. On that day you will realize that I am in My Father. You will [also] know that you are in Me, and I am in you. Anyone who has My commands and obeys them loves Me. My Father will love the one who loves Me. I too will love them. And I will show myself to them."

*Thank You Father God for creating a new beginning for our planet through the family of Noah. Despite even worse evil on Earth than before Noah's Flood, You gave Your commands to love and obey You and then Your Law to follow. Now many years later we are saved by another new beginning through Christ alone who has also promised Your Holy Spirit to guide us in living lives filled with Your love. Thank You. Amen.*

### **29<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Psalms 66:8-20. "Praise our God! You have kept our feet from slipping. You have put us to the test and put us through fire to make us like silver... Come and listen, all of you who have respect for God. Let me tell you what He has done for me. I cried out to Him with my mouth. I praised Him with my tongue. If I had enjoyed having sin in my heart, the LORD God Almighty would not have listened. But He has listened. He has heard and accepted my prayer. He has not held back His love from me."

1 Corinthians 1:14-24. "Christ sent me to preach the Good News [of salvation in Christ alone]. He commanded me not to use the kind of wisdom that people commonly use. That would take all the power away from the cross of Christ. The message of the cross seems foolish to those who are lost and dying. But it is God's power to us who are being saved. It is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of those who are wise.' (Isaiah 29:14) ...God wisely planned that the world would not know Him through its own wisdom. ...We preach about Christ and His death on the cross. That is very hard for Jews to accept. And everyone else thinks it's foolish. But there are those to whom God has chosen, both Jews and Gentiles, that Christ is God's power and God's wisdom."

*We thank You heavenly Father in the words of the psalmist for "putting us to the test" and "not holding back Your love from me". We also thank You that You commanded Your servant Paul "not to use the kind of wisdom that people commonly use" but to prove to Jews and Gentiles alike "that Christ is God's power and God's wisdom". Thank you for choosing us and testing us, proving Your wisdom and salvation is superior to those of the world around us. Thank You for listening to our prayers. Amen.*

### **30<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Isaiah 12:1-3 prophesies that, despite the sins of God's people, they will say, "O LORD, we will praise You! You were angry with us. But now Your anger has turned away from us. And You have brought us comfort. God, you are the One who saves us. We will trust in You. Then we will not be afraid. The LORD God Almighty is my strength. We sing about You. You have become our salvation."

2 Corinthians 1:8-13 declares that, despite the great hardships of God's people, they will say, "This happened so that we would not depend on ourselves but on God... God has saved us from deadly dangers and He will continue to do it. We have put our hope in Him. He will continue to save us. You must help us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because of what will happen to us. They will thank God for his kindness to us in answer to the prayers of many."

*Father God, forgive us when our repentance is shallow and we quickly revert to old sinful ways. Turn Your anger away from us as we seek to learn more of You and put our trust in You so that we, too, can say with Isaiah, "You have become our salvation". Father, forgive us when we are*

*saddened and fearful during times of great hardship and testing and begin to doubt Your mercy and our calling. Turn our worries into hope so that we, too, can say with Paul, "He will continue to save us". O LORD, we will praise You! "Then many people will give thanks because of what will happen to us." Thank You also for the answers to our prayers and the prayers of others. Christ our Saviour has become our ongoing salvation! We will sing praises about You as we put our trust in You and not in ourselves. Amen.*

### **31<sup>st</sup> May 2023.**

Leviticus chapters 11 to 14 are part of the laws given to Moses by the LORD God Almighty for living 'clean' lives, inwardly and outwardly. This was 1500 years before the personal ministry of Jesus Christ on Earth. The laws were for the people of God to live holy lives different to the tribes around them. This included guidance on what animals, creatures, birds and fish could be eaten or should be avoided. "Do not make yourselves 'unclean' by eating any of those animals [even by touching them]... I am the LORD your God. Set yourselves apart. Be holy, because I am holy" (11:43-47) These laws constantly reminded God's people to think daily before they hunted for food, that their lives should be focused on God's provision in both physical and spiritual health. In the same way today we must know the difference between what pollutes our lives physically and spiritually in order to remain 'clean' and holy in the sight of our Father God and Jesus our Saviour, as examples to others around us.

Philippians 3:9-12. Paul said that in his new life with Christ he wanted "to be joined to Him. For me, being right with God does not come from the Law. It comes because I believe in Christ... It is received by faith. I want to know Christ better... I want to become like Him by sharing in His death. Then by God's grace I, too, will rise from the dead... I have not yet been made perfect. But I move on to take hold of what Christ Jesus took hold of me for."

*Father God, we take note of the importance to You of being "focused on God's provision in both physical and spiritual health and know the difference between what pollutes our lives physically and spiritually." Help us, as Paul did, to be an "example to others" in our new life, "to think daily" of being holy people "right with God" through faith in Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

### **1<sup>st</sup> June 2023.**

Daniel Chapters 11 and 12. Chapter 11 describe the extraordinary events that would happen in the Middle East countries in the 400 years leading up to the coming of Christ. What the angel described to Daniel came true. Chapter 12 gives a description of the persecution of believers before the second coming of Christ after which those who have died will be raised up to everlasting life. That is "everyone whose names are written in the Book of Life" (12:1). Daniel was told, "Not one sinful person will understand. But those who are wise will." (12:9-10) "At the end of the days you will rise from the dead. And you will receive what God has appointed for you."

Matthew 12:22-45 gives the answer of Jesus to those who disbelieved He was their Messiah. He told them, "Evil and unfaithful people ask for a miraculous sign! But none will be given except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Jonah was in the stomach of a huge fish for three days and three nights. Something like that will happen to the Son of Man [Messiah]. He will spend three days and three nights in the grave. The men of Nineveh will stand up on judgment day with the people now living. And the Ninevites will prove that those people are guilty. The people of Nineveh turned away from their sins when Jonah preached to them. And now One who is more important than Jonah is here." (12:39-41)

*Dear God, grant that we will be among those at the end of this age who will be wise and understand what is happening! Grant also the faith given to Daniel to "receive what God has appointed for you". May we also heed the words of the "One who is more important than Jonah". Thank You Jesus! Have mercy on those who reject You and the Good News of God's mercy in salvation through Your sacrifice on the cross. Bring them into divine wisdom and repentance whilst there is time! Amen.*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.**

Isaiah 37 records the time of King Hezekiah in 710 BC when Jerusalem was under siege by the king of Assyria. Hezekiah sent officials to God's prophet Isaiah to pray for the people. Isaiah wrote to him not to be afraid because God would send the Assyrians away because of their blaspheming words. When Hezekiah read these words he went to the Temple, "LORD our God, save

us from the powerful hand of Sennacherib. Then all of the kingdoms on earth will know that You alone are God." (37:20) Then Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah, "He will not enter this city. He will not even shoot an arrow at it... I will guard this city and save it. I will do it for My sake and for the sake of My servant David." Then God's angel struck down the army of Sennacherib who fled back home to Nineveh where two of his sons killed him. (37:34-38)

Luke 4:14-21. 'Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit. News about Him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised Him. Jesus went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. On the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue as He usually did. And He stood up to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He has anointed Me to tell the Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to announce freedom for prisoners. He has sent Me so that the blind will see again. He wants me to free those who are held down. And He has sent Me to ...set His people free.' (Isaiah 61:1,2) ...The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were on Him. "Today this passage of Scripture has come true." '

*Thank You Father for confirming Your blessing remains on those whose trust is in You. Thank You this was fulfilled through Christ our Saviour for Jews and Gentiles everywhere. Amen.*

### **5<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

2 Kings 9 describes the anointing by God's prophet Elisha of Jehu as King of Israel (v.3). Jehu then went to find Joram the son of Ahab and Jezebel. When Joram saw Jehu he asked, "Have you come here in peace, Jehu?" Jehu replied, "Your mother Jezebel worships statues of gods. She also worships evil powers. The evil things she does have spread everywhere. As long as all of that goes on, how can there be peace?" Then Jehu shot Joram with an arrow and left him to die on a field belonging to Naboth, as God prophesied through Elisha years before (v.24-26). Jehu then went to find Queen Jezebel who saw him coming from a high window... Two or three officials also looked down at him. "Throw her down!" Jehu said to them. So they threw her down. Jehu left her on the ground and went inside to eat and drink. When they went out to bury her, they found nothing but her skull and feet and hands. Jehu said, "That is what the LORD God Almighty said would happen through his servant Elijah. On a piece of land at Jezreel, dogs will eat up Jezebel's body" (v.30-36).

Jude verses 20 to 23. "Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Let the Holy Spirit guide and help you when you pray. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring you eternal life. As you wait for His mercy, remain in God's love. Show mercy to those who doubt. Pull others out of the fire. Save them. To others, show mercy mixed with fear. [But] hate even the clothes that are stained by the sins of those who wear them."

*Thank You heavenly Father for the record of punishment at the time of Elijah and Elisha deserved by the wicked Ahab and Jezebel and their family. Thank You heavenly Father for the righteous guidelines given by Jude for true believers and followers of Christ. Open us to Your Spirit's guidance. Amen.*

### **6<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Micah 7 reveals the confidence of the writer in the LORD God Almighty. "LORD, who is a God like you? You forgive sin. You forgive Your people when they do what is wrong. You do not stay angry forever. Instead, You take delight in showing Your faithful love to them. Once again You will show loving concern for us. You will completely wipe out the evil things we have done. You will throw all of our sins into the bottom of the sea." (7:18-19)

Revelation 10 is the record of the Apostle John given to him by the seventh angel of God. The angel made it clear there would be no more delay for God's final judgement of the inhabitants of planet Earth. Then will come the defeat of Satan and the final punishment of evildoers. This will establish on Earth the 'mystery of God' which is the Kingdom of Christ and the defeat of evil. He will rule for ever as revealed to the prophets long ago. (10:6-7)

*Heavenly Father, thank You for these important words of confidence in You and hope in the future You have purposed for all true believers in Christ our Saviour, who is Israel's Messiah. Thank You for Your mercy and forgiveness and the suffering You endured through Christ's sacrifice for our sins. Come soon, Lord Jesus, that we will experience the joy of welcoming You and seeing Your glory at work in the wonderful world You created which we have spoilt. Thank You for taking our punishment we deserve to the cross. Encourage us to share Your compassion for the needy with Your resurrection power and authority in Your name through the indwelling Holy Spirit You promised to believers. Amen.*

## **7<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Genesis Chapter 3 provides God's account to Moses of events in the Garden of Eden which determined the future of mankind regarding tendency to disobey God, awareness of sin, the need to work hard to live and the relationship between man and woman. Through the serpent, Satan queried God's instructions not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (3:1-5) Adam and Eve disobeyed God. (3:6-9) The LORD God told Eve she would be aware of much pain in her essential role of bearing children and would submit to Adam's love and protection as wife and mother. God also told Adam he would need to work hard to cultivate the land all the days of his life to grow crops and remove weeds. Then God provided them with clothes, saying "The man has become like one of Us. He can now tell the difference between good and evil." So the LORD God drove them out of the Garden of Eden to work on the land. (3:21-23)

Hebrews 10:5-10 describes Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all from the sin that caused God to destroy mankind at the time of Noah and later to introduce a Law to encourage obedience and discourage the lure of sin. "When Christ came into the world, He said, 'You did not want sacrifices and offerings. Instead, you prepared a body for Me. You were not pleased with burnt offerings and sin offerings. So I said, "Here I am. It is written about Me in the scroll. God, I have come to do what You want."' (Psalm 40:6-8) ...We have been made holy by what God wanted. We have been made holy because Jesus Christ offered His body once and for all time."

*We thank You heavenly Father again and again for Your revelation to Moses of foundational truth regarding mankind and of Your long-term plan to redeem us through the sacrifice of Your Son our Saviour. Thank You, thank You, Jesus. Amen.*

## **8<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Judges 16:23-31 records the death of Samson in a way that killed many more of Israel's enemies than in the rest of his life. He was captured by the Philistines and humiliated by having his eyes removed. As he stood before a large crowd of Philistines praising their god Dagon for delivering Sampson into their hands, he 'prayed to the LORD God Almighty, "LORD and King, show me that you still have concern for me. God, please make me strong just one more time. Let me pay the Philistines back for what they did to my two eyes." Then Samson reached toward the two pillars that held the temple up. He put his right hand on one and his left hand on the other. Samson said, "Let me die together with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might. The temple came down on the rulers. It fell and killed all of the people who were in it', about three thousand people.

1 Peter 1:13-21. "Control yourselves. Put your hope completely in the grace that will be given to you when Jesus Christ returns. You should obey and not give in to evil longings which controlled your life when you didn't know any better. The One who chose you is holy. So you should be holy in all that you do... You call on a Father who judges each person's work without favouring one over another. So have the highest respect for God. The blood of Christ has set you free from an empty way of life... You know that you were not bought with things that can pass away, like silver or gold. Instead, you were bought by the priceless blood of Christ... He was chosen before God created the world. But He came into the world in these last days for you. Because of what Christ has done, you believe in God."

*Thank You Father for recording the true story of Sampson and for Paul's message of salvation and hope in Christ alone. Amen.*

## **9<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

1 Chronicles 13 describes the time soon after David became king over all Israel in 1048 BC. He met with his officials and told them, "If it seems good to you and if that's what the LORD our God wants, let us bring the Ark of our God back here [Jerusalem]. We didn't use it to seek God for advice during the whole time Saul was king." So David went to Kiriath Jearim to get the Ark of the LORD God who sits on His throne between the cherubim. (13:2,6) The Ark of God was placed on a new cart... Uzzah and Ahio were guiding it... All of them were singing songs and playing harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. They came to the threshing floor of Kidon. The oxen nearly fell there. So Uzzah reached out his hand to hold the Ark steady. Then the LORD's anger burned against Uzzah. He struck him down because he had put his hand on the Ark. So Uzzah died there in front of God... David was afraid of God that day. He asked, "How can I ever bring the Ark of God back here to me?" So he didn't take the ark to be with him in the City of David. (13:7-13) This did not happen until David had built a special place for the Ark of God to reside in Jerusalem (15:1-3).

Titus 1:7-8 gives Paul's advice for church leaders. "A church leader is trusted with God's work and must be without blame. He must not look after only his own interests nor get angry easily or get drunk... Instead, he must welcome people into his home and love what is good. He must control his mind and feelings and do what is right. He must be holy and control what his body longs for."

*We thank You heavenly Father for revealing what preparation and respect is necessary to seek and worship You and for Your people and their leaders to live holy and controlled lives. Amen.*

### **12<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Isaiah 13 describes how Almighty God planned to destroy Babylon like Sodom and Gomorrah (v.19). In Chapter 14, Isaiah records, "The LORD will show tender love toward Jacob's people. Once again He will choose Israel. He will settle them in their own land. Outsiders will join them. They and the people of Jacob will become one people" (v.1).

1 Corinthians 26-31. "Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when God chose you. Not many of you were considered wise by human standards. Not many of you were powerful. Not many of you belonged to important families. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the things of this world that are common and looked down on. He chose what is not considered to be important to do away with what is considered to be important. So no-one can boast to God. Because of what God has done, you belong to Christ Jesus. He has become God's wisdom for us. He makes us right with God. He makes us holy and sets us free. It is written, 'The one who boasts should boast about what the Lord has done.' " (Jeremiah 9:24)

*Thank You once again Father God for revealing to us Your purposes and divine control over the destiny of mankind who You recreated at the time of Noah. We and our forefathers have sinned and gone astray but in Your mercy You have purposed never to destroy the world again but to punish the wicked and bless Your own special people through the saving work of Israel's Messiah. Thank You that because of what You have done we now "belong to Christ Jesus". Show us how to keep humble and "boast only of what Christ has done" that many will be saved and greet Him on the day He establishes Your Kingdom on Earth and unites us with Your people Israel. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Nehemiah 13 records some of the final reforms Nehemiah introduced which included refusing certain foreigners (Ammonites and Moabites) into holy places. The people responded by excluding all foreigners who refused to worship the LORD God Almighty. Nehemiah also restored the people's offerings for the Levite priests and singers and gatekeepers of the Temple so that they should not neglect their duties in the Temple by having to work on the land. He also put a stop to the people picking produce to sell on Sabbath days. Finally, he punished the fathers of Jewish girls who had been allowed to marry foreigners from Ashdod. Nehemiah took note that all these reforms had been applied earlier but had been neglected, highlighting the need to ensure religious reforms and practices were taught and carried out from generation to generation. The book of Nehemiah ends with him asking God to remember him for promoting true worship and Sabbath observance, not just for his work in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Matthew 28:11-20 records that after the resurrection from death of Jesus, the Jewish priests paid large sums of money to the guards who found the tomb was empty. He told them to say, "His disciples came during the night. They stole his body while we were sleeping." (28:13) 'So the soldiers took the money and did as they were told. This story has spread all around among the Jews to this very day.' (28:15) Meanwhile, Jesus told the eleven disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations. Baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end."

*Dear heavenly Father, thank You for the records of Nehemiah and Matthew to preach the truth and faithfully teach every generation. Forgive us when we fail to do this and help us to put right what is wrong. Amen.*

### **14<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Ecclesiastes Chapter 9 gives part of the thinking of the unknown author regarding the purpose of life. He strongly believes that God is in control of righteous and wise people but all people, good or bad, share the common destiny of joining others in death! (9:1-3) So he advises his family and friends, "Go and enjoy your food and drink. Now is the time God favours what you do... You love

your wife so enjoy life with her. Do it all the days of this meaningless life God has given you on Earth. That's what He made you for. That's what you get for all of your hard work on earth. No matter what you do, work at it with all your might." (9:7-10) At the end of his writings, he advises, "My son... respect God and obey His commandments... He will judge everything, whether it is good or evil." (12:13-14)

2 Timothy 2:1-10 gives Paul's advice. "My son, be strong in the grace that is found in Christ Jesus... Pass on to people you can trust the things you have heard me say. Then they will be able to teach others also. Like a good soldier of Christ Jesus, share in the hard times with us. A soldier does not take part in things that do not have anything to do with the army... It is the same for anyone who takes part in a sport... or for the farmer who works hard... The Lord will help you understand what all of it means. Remember Jesus Christ... He was raised from the dead. That is my Good News. I am suffering for it. I have even been put in chains like someone who has committed a crime. But God's word is not held back by chains. So I put up with everything for the good of God's chosen people. Then they also can be saved."

*Dear God, help us to heed the truth of these writings for the salvation of others. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

### **15<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

2 Chronicles 36:2-17. Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king of Judah and reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. He did evil in the sight of the LORD God Almighty. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attached Jerusalem and took Jehoiakim in chains back to Babylon. His son Jehoiachin reigned in his place for three months. He was 18 years old and did evil in the eyes of the LORD. Nebuchadnezzar also took him prisoner to Babylon and made Zedekiah king in his place. Zedekiah was 21 years old and reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years and did evil in the sight of the LORD his God and refused to humble himself before God's prophet Jeremiah, who spoke the word of the LORD. Zedekiah hardened his heart and refused to turn to the LORD, the God of Israel, along with all the leaders and priests. The LORD sent many messengers to Jerusalem because He had pity on them but they scoffed at His prophets. So God handed all of them over to king Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem and carried a remnant of God's people into exile in Babylon.

Galatians 3:6-14. Paul says, "Scripture says that Abraham believed God. God accepted Abraham because he believed. So his faith made him right with God. Those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture said that God would make non-Jews right with Himself by believing in Him. He announced the Good News ahead of time to Abraham. He said, 'All nations will be blessed because of you.' ...Christ Jesus has set us free so that the blessing given to Abraham would come to non-Jews through Christ."

*Father God, show us how to pray against unrighteous leaders and to uphold the Good News of Jesus Christ whilst there is time. Help us to be part of Your fulfilment of Scripture in these Last Days. Through faith in You, may we avoid the punishment we deserve and be a blessing to all nations. Amen.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Numbers Chapter 7 records the offerings brought to the Tent of Meeting containing the Ark of God whilst the Children of Israel were still on the way to the Promised Land of Canaan 3500 years ago. Then 'Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD God Almighty... The LORD spoke with Moses there. (7:89) "Speak to Aaron. Say to him, 'Set up the seven lamps [a symbol of completeness]. They will give light to the area that is in front of the lampstand.' " So Aaron did it. He set up the lamps so that they faced forward [outward] on the lampstand.' (8:2-4) This is followed by instructions to the Levite priests and the instructions for the annual celebration of the Passover.

Hebrews 10:1-7 says: "The Law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming. It is not the real things themselves. The same sacrifices have to be offered over and over again... That is why the Law can never make perfect for those who come near to worship God. If it could, wouldn't the sacrifices have stopped being offered? The worshipers would have been made clean once and for all time. They would not have felt guilty for their sins anymore. But those offerings remind people of their sins every year. It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. So when Christ came into the world, He said, 'You didn't want sacrifices and offerings. Instead, you prepared a body for Me. You were not pleased with burnt offerings and sin offerings. Then I said, "Here I am. It is written about Me in the scroll. God, I have come to do what you want." ' " (Psalm 40:6-8)

*Father God, we thank You for reminding us "the Law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming" in Christ our Saviour who died 2000 years ago for the sins of all who repent to be permanently forgiven. Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Ezekiel 17:22-24 gives a prophesy about the coming Messiah from the family line of King David. "The LORD and King says, 'I Myself will get a shoot [the Messiah] from the very top of a cedar tree [the House of David]... It will become a beautiful cedar tree. All kinds of birds [nations] will make their nests in it. They will live in the shade of its branches. All of the trees in the fields will know that I bring tall trees down. I make small trees grow tall. And I make dry trees grow green. I have spoken. I will do it. I am the LORD.' "

Hebrews 11:20-39. "By faith Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. By faith Joseph spoke to the people of Israel about their leaving Egypt. By faith Moses led them out of Egypt. I don't have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. Because of their faith they received the blessings God had promised. But none of them received what God had promised which was even better for us." The writer of Hebrews continues, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses, let us throw off everything that stands in our way... Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the author of faith and makes it perfect. He ignored the shame of the cross and suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to. Then he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. He put up with attacks from sinners. So think about Him. Then you won't get tired. You won't lose hope." (12:1-3)

*Thank You God for the various prophecies and plans You record in the Old Testament. Thank You for the spiritual leaders You raised up who lived by faith in Your word. Keep safe this day Your people who uphold Your truth in the midst of a wicked generation as we prepare to welcome Jesus our Messiah and Saviour. For His sake Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Micah 2:7-8. The prophet Micah records the words of the LORD God Almighty. "What I promise brings good things to those who lead honest lives. But lately My people have attacked one another as if they were enemies."

Matthew 12:46-50. 'While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, His mother and brothers stood outside. They wanted to speak to Him. Someone told Him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside. They want to speak to You." Jesus said, "Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?" He pointed to His followers and said, "Here is My mother and My brothers! Anyone who does what My Father in Heaven wants is My brother or sister or mother.' '

*Father God, in Your mercy, protect Your servants from the hindrance or persecution of other believers, even if they mean well and are close family or friends. May Your anointing prevail on those You have called in unique ways to minister Your truth and salvation through Christ to the needy "who lead honest lives", at home or worldwide. Forgive us when we find fault with others who have their own unique callings and unique ministry opportunities through unique talents and experience. Encourage us when we talk and share with the unsaved in the language familiar to the majority, as Jesus did using the Aramaic language of His day in and around Jerusalem, instead of the national or international languages of Hebrew and Greek, popular though these were. May we sense the importance of building spiritual relationships with others in ways and words they understand without imposing traditional views and teachings in ways and words that put up barriers with those who seek understanding at their level of education and intelligence and experience. May we succeed in doing what is on Your heart to "bring good things to those who lead honest lives". Help us then to teach Your truth and preach the Good News of Jesus in the way You have planned long ago. Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> June 2023.**

Deuteronomy 5:27-33. 'After God spoke out His Ten Commandments from the mountain top, the people said to Moses, "Go near and listen to everything the LORD our God says. Then tell us what He tells you. We will listen and obey." Moses said, "The LORD said, 'I have heard what these people said to you. Everything they said was good. But I wish they would always have respect for Me in their hearts. I wish they would always obey all of My commands. Then things would go well with them and their children forever.' ...So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you. Do not turn away from His commands to the right or the left. Live exactly as the LORD your God has

commanded you to live. Then you will enjoy life in the land you will soon own. Things will go well with you there. You will live there for a long time.” ’

Romans 8:26-31. “The Holy Spirit helps us when we are weak. We do not know what we should pray for but the Spirit Himself prays for us. He prays with groans too deep for words. God, who looks into our hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit. And the Spirit prays for God’s people just as God wants Him to pray. We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him... Since God is on our side, who can be against us? God did not spare His own Son. He gave Him up for us all. Then will He not also freely give us everything else? ...Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also praying for us. He died and was raised to life. Who can separate us from the love of Christ?”

*Thank you God for these famous words through Your servants Moses and Paul. Help us to "listen and obey" and rejoice that "Christ Jesus is also praying for us". Amen.*

## **22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.**

Amos 7:10-17 records in 787 BC that Amos warned that God would send Israel into exile because of the sins of the people. “I was not a prophet... I was a shepherd... But the LORD God Almighty took me away from taking care of the flocks. He said, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.' ...You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel.' But the LORD says... 'Your sons and daughters will be killed with swords. Your land will be measured and divided up. And you yourself will die in another country.'” This exile happened in 597 BC.

John 16:5-12 records the words of Jesus to His disciples. “Now I am going to the One who sent Me... It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Holy Spirit [Comforter, KJV] will not come to help you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will prove that the world’s people are guilty [of sin, KJV]. He will prove their guilt concerning sin and godliness and judgment. The world is guilty as far as sin is concerned. That is because people do not believe in Me. The world is guilty as far as godliness is concerned... I am going to the Father, where you cannot see Me anymore... When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own. He will speak only what He hears [from Father God]. And He will tell you what is yet to happen.”

*Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for telling Your disciples it was to their advantage that you would soon leave them and send God’s Holy Spirit to strengthen and encourage us. Thank You for proving "that the world’s people are guilty of sin". May we be faithful shepherds of Your people despite opposition from them. So thank You that You that You went back to Heaven and left Your Spirit to dwell within us. Amen.*

## **23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023.**

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 gives God’s guidance regarding the choice of a king. “When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you... you will say, 'Let us appoint a king over us, just like all of the nations around us.' When that happens, make sure you appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own people. Do not appoint over you someone from another country... When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he must make himself a copy of the law I am teaching you... The king must keep the scroll close to him at all times. He must read it all the days of his life. Then he can learn to have respect for the LORD his God. He can carefully follow all of the words of that law and those rules... He will not turn away from the law to the right or the left. Then he and his sons after him will rule over his kingdom in Israel for a long time.”

2 Timothy 2:14-16. “Keep reminding the believers of these things [teachings]. While God is watching, warn them not to argue about words that do not have any value. It only destroys those who listen. Do your best to please God. Be a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed. Teach the message of truth correctly. Stay away from godless chatter to avoid becoming more and more ungodly.”

*Dear Lord God, we seek always to live under the wisdom of Your Bible and "keep it close to us at all times". Forgive us if we "appoint over us leaders from another country" or faith. Thank you that Jesus taught, explained and applied Your truth. May we benefit more and more from Your salvation plan recorded for us in the four Gospels as we invite the promised Holy Spirit to fill us with Your wisdom, power and love. May we therefore live God-fearing lives and avoid unrighteous "chatter". Amen.*

## **26<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Daniel 5 records the famous "writing on the wall" experienced by King Belshazzar of Babylon. Daniel told the king, "You have taken your stand against the LORD God of Heaven. You had your servants bring cups from His Temple to you. You and your nobles drank wine from them. So did your wives and concubines. You praised your gods... But you did not honour the God who holds in His hand your very life and everything you do. So he sent the hand that wrote on the wall... Here is what those words mean. Mene means that God has limited the time of your rule and brought it to an end. Tekel means that you have been weighed and have not measured up to God's standard. Peres means that your authority over your kingdom will be taken away from you and given to the Medes and Persians." That very night, Belshazzar was slain and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom.

1 Peter 2 gives the account of Peter regarding Christ the Cornerstone. "Christ is the living Stone. People did not accept Him. But God chose Him. God places the highest value on Him... In Scripture it says, 'The one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame... But He will be a stumbling stone to others.' God chose you to be His people... You are a holy nation, a people who belong to God. All of this is so that you can sing His praises. He brought you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people. But now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy. But now you have received mercy."

*Thank You Father God for enabling us to worship You through the saving work of Christ Your Son and our Saviour. We invite you to "weigh us" and ensure we "measure up" to Your standards to become a "holy nation of people who belong to God". In Your mercy. Amen.*

## **27<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Psalm 49. "Hear this, all you nations. Listen, all you who live in this world. Listen, ordinary and important people alike. Listen, those of you who are rich or poor. (v.1-2) Do not be upset when someone becomes rich. Do not be troubled when he becomes more and more wealthy. He will not take anything with him when he dies. His riches will not go down to the grave with him. While he lived, he believed he was blessed. People praised him when things were going well for him. But he will die and will never again see the light that leads to life. People who have riches without spiritual understanding are like beasts that perish." (v.16-20)

Hebrews 9:26-28. "Now Christ has appeared once and for all time. He has come at the end of the age to do away with sin. He has done that by offering Himself. People have to die once. After that, God will judge them. In the same way, Christ was offered up once. He took away the sins of many people. He will also come a second time. At that time He will not suffer for sin. Instead, He will come to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him."

*Almighty God, forgive us when we seek "riches without spiritual understanding". When "things are going well" on Your chosen journey through life, may we always give glory to You. Help us avoid seeking worldly pleasures as the Children of Israel did on their journey through Moab when they were drawing close to entering Your Promised Land. As we draw close to the second coming of our Lord and Saviour, thank you for the sacrifice that Jesus made who "took away the sins of many people". Help us to share this Good News of salvation through Christ alone and that "He will come again to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him." May all the nations hear this, rich and poor alike! Amen.*

## **28<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

Esther 2:20-23 records what happened during the reign of Xerxes, king of 127 provinces stretching from India to Egypt in 520 BC. The Jewess Esther was chosen as Queen. 'Two of the king's officers guarded the door of the royal palace. They became angry with King Xerxes so they decided to kill him. Mordecai [Esther's uncle] was sitting at the palace gate and found out about it and told Queen Esther. She reported to the king and they checked and found it was true. So the two officials were put to death.' The king then trusted Mordecai and promoted him. When later there was a plot in the land to destroy the Jews, Mordecai was able to tell Queen Esther who warned the king. This action save the Jews from persecution across the nation. 'Mordecai worked for the good of his people and he spoke up for the benefit of all of God's people.' (10:3)

John 17:1-11 records the time when Jesus prayed for Himself and His disciples. "Father, the time has come. Bring glory to Your Son. Then Your Son will bring glory to You... He gives eternal life to all those You have given Him... I have brought You glory on earth. I have finished the work You gave Me to do... I pray for them [the disciples] You have given Me, because they are Yours... Glory

has come to Me because of My disciples. I will not remain in the world any longer but they are still in the world. Holy Father, keep them safe... so they can be one, just as You and I are one."

*Thank You God for the amazing love shown to those You have called to be saved, revealed at the time of Mordecai and during the time that Jesus lived on Earth. Thank You for His prayers then and now to keep us "safe... so they can be one, just as You and I are one." Help us also to "work for the good of all of God's people" Amen.*

### **29<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

2 Samuel 20 records the time when a man named Sheba caused a rebellion in Israel by shouting out, "We do not have any share in David's kingdom! He is not our king!" (20:1) David first put right what was wrong in his life (20:3) before telling Joab and his faithful men to chase after Sheba (20:6-7). When they caught up with Sheba, a 'wise woman' asked to speak to Joab to tell him that most of the people were peaceful and faithful to King David. "Why do you want to swallow up what belongs to the LORD?" (20:19) So instead of attacking the rebels, David asked the woman to arrange for the execution of Sheba. When this happened, 'he blew his trumpet and Joab's men pulled back from the city. Each of them returned to his home.' (20:22) Peace prevailed in all Israel thanks to the action of one wise woman who was unknown.

Philippians 3:12-15. Paul says, "I have not yet been made perfect. But I move on to take hold of what Christ Jesus took hold of me for. Brothers and sisters, I don't consider that I have taken hold of it yet. But here is the one thing I do. I forget what is behind me. I push hard toward what is ahead of me. I move on toward the goal to win the prize. God has appointed me to win it. The heavenly prize is Christ Jesus himself. All of us who are grown up in the faith should see things that way. Maybe you think differently about something. But God will make it clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already achieved."

*Lord help us to "forget what is behind" and "put right what is wrong in our lives" and "take hold of what Christ Jesus took hold of me for". Make clear to us the "unknown" faithful men and women who will help us to "live up to what we have already achieved". Amen.*

### **30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

1 Samuel 16:1-13 records the anointing of David as the future King of Israel. God told His priest and prophet Samuel to go to Bethlehem to find a son of Jesse who would be His anointed one. Samuel was afraid (v.2). God warned Samuel, "Do not consider how handsome or tall he is. I do not look at the things people look at... I look at what is in the heart." Jesse brought his sons to Samuel to bless the one chosen by God but He did not choose any of them. Samuel asked Jesse if there were more sons and was told that his youngest son, David, was caring after the sheep. When David arrived, God told Samuel, "Get up and anoint him. He is the one." So Samuel anointed David and from that day on, the Spirit of the LORD came on David with power. This took place in the town of Bethlehem where Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, was born over 1000 years later.

1 Corinthians 2:1-7. "Brothers and sisters, when I came to you I did not come with fancy words or great wisdom. I preached to you the truth about God's love. I made up my mind to preach only one thing: Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. When I came to you, I was weak and afraid and trembling all over. I did not preach my message with clever and compelling words. As I preached, the Holy Spirit showed his power. That was so you would believe not because of human wisdom but because of God's power... Before time began, God planned that his wisdom would bring us heavenly glory."

*God Almighty, thank You that from the beginning You planned not only Earth but Heaven for the dwelling place of true believers. Thank you also for Samuel and Paul who were weak and afraid but spoke in the power of Your Holy Spirit about Your amazing plans for us, far more important than man's wisdom. Amen.*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023.**

Proverbs 3:5-10. "Trust in the LORD God Almighty with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways remember Him. Then He will make your paths smooth and straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Have respect for the LORD and avoid evil. That will bring health to your body. It will make your bones strong. Honour the LORD with your wealth. Give Him the first share of all your crops. Then your storerooms and storage jars will overflow." Matthew 5:1-17. The Beatitudes that Jesus taught His disciples at the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed

are those who are spiritually poor. The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them. Blessed are those who are sad. They will be comforted. Blessed are those who are free of pride [meek, KJV]. They will be given the Earth. Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for what is right. They will be filled. Blessed are those who show mercy. They will be shown mercy. Blessed are those whose hearts are pure. They will see God. Blessed are those who make peace. They will be called children of God. Blessed are those who suffer for doing what is right. The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them. Blessed are you when people make fun of you and hurt you because of Me. You are also blessed when they tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of Me."

*Thank you Father God for Your concern for our health, wealth and spiritual happiness. May we trust in You "with all our heart". Teach us how to be meek (not weak), by not seeking our own way, not taking offence nor seeking revenge, and not seeking honour. May we seek only Your wisdom recorded in the Bible and Your new Kingdom on Earth as in Heaven. May we live as Jesus taught His disciples, to share and live Your overflowing life in the love and truth of Your promised Spirit. Amen.*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

2 Kings 6:8-23 records the time when God's prophet Elisha was given wisdom to stop the enemies of Israel occupying their land. The king of Aram chose a place to assemble his army inside the border of Israel. However, the prophet Elisha knew this and warned the king of Israel who stopped the enemy occupation. This happened several times so the king of Aram sent men to capture Elisha. When they were near, Elisha's servant asked him, "What can we do?" "Do not be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Elisha then prayed, "LORD God Almighty, open my servant's eyes so he can see." Then he looked up and saw that they were protected by horses and chariots and fire all around. Then Elisha prayed for the enemy to be blinded and led them away into a trap. He then told the king of Israel not to destroy them but to show them mercy and prepare food for them before sending them back home. 'So the soldiers from Aram stopped attacking Israel's territory.'

Colossians 4:12-13. Paul wrote a letter to the church in Colossae from prison. "Epaphras sends greetings. He is one of you. He serves Christ Jesus. He is always praying hard for you. He prays that you will stand firm in holding to all that God has in mind for us all. He prays that you will continue to grow in your knowledge of what God wants you to do. He also prays that you will be fully certain and confident about it."

*Dear Father God we thank You for the records of Your great men of God, Elisha and Paul. Despite the attacks of our enemies, make us, Your servants, aware that "those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Grant us opportunity to "show mercy" to our enemies and "stand firm in holding to all that God has in mind for us". Make us fully aware of Your will. Amen.*

#### **5<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Jeremiah 29:30-32. This reading is about witnessing under persecution. Jeremiah, the prophet of God, endured much persecution during his life of ministry. It records the time when Shemaiah, a false prophet, was trying to influence state and religious leaders with his lies. "The word of the LORD God Almighty came to Jeremiah" for the remnant of God's people in exile, that Shemaiah would end up without any supporters, "nor will he see the good things I will do for My people, declares the LORD".

Acts 22. After Paul was beaten up and arrested in Jerusalem (21:30-33), he testified how he "persecuted the followers of this Way [i.e. Jewish believers in Jesus Christ] to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison" (22:4). But then he met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus and God told him that he would become His messenger for Christ to non-Jews in faraway places (22:21).

*Father God, help us to remain strong under persecution and witness boldly to those who will listen and be saved. Forgive us for the times we judge others by worldly standards instead of by the love You have for all. Help us to forgive those who oppose us and Your truth. Help us to trust instead in Your safe keeping and Holy Spirit intervention for Your glory. We ask this in the name of Jesus who was punished for our sins so that we can be forgiven and "become Your messenger for Christ". Strengthen our hope in His everlasting resurrection life offered to all who believe. Amen.*

## 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Numbers chapter 14. The children of Israel rebelled on the way to the Promised Land of Canaan. They heard the report of the spies who visited Canaan. The people there were very many and very strong. So the children of Israel grumbled against Moses and told them they wanted to go back to Egypt. Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, reported the good things in Canaan. "If the LORD is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land. It is a land that has plenty of milk and honey. He will give it to us. But do not refuse to obey Him. And do not be afraid of the people of the land. We will swallow them up! The LORD is with us." But the people refused to listen. Moses pleaded with God who promised to forgive the children of Israel but not allow them to enter Canaan. They stayed in the desert for 40 years where they died. Instead, their descendants inhabited the land of Canaan. Joshua and Caleb also entered into the Promised Land.

Luke 9:62 to 10:1-20 (NIV). Jesus said, "No-one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God." Then He appointed 72 others and sent them two by two to every town and place where He planned to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves... Heal the sick and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you'... He who listens to you, listens to Me. He who rejects you, rejects Me and the One who sent Me."

*Heavenly Father, thank you for Your salvation through Jesus Christ. We feel weak at times, "like lambs among wolves". Help us not to look back and make us "fit for service in the Kingdom of God". Amen.*

## 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Job 33 is where Job's friend Elihu tries very hard to get him to listen to him. "Why do you claim that God never answers any of our questions? He speaks in one way and then another. We might not even realize it. He might speak in a dream or in a vision at night... He might speak in their ears. His warnings might terrify them. He warns men in order to turn them away from sinning. He wants to keep them from being proud. He wants to stop them from going down into the grave. He doesn't want them to be killed with swords." (33:13-18). "Then the light that leads to life will shine on them. So give me your attention, Job! Listen to me! Be quiet so I can speak." (33:30,33) Then Elihu counselled Job for four more chapters. But God Himself counselled Job in the next four chapters which brought about Job's repentance and salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:15-18. "Christ died for everyone. He died so that those who live should not live for themselves anymore. They should live for Christ. He died for them and was raised again. So from now on we don't look at anyone the way the world does. At one time we looked at Christ in that way. But we don't anymore. Anyone who believes in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone! The new has come! It is all from God. He brought us back to himself through Christ's death on the cross. And he has given us the task of bringing others back to him through Christ."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us "the task of bringing others back to You through Christ". Grant us wisdom in preparing others to receive Your forgiveness through repentance and salvation in Christ alone. Forgive us when we try to counsel others in our own strength and wisdom as did the friends of Job. Instead, may we help them to listen to **Your** voice. Amen.*

## 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Psalms 65 is a prayer of thanks to God by King David for His salvation and provision. "All people will come to You, because You hear and answer prayer. When our sins became too much for us, you forgave our lawless acts. Blessed are those You choose and bring near to worship You. You bring us into the courtyards of Your holy temple. There in Your house we are filled with all kinds of good things. God our Saviour, You answer us by doing wonderful things. You save us by Your power. People all over the world and beyond the farthest oceans put their hope in You." (65:2-5) David goes on to record God's care for the land with rain to bless the crops. "The meadows are covered with flocks and herds. The valleys are dressed with grain. They sing and shout with joy." (65:13)

1 Timothy 3:13-16. Paul wrote, "Those who have served well earn the full respect of others. They also become more sure of their faith in Christ Jesus... I am writing these directions to you [so that] if I have to put off my visit, you will know how you should act in God's family. The family of God is the church of the living God. It is the pillar and foundation of the truth. There is no doubt that godliness is a great mystery."

*Father God, 3000 years ago You were worshipped by Your servant David with thanks for a climate that provided ample supplies. And yet Your people sinned. 2000 year ago You established Your church through the sacrifice of Your Son on the cross for all who believe in Him. And yet Your people still sinned. Forgive us for allowing a church that so often fails to be "the pillar and foundation of the truth" and pollutes the climate which so often hinders Your "care for the land with rain to bless the crops". Help us to find Your godliness which is "a great mystery"! Amen.*

### **11<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Ecclesiastes 9:7-17. The unknown writer advises, "Go and enjoy your food. Be joyful as you drink your wine. Now is the time God favours what you do... You love your wife. So enjoy life with her. Do it all the days of this meaningless life God has given you on Earth. That's what He made you for. That's what you get for all of your hard work on Earth. No matter what you do, work at it with all your might. Remember, you are going to your grave. And there isn't any work or planning or knowledge or wisdom there!" (9:7-10) "It is better to be wise than to be powerful. But people look down on the poor man's wisdom. No one pays any attention to what he says. People should listen to the quiet words of those who are wise. That's better than paying attention to the shouts of a ruler of foolish people. Wisdom is better than weapons of war. But one sinner destroys a lot of good!" (9:16-18)

Revelation 21:3-8. "I heard a loud voice from the throne. 'Now God makes His home with people. He will live with them. They will be His people. And God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sadness. There will be no more crying or pain... I am making everything new! ...It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. I am the Beginning and the End. Anyone who is thirsty may drink from the spring of the water of life. It is free! Anyone who overcomes will receive all this from Me. I will be his God, and he will be My child.' "

*Father in Heaven, open our eyes to the foolishness of anti-Christ rulers of today! Encourage us all to "drink from the spring of the water of life" which is free in Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

### **12<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Exodus 23:20 to 24:12 records the time on the journey to the Promised Land that God warned His people not to worship the gods of those who lived there but to destroy their statues and sacred stones. "I am the LORD your God. Worship Me. Then I will bless your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you. In your land no woman will give birth to a dead baby. Every woman will be able to have children. I will give you a long life... I will make all of your enemies turn their backs and run away... I will make your borders secure from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea." Then Moses and seventy of the leaders went up Mount Sinai to worship the LORD God Almighty. Moses went ahead alone and wrote down everything that the LORD said (24:1-4). When he took the Scroll of the Covenant and read it to the people. They answered, "We will do everything the LORD has told us to do. We will obey Him."

2 Corinthians 6:16-18 and 7:1. Paul reminded the believers, "God has said, 'I will live with them. I will walk among them. I will be their God. And they will be My people. So come out from among them [idol worshippers] and be separate. Do not touch anything that is not pure and clean. Then I will receive you... I will be your Father. You will be My sons and daughters.' Dear friends, we have these promises from God. So let us make ourselves pure from everything that pollutes our bodies and spirits. Let us be completely holy. We want to honour Him. [Perfecting holiness in the fear of God, KJV.]"

*Thank You LORD God for these instructions from 3500 and 2000 years ago to be disciplined in holy living. May we give You joy in "perfecting holiness" through the salvation and provision of Your Covenant and the sacrifice of Your Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Daniel 8:19-27 describes part of the terrifying vision God gave to Daniel over 500 years before Christ, the Prince of Peace. "The vision tells about the appointed time of the end" (v.19). It prophesies, "A king will appear who ... will be a master at making clever plans. He will become very strong. But not by his own power. People will be amazed at the way he destroys everything. He will be successful no matter what he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will tell lies in order to succeed. He will think he is more important than anyone else. When people feel

safe, he will destroy many of them. He will stand up against the greatest Prince of all. Then he will be destroyed" (v.23-25). Then Daniel was told to "seal up the vision for it tells about a time far off" (v.26).

Titus 2:1-8 advises, "What you teach must agree with true teaching. Tell the older men that in anything they do, they must be worthy of respect. They must control themselves. They must have true faith. They must love others. They must not give up. In the same way, teach the older women to lead a holy life... Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children. The younger women must control themselves. They must be pure. They must take good care of their homes. They must be kind. They must follow the lead of their husbands. Then no-one will be able to speak evil things against God's word. In the same way, help the young men to control themselves. Set an example for them in everything."

*Heavenly Father, in the days leading to Christ's return, thank You for Daniel's vision of the terrible times we now live in and also for the instructions of Titus to live holy, caring and disciplined lives as we wait. Meanwhile, show us how to pray for repentance and revival in Your church. Amen.*

### **14<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

2 Kings 3. Joram, the son of Ahab the evil king of Israel, chose to fight against the Moabites who lived on the far side of the Red Sea. He travelled via the desert but ran out of water for his men. He claimed God had allowed this to happen (v.10,13). So he asked God's prophet Elisha to enquire of the LORD God Almighty what to do. Elisha announced, "The LORD says, 'Dig a lot of ditches in this valley.' Do it because the LORD says this valley will be filled with water. Then you will have water to drink... He will also hand Moab over to you" (v.15-17). The men were revived and successfully fought against the people of Moab. However, the king of Moab rose up against Israel with great fury. 'This shocked and terrified the men of Israel, so they withdrew and returned to their own land' (v.27). This proved that Joram's decision to attack Moab was wrong from the beginning but God made sure that Moab and Israel would not attack each other again.

John 16:1-16 Jesus warns His disciples "A time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing God a favour. They will do things like that because they do not know the Father or Me.... It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Friend or Comforter [Holy Spirit] will not come to help you... When He comes, He will prove that the world's people are guilty... That is because people do not believe in Me... But when the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all things... He will bring Me glory."

*Thank you Father God that history proves people get things terribly wrong because "they do things like that because they do not know You". Forgive us all when we make decisions without seeking You first before things go wrong. Guide us through Your promised Holy Spirit, for Christ's glory. Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Ezekiel 23:35 records God's promised punishment on His people in Jerusalem 600 years before the ministry of Israel's Messiah there. "The LORD and King says, 'You have forgotten Me and pushed Me behind your back. You have been impure. You have acted like a prostitute. So I will punish you.' " The people of Israel had not only been tempted by the sins of the surrounding tribes in God's Promised Land of Canaan but had copied the sexual immorality of their ancestors when they were in Egypt (23:27).

Revelation 2:1-7. The words of the ascended Jesus Christ given to the church in Ephesus. "I know what you are doing. You work long and hard. I know you cannot put up with those who are evil... You have been faithful and have put up with a lot of trouble because of Me. You have not given up. But here is something I hold against you. You do not have as much love as you had at first. Remember how far you have fallen! Turn away from your sins. Do the things you did at first. If you don't, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you do have this in your favour. You hate the way the Nicolaitans act. I hate it too. Those who have ears should listen to what the Holy Spirit says to the churches. I will allow those who overcome to eat from the tree of life in God's paradise."

*Heavenly Father and LORD God Almighty. Thank you for the spiritual and moral faithfulness Your promised Holy Spirit gives to those of us who have committed our lives to Christ our Saviour and become Your 'children of God'. Continue to make us strong against the sexual immorality from old*

*and new temptations that surround us daily, unlike the Nicolaitan believers. Rekindle our love for You when we turn our backs on You, by alerting us to the need to repent and worship You. Amen.*

### **18<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Ruth 4:9-21 records the time in the town of Bethlehem, Israel, when Boaz took Ruth as his wife. She had a son who became an ancestor of King David in the family line of Mary. Mary gave birth in Bethlehem to a Son through the Holy Spirit who was Jesus the Christ, Israel's Messiah. 'Then Boaz spoke to the elders and all of the people. "Today you are witnesses. You have seen that I have bought land from Naomi... I have also taken Ruth, who is [her daughter-in-law] from Moab, to become my wife." ...Then the elders said, "We are witnesses... May the LORD God Almighty make her to be like Rachel and Leah. Together they built up the nation of Israel... May you be famous in Bethlehem." ...So Boaz got married to Ruth. And she had a son. The local women said to Naomi, "We praise the LORD... May this child become famous all over Israel!" They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David.'

2 Timothy 3:15 to 4:3. Paul advises Timothy, "You have known the Holy Scriptures ever since you were a little child. They are able to teach you how to be saved by believing in Christ Jesus. God has breathed life into all of Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true... By using Scripture, a man of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing. I give you a command in the sight of God and Christ Jesus... Preach the word. Be ready to serve God in good times and bad. Correct people's mistakes. Warn them. Cheer them up with words of hope. Be very patient. Teach them carefully. The time will come when people will not put up with true teaching."

*Heavenly Father, again we praise You for giving us Your amazing Holy Bible to proclaim Your truth. Help us to patiently reveal Your purposes in salvation through Christ alone in these frustrating times. Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Numbers 33 lists in great detail the 40+ stages in the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan. It ends when they camped on the flatlands of Moab by the Jordan River across from Jericho. Here the LORD spoke to Moses. "Tell the people of Israel, 'Go across the Jordan River into Canaan. Drive out all those who are living in the land. Destroy all the statues of their gods and the high places where they are worshiped. Take the land as your own. Settle down in it. I have given it to you... If you do not drive out the people who are living in the land, then those you allow to remain there will become like thorns in your flesh. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live. Then I will do to you what I plan to do to them.' " (v.48-56)

Hebrew 9:7-15 explains how "only the high priest went into the inner room of the Tabernacle of God... He offered the blood for himself and for the sins of the people. The Holy Spirit was showing us that God had not yet clearly revealed the way into the Most Holy Room... It shows us that the gifts and sacrifices they offered were not enough... People had to obey them only until the new covenant came. Christ came to be the High Priest of the good things that are already here... He entered the Most Holy Room by spilling His own blood. He did it once and for all time. He paid the price to set us free from sin forever... That is why Christ is our go-between of the new covenant. Now those God calls to Himself will receive the eternal gift he promised... to set them free from the sins they committed under the first covenant."

*Thank You Father God once again for these Spirit-inspired writings separated by 1500 years. Thank You for Your amazing provision in this world and the next for those who put their trust in You and in Your Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Haggai 1 & 2 tells how God's people built fine houses but failed to rebuild the House of the LORD. God told them they had planted much but harvested little. "You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it... Each one of you is busy with your own house. So because of what you have done, the heavens have held back the dew. And the Earth has not produced its crops. I ordered the rain not to fall on the fields and mountains. Then the ground did not produce any grain... People and cattle suffered. All of your hard work failed." Then God spoke through Haggai and the people repented and "obeyed the LORD their God". They worked on the land and on the rebuilding of the Temple. God said, "Be strong, for I am with you... My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear... I

struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to Me. From this day on, give careful thought."

Corinthians 1:8-11. Paul testifies, "God comforts you just as He comforts us. We want you to know about the hard times we suffered... It was far more than we could stand... In our hearts we felt as if we were under the sentence of death. But that happened so that we would not depend on ourselves but on God. He raises the dead to life. God has saved us from deadly dangers. And he will continue to do it. We have put our hope in Him. He will continue to save us through your prayers."

*Lord God grant us the repentance and hope You gave through Haggai and the faith and testimony of answered prayers you gave through Paul. May we depend not on ourselves but on You. Help us to rebuild Your Church and encourage others to pray. May we "give careful thought" to why we experience "purses with holes in" and climate change and other disasters. Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> July 2023.**

Job Chapters 31-37 records and exposes Job's 15 self-acclaimed virtuous qualities in his life! This is after all his many complaints to his friends against what God had allowed to happen to him. In Chapter 3, Elihu burned with anger against Job because Job said he himself was right instead of God... Then Elihu proceeded to prepare the way for Job's repentance regarding his self-righteous attitude. Elihu had kept quiet because he was younger than Job's other friends. But "the spirit within me compels me to speak. I am like new wineskins ready to burst. I must speak" (32:18-19). Elihu's words upholding the virtues of Almighty God cover six chapters! He ends up asking Job to "have respect for God for He cares about all those who are wise" (37:24) Then in Chapter 38, God Himself speaks to Job before Job repents in Chapter 42.

1 Corinthians 10:31 to 32:1. Paul says, "Do everything for the glory of God. Do nothing that causes another person to trip and fall... I am not looking out for what is good for me. I am looking out for the interests of others. I do it so that they might be saved. Follow my example, just as I follow the example of Christ."

*Thank You heavenly Father for encouraging us again and again to heed the warnings in the life of Job not to complain and blame You but to endure all the hardships of life, trusting in Your purposes, provision and promises. Forgive us when we are self-righteous and trust in our own wisdom, failing to understand Your profound virtues. Help us, in Paul's words, to "do everything for the glory of God" and "do nothing that causes another person to trip and fall." Help us to follow Paul's example, and also Elihu's example, even if it's someone who is younger than ourselves. Do not let us hinder what You have purposed for our full redemption. For Christ's sake who died for our salvation. Amen.*

### **24<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Psalms 37 provides much divine wisdom through King David over 1000 years before Jesus Christ walked on Earth. "Do not be upset by evil people. Do not be jealous of others. Trust in the Lord God Almighty and do good. Delight in the LORD. Commit your life to the LORD. Be still and be patient and wait on the LORD. Keep from being angry. Turn away from evil and do good. Wait for the LORD to act and [meanwhile] live as He wants you to."

Titus 1:1-3. Paul's testimony. "I serve God. I am an apostle of Jesus Christ. God sent me to help His chosen people believe in Christ. I have been sent to help them understand the truth that leads to godly living. Faith and understanding rest on the hope of eternal life. Before time began, God promised to give that life. And He does not lie. At just the right time He made His word plain. He did it through the preaching that He trusted me with. God our Saviour has commanded all those things."

*Father God, thank You for recording the evidence of how you used a lowly shepherd boy to become Your chosen king and ancestor of Your Messiah, our Saviour Jesus Christ, through the virgin Mary. You did this despite his shameful worldly sins during his lifetime for which he repented and You forgave. Thank you for recording the evidence of how You used an important Jewish leader to become a chosen apostle of Your Messiah, our Saviour Jesus Christ, through meeting Jesus personally on the road to Damascus. You did this despite his persecution of the early Jewish believers in Jesus as the promised Son of Man and Son of God. Thank you for Your readiness to forgive and forget the past sins of all believers. Help us to live above the shameful harm our past life has had on others and instead share Your divine wisdom, mercy and "eternal life" for Your glory and for Christ's sake. Amen.*

## **25<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

Obadiah records a vision from God just before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Edom, the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, were supporting the enemies of Israel, the descendants of Jacob. Although God punished Israel by destroying Jerusalem and sending a remnant of Jews into captivity, He told Obadiah that Edom would be totally destroyed (v.15-17). "The day of the LORD is near for all of the nations... You will be paid back for what you have done... But some of My people will be left alive... And the people of Jacob will again receive the land as their own." This promise of God applies until the end of time when Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom after He returns to Jerusalem.

Luke 10:10-21 records the time when Jesus sent 72 of His followers out to preach the Good News. He warned them that some towns would not welcome them. "But God's Kingdom is near. On judgment day it will be easier for Sodom than for those towns... Anyone who listens to you listens to Me. Anyone who does not accept you does not accept Me. And anyone who does not accept Me does not accept the One who sent Me." The 72 returned with joy. "Lord, even the demons obey us when we speak in your name." Jesus replied, "I have given you authority to walk over snakes and scorpions... But do not rejoice when the evil spirits obey you. Instead, be glad that your names are written in Heaven." At that time Jesus was full of joy through the Holy Spirit. "I praise you, Father. You are Lord of Heaven and Earth. You have hidden these things from the wise and educated. But You have shown them to little children."

*Help us heavenly Father to prepare the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ. May our faith be strong to believe that Your enemies will finally be defeated when Jesus returns to establish Your rule on Earth. Amen.*

## **26<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

Joshua 15 reveals the purposes of Almighty God for the tribe of Judah to settle in His Promised Land of Canaan. This stretched from the southern end of the Dead Sea along the Wadi of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. Also from the River Jordan at the entrance to the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea via Jerusalem. The eastern boundary was the Dead Sea and its western boundary was the Mediterranean Sea. Finally, it records how God's future purposes for the role of Jerusalem were hindered at that time by the Jebusites who lived there.

Jude warns against the evil of the last days. "You are loved by God the Father and kept safe by Jesus Christ. I ask you to stand up for the faith. Certain people have slipped in among you in secret who are godless people. They use the grace of our God as an excuse for sexual sins. The Lord saved His people and brought them out of Egypt. But later He destroyed those who did not believe. In the very same way, they pollute their own bodies and don't accept authority. They do what comes naturally to them which are the very things that destroy them. Dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ said was going to happen. 'In the last days, some people will make fun of the truth. They will follow their own ungodly longings.' They are not led by the Holy Spirit. Build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Let the Holy Spirit guide and help you when you pray. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring you eternal life."

*Thank you again Father in Heaven for Your purposes and provision in the family of Abraham and his great-grandson Judah. Also, for Your salvation in their Messiah, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we keep the faith as we trust in Your guidance for these Last Days and stand up against those who hinder Your purposes. Amen.*

## **27<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

2 Chronicles 19:1-9. In the days of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, God's prophet Jehu met him and said, "You should not support evil nations who hate the LORD God Almighty... But there is some good in you. You have removed all of the Asherah poles in the land that are used to worship the goddess Asherah. And you have worshiped God with all your heart." Jehoshaphat went out among his people. He turned them back to the LORD, the God of Israel. He appointed judges and told them, "Think carefully about what you do. You are not judging for mere men. You are judging for the LORD. He is with you every time you make a decision... He is always right. He treats everyone the same." Jehoshaphat also chose some Levites, priests and some leaders of Israelite families. He appointed them to apply the law of the LORD fairly. He told them, "Have respect for the LORD. Serve Him faithfully. Do it with all your heart."

Hebrews 11 is where the writer lists many people of great faith in the LORD God Almighty: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the other prophets. "Because of their faith they ruled fairly. They received the blessings God had promised. They shut the mouths of lions and escaped being killed by the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength... Some were made to suffer greatly... All of those people were praised because they had faith. But none of them received what God had promised us. God had planned something better for us so they would be made perfect together with us." He continues, "This huge cloud of witnesses is all around us. So let us throw off everything that stands in our way and any sin that holds on to us tightly. Let us keep on running the race marked out for us. Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the author of faith. He makes it perfect." (12:1-2).

*Amen and Amen! And may it be so today!*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023.**

Ecclesiastes 2 reminds us that life is meaningless without awareness of its Creator. "I gave myself everything my eyes wanted. There wasn't any pleasure that I refused to give myself. I took delight in everything I did. And that was what I got for all of my work. But then I looked over everything my hands had done. I saw what I had worked so hard to get. And nothing had any meaning."

Luke 10:1-24 records the time when Jesus called 72 of His followers to go out to the surrounding towns "like lambs among wolves". The instructions Jesus gave them included "heal the sick" (v.9) and to speak to the people believing that "anyone who listens to you listens to Me. Anyone who does not accept you does not accept Me. And anyone who does not accept Me does not accept the One who sent Me." The 72 returned with joy. They said, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we speak in Your name." Jesus replied, "Do not rejoice when the evil spirits obey you. Instead, rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." (v.16) At that time Jesus was full of joy through the Holy Spirit. He said, "I praise You, Father. You are Lord of Heaven and Earth. You have hidden these things from the wise and educated. But You have shown them to little children. Yes, Father, this is what You wanted."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding us of the sad realisation of the writer of Ecclesiastes that this wonderful world You created is meaningless without a joyful awareness of its Creator. Thank you for the record by Luke which describes how much wonder and joy the followers of Jesus experienced when He sent them out teaching and healing the people. Thank You for the awareness that this gave our Lord and Saviour much joy to see this happen to ordinary people who chose to obey the "call to go out" to bless others and be blessed. Amen.*

### **4<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Ezekiel 43-45 describes the promised return of God's glory to the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. "I saw the glory of the God of Israel. He was coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters. His glory made the land shine brightly... I fell with my face toward the ground. The glory of the LORD entered the Temple through the east gate... His glory filled the Temple." A voice spoke to Ezekiel, "Son of man, this is the place where My throne is. The stool for My feet is also here. I will live here among the people of Israel forever. They will never again treat My name as if it were not holy. They and their kings will not serve other gods anymore." (43:2-7). Later, God instructed, "Princes of Israel, you have gone far enough! Stop hurting others. Do not crush them. Do what is fair and right. Stop taking my people's land away from them ...and use weights and measures that are honest and exact." (45:9-10)

Romans 16:17-20. Paul says, "I am warning you to watch out for those who try to keep you from staying together... They teach you things opposite to what you have learned. Stay away from them. People like that are not serving Christ our Lord. They are serving only themselves... with words to fool innocent people. Everyone has heard that you obey God. So you have filled me with joy. I want you to be wise about what is good. And I want you to have nothing to do with what is evil."

*Thank You Father God for Ezekiel's vision of Your return to Jerusalem through the east gate in the same way as predicted for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. In the meantime, teach us to be "fair and right and honest" and "wise about what is good". Help us to "have nothing to do with what is evil" and encourage us to stay together in unity. Amen.*

## **7<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Isaiah 12 records songs of praise to God for the salvation of the remnant of Jacob's tribe of Judah including King David's royal line. "LORD, we will praise You. You were angry with us but now Your anger has turned away from us. And You have brought us comfort. God, You are the one who saves us. We will trust in You. Then we will not be afraid... In days to come, the people of Israel will sing, 'Give thanks to the LORD. Worship Him. Tell the nations what He has done. Announce how honoured He is. Sing to the LORD. He has done glorious things. Let it be known all over the world.'" "

Acts Chapter 7 gives the Apostle Stephen's speech in Jerusalem. He reminded them how Moses led God's people out of Egypt. "He did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and for 40 years in the desert. This is the same Moses who said, 'God will send you a Prophet... He will come from your own people.'" (7:36-37) Then Stephen told them, "You stubborn people! You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit! They even killed those who told about the coming of the Blameless One. And now you have handed Him over to His enemies and murdered Him. The Law you received was brought by angels. But you haven't obeyed it." They stoned Stephen to death. His final words were, "Lord! Do not hold this sin against them!" (7:54-60)

*Thank You again Father God for reminding us of Your divine purpose and provision through the remnant of Judah and King David's royal line to the Prophet of prophets, Your "Blameless One", Christ Jesus, Israel's Messiah. Praise You that despite the persecution and sacrifice of the followers of Christ our Saviour, Your truth has become "known all over the world". It has been believed, accepted and practised by billions of people down the ages. Praise God! Amen.*

## **8<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

1 Kings 11:9-13 records how God remained faithful to the family line of King David in Jerusalem. 'The LORD became angry with Solomon. That was because He had commanded Solomon not to follow other gods. But Solomon did not obey him. So the LORD said, "You have chosen not to obey My rules... So you can be certain I will tear the kingdom away from you. I will give it to one of your officials. But I will not do that while you are still living. Because of your father David I will wait. I will tear the kingdom out of your son's hand... I will give him one of the tribes for the sake of my servant David and also because of Jerusalem, the city I have chosen.'" "

2 Peter 3:8-15 warns, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow to keep His promise... He is patient with you. He doesn't want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, He wants all people to turn away from their sins. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. Fire will destroy everything in them. God will judge Earth and everything in it... So what kind of people should you be? You should lead holy and godly lives. Live like that as you look forward to the day of God... We are looking forward to a new Heaven and a new Earth. Godliness will make its home there... So try your best to be found pure and without blame. Be at peace with God. Remember that while our Lord is waiting patiently to return, people are being saved."

*Thank You heavenly Father for Your patience with us when we have "chosen not to obey My rules". Help us to "lead holy and godly lives" and wait "patiently for Christ's return" to Your chosen city Jerusalem whilst "people are being saved". Amen.*

## **9<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

Isaiah 43 confirms God's famous declaration of His love and purpose for Abraham's family through the sons of Jacob. "Family of Jacob, the LORD created you... Do not be afraid. I will set you free. You belong to Me. You will pass through deep waters. But I will be with you... You will walk through fire. But the flames will not harm you... I am the one and only LORD. I am the only one who can save you... You are My witnesses that I am the LORD God Almighty... Forget the things that happened in the past. Do not keep on thinking about them... I am going to make a way for you to go through the desert. I will make streams of water in the dry and empty land for My people to drink... I do it for the people I made for Myself. I want them to sing praises to Me... You have loaded Me down with your sins. You have made Me tired with the wrong things you have done. I am the one who wipes out your lawless acts. I do it because of who I am. I will not remember your sins anymore."

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 says, "Brothers and sisters, we ask you to have respect for the godly leaders who work hard among you. They have authority over you. They correct you... Live in peace with each other... Help those who are weak. Make sure that nobody pays back one wrong act with another. Always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Always be joyful. Never stop

praying. Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank Him because you believe in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Holy Spirit's fire... Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil... May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept free from blame until our Lord Jesus Christ comes."

*Thank You for Your forgiveness, salvation and teaching. Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Zechariah 9:7-10 prophecies to the remnant of Judah. "The Philistines who are left will belong to our God and become leaders in Judah and part of Israel. But I will guard My Temple against enemy armies." This is followed by a prophecy of Israel's coming Messiah. "People of Jerusalem, shout for joy! See, your King comes to you. He will be righteous and have the power to save. He comes gentle and riding on a donkey's colt... Your King will announce peace to the nations... His kingdom will reach to the ends of the Earth."

Romans 8:9-17 speaks of the new life in Christ. "Your sinful nature no longer controls you. The Holy Spirit controls you. The Spirit of God lives in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ. Christ lives in you so your body is dead to sin. But your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. So the God who raised Christ from the dead will also give [new] life to your bodies which are going to die. He will do this by the [resurrection] power of His Spirit, who lives in you. Brothers and sisters, we have a duty. Our duty is not to live under the control of our sinful nature. If you do, you will die. But by the power of the Holy Spirit you can put to death the sins your body commits. Then you will live... You received the Holy Spirit, who makes you God's child... As His children, we will receive all that He has for us. We will share what Christ receives. But we must also share in His sufferings that we may also share in His glory."

*Thank you heavenly Father for these amazing promises to Your people Israel and to those around the world who commit their lives to Israel's Messiah, Christ Jesus. Amen.*

### **11<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

2 Chronicles 33:10-20 records part of the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah. 'The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people. But they did not pay any attention to Him. So the LORD brought the army commanders of Assyria against them. They took Manasseh as a prisoner to Babylon... When Manasseh was in trouble, he asked the LORD his God to show favour to him. He made himself very humble in the sight of the God of his people. Manasseh prayed to Him and the LORD felt sorry for him. He answered his prayer. He brought him back to Jerusalem and his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God. After that, Manasseh rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David... He got rid of the strange gods... and all of the altars he had built on the Temple Hill and in Jerusalem. Then he made the LORD's altar look like new again. He sacrificed friendship offerings and thank offerings on it. He told the people of Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.'

Hebrews 12:1-11. "A huge cloud of witnesses is all around us. So let us throw off everything that stands in our way and any sin that holds on to us so tightly. Let us keep on running the race marked out for us. Let us keep looking to Jesus, the author of our faith. He makes it perfect. He paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy He was looking forward to. Then He sat down at the right hand of God. He put up with attacks from sinners. So think about Him... You struggle against sin but you have not yet fought to the point of spilling your blood... Put up with hard times. God uses them to train you... for your good."

*Father God, thank You for the "huge cloud of Bible witnesses" and help us to "throw off any sin" and "keep looking to Jesus". Amen.*

### **14<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Genesis 35 records 3750 years ago the return of Jacob and his large family from the town of his grandparent's family to settle in Bethel where his grandfather Abraham had been led by God to live. "God said to Jacob, 'Go to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to honour Me.' So Jacob spoke to his family. 'Get rid of the strange gods you have with you. Make yourselves pure, and change your clothes. Come, let us go to Bethel. There I will build an altar to honour the LORD God Almighty. He answered me when I was in trouble. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.' " (v.1-3) When they arrived in Bethel (Canaan) God appeared to Jacob and said, "Your name is Jacob. But you will not be called Jacob anymore. Your name will be Israel. I am the Mighty God. Have

children and increase your numbers. A nation and a community of nations will come from you. Kings will come from your body. I am giving you the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac. I will also give it to your children after you." (v.10-12)

Matthew 17:1-9 records the transfiguration of Jesus on a mountain top in front of His disciples Peter, James and John. 'His face shone like the sun. His clothes became as white as the light. Just then Moses and Elijah appeared in front of them. God spoke, "This is my Son, and I love Him. I am very pleased with Him. Listen to Him!"

*Father God, thank You for recording events for us to read which have had an ongoing impact on Earth to this present age. Thank you also for confirming to the disciples of Jesus who He really was on the mountain top with Moses and Elijah in such a way to impact their calling to proclaim the Good News of Your salvation in Christ. Make us pure children of God and motivate us to continue this ministry to the end. Amen.*

### **15<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Jeremiah 4:27 is where God proclaims "My people are fools; they do not know Me. They are senseless children who have no understanding. They are skilled only in doing evil; they know not how to do good!" This outburst of God's anger is followed by many chapters warning that Jerusalem will be under siege, and that false religions are worthless, and sin must be punished, idols must be destroyed, destruction will result from the broken covenant with Almighty God, with threats of captivity, drought, famine, war, disaster, and judgement against evil leaders. However, God vows to bring a day of restoration which gives Jeremiah the confidence to buy a strip of land (Chapter 32).

Titus 3:1-7. Paul tells Titus, "Remind God's people to obey rulers and authorities. Remind them to be ready to do what is good. Tell them not to speak evil things against anyone. Remind them to live in peace and consider the needs of others. They must be kind and gentle towards all people. At one time we too acted like fools... But the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared and saved us. It was not because of the good things we had done. It was because of His mercy. He saved us by washing away our sins. We were born again. The Holy Spirit gave us new life. God poured out the Spirit on us freely because of what Jesus Christ our Saviour has done. His grace made us right with God. So now we have received the hope of eternal life as God's children."

*Thank You Father God for this amazing teaching of New Testament truth and salvation in Christ. Forgive our foolish and selfish ways. Thank you that in Your mercy over many centuries You were patient, if angry, showing love for Your people, through whom Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and the prophets like Jeremiah, prepared the way for Your Messiah, our Saviour. May we do the same today for His second coming. Amen.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Job 22 and 23 covers the time when Job was suffering greatly as God tested his faith. His friend Eliphaz told him, "Job, obey God and be at peace with Him. Then He will help you succeed." (22:21-22) Job replied with confidence, "God knows every step I take. When He has put me to the test, I will come out as pure as gold. My feet have closely followed His steps. I have stayed on His path without turning away. I have not disobeyed His commands. I have treasured His words more than my daily bread. He is the only God. Who can oppose Him?" (23:10-17) Earlier Job had claimed "I know that my Redeemer lives. In the end He will stand on Earth... and I will see Him." (19:25-26)

Hebrews 9 and 10. The writer says, "Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance. He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." (9:15) He goes on, "Brothers and sisters, we are not afraid to enter the Most Holy Room. We enter boldly because of the blood of Jesus. His way is new because He lives. It has been opened for us through the curtain... So let us come near to God with an honest and true heart. Let us come near with a faith that is sure and strong. Our hearts have been sprinkled [with the blood of Christ]. Our minds have been cleansed from a sense of guilt. Our bodies have been washed with pure water. Let us hold firmly to the hope we claim to have. The One who promised is faithful." (10:19-24)

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the faith You gave to Old and New Testament believers. May we, too, grow in love and fear of You that we may say, "I know that my Redeemer lives" through the sacrifice of Your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Leviticus 4:13-15 is part of God's instructions to Moses 3,500 years ago for His people to repent and receive forgiveness through the sacrifice of innocent animal blood. "If the whole community of Israel sins without meaning to, they are still guilty. They do something the LORD commands us not to do, even if they are not aware of what they have done. When they become aware of the sin they have committed, then they must bring a young bull as a sin offering... The bull must be killed in the sight of the LORD." Earlier, God had instructed that animals for sacrifice should be perfect and without any faults (3:1). These instructions portray the purposes of God 1500 years later in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, on behalf of the sins of the people, aware or not.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 is part of Paul's warning against seeking after worldly riches, aware or not. "Command people who are rich in this world not to be proud. Tell them not to put their hope in riches... Command those who are rich to put their hope in God. He richly provides us with everything to enjoy. Command the rich to do what is good. Tell them to be rich in doing good things. They must give freely and be willing to share... This will provide a firm basis for the next life. Then they will take hold of the life that really is life", meaning eternal life in Heaven.

*Father God, thank You for teaching us we can be deceived into thinking we are not guilty of doing wrong. You made provision for public confession of Israel's sins before the time of Christ through the sacrifice of innocent animal blood. Then you made provision for all people through the sacrifice of the innocent blood of Jesus Himself. Please forgive us, even if we think we are not guilty, of seeking riches in this world. May we be rich in good deeds! Amen.*

### **18<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Psalms 100 is a psalm of thanksgiving from an unknown composer. "Shout to the LORD with joy, everyone on Earth. Worship the LORD God Almighty with gladness. Come to Him with songs of joy. The LORD is God. He made us, and we belong to Him. We are His people. We are the sheep of His flock. Give thanks as you enter the gates of His Temple. Give praise as you enter its courtyards. Give thanks to Him and praise His holy name. The LORD is good. His faithful love continues through all generations."

Luke 2:46-52 is the time when the parents of the boy Jesus could not find Him in Jerusalem. 'After three days His parents found Him in the Temple courtyard. He was sitting with the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at how much He understood. They were also amazed at His answers. When His parents saw Him, they too were amazed. His mother said to Him, "Son, Your father and I have been worried about you. We have been looking for you everywhere." "Why were you looking for me?" He asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what He meant by that. Then He went back to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. His mother valued all these things in Her heart. Jesus became wiser and stronger. He also became more and more pleasing to God and to the people.'

*We thank you heavenly Father for the unknown writer who was guided by Your Holy Spirit to give us good words to shout out our praises to You. Thank You too for Your guiding Spirit to train Your Son our Saviour as a rabbi in the Temple at Jerusalem before Your Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism at the beginning of His ministry on Earth. May Your Spirit also inspire amazing things among Your chosen people. Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> August 2023.**

Ezekiel 45 instructs the leaders of Israel in fair treatment before describing the altar offerings required for the sins of the people. "The LORD says, 'You have gone far enough! Stop hurting people. Do not crush them. Do what is fair and right. Stop taking My people's land away from them. Use weights and measures that are honest and exact. Use a 6-bushel measure for dry products and a 60-gallon measure for liquids. Every amount of money must be weighed out with standard weights.'" (45:9-12) This is followed by the list of offerings required "to pay for the sin of the people". (45:15) Also "the sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings and olive oil" for the week-long Passover Festival (45:25).

Jude 4-5, 17-21 warns, "Certain godless people have slipped in among you. Long ago it was written that they would be judged. They use the grace of our God as an excuse for sexual sins. They say no to Jesus Christ who is our Lord and King. I want to remind you the LORD saved His people by

bringing them out of Egypt. But later He destroyed those who did not believe... Dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ said was going to happen. They told you, 'In the last days, some people will make fun of the truth. They will follow their own ungodly longings.' They are the people who separate you from one another. They do only what comes naturally. They are not led by the Holy Spirit. Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Let the Holy Spirit guide you when you pray. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring you eternal life. As you wait for His mercy, remain in God's love."

*Father God, help us today to learn from Scripture to be fair to others and not to rebel against Your instructions, purposes and provision. Encourage us in worship and personal sacrifice to live for "our Lord and King". Amen.*

### **22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023.**

Ezekiel 34. The LORD God Almighty says, "Prophecy against the shepherds of Israel. Tell them, 'How terrible it will be for you shepherds of Israel! You only take care of yourselves. You should take good care of your flocks. Instead, you eat their butter. You dress yourselves with their wool. You kill their finest animals. But you do not care for them. You have not made the weak ones in the flock stronger nor healed the sick... You have not searched for the lost. When you rule over them, you treat them badly... I am against you shepherds. I will hold you accountable for My flock. I will stop you from taking care of the flock... I will look after them. A shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them. And I will look after My sheep.' "

2 Corinthians 1:3-11. "Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the Father who gives tender love. All comfort comes from Him. He comforts us in all our troubles. Now we can comfort others when they are in trouble since we ourselves have received comfort... We were having a lot of trouble. It was far more than we could stand... But that happened so that we would not depend on ourselves but on God. He raises the dead to life. He saved us from deadly dangers. And He will continue to do it. We have put our hope in Him... You must help us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because of what will happen to us. They will thank God for His kindness to us in answer to the prayers of the many."

*Thank You Father God for Your care for Your people. Thank you for the Bible which confirms this from 2000 and 2600 years ago. Raise up Christ-like leaders who will save us from the anti-Christ leaders on Earth today. And encourage us to pray for one another. Amen.*

### **23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023.**

Psalms 147:11-20 is a call to praise the God of Israel. "The LORD takes delight in those who have respect for Him. They put their hope in His faithful love. Jerusalem, praise the LORD! He makes the bars of your gates stronger. He blesses the people who live inside you. He keeps your borders safe and secure. He satisfies you with the finest wheat... He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. He throws down His hail like small stones. No-one can stand His icy blast. He gives His command and the ice melts. He stirs up His winds and the waters flow. He has made His word and His laws known to Israel. He has not done that for any other nation... Praise the Lord!"

Romans 2:6-13. Paul upholds the Law given to Moses and fulfilled in Christ. "God will give to each person in keeping with what he has done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good... But there are others who only look out for themselves. They do not accept the truth but go down an evil path. God will pour out His burning anger on them. There will be trouble and suffering for everyone who does evil. That is meant first for the Jews then for the non-Jews. But there will be glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good. That is meant first for the Jews then for the non-Jews. God treats everyone the same... But hearing the Law does not make a person right with God. People are considered to be right with God only when they obey the Law."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for Your truth and Good News of Jesus Christ revealed these past 2000 years to non-Jews. We pray for the people of Israel to praise You and to obey Your Law AND be ready to welcome Jesus, its fulfilment! Thank you that You delight in all who respect You and do good. Amen.*

### **24/8/23.**

Malachi 3. "Return to Me. Then I will return to you," says the LORD who rules over all. "But you ask, 'How can we return?' Will a man dare to steal from Me? But you rob me! You ask, 'How do we rob You?' "By holding back your offerings when you do not bring Me a tenth of everything you

produce. ...Bring the entire tenth to the storerooms in my Temple. Then there will be plenty of food. Put Me to the test," says the LORD. "Then you will see that I will throw open the windows of Heaven. I will pour out so many blessings that you will not have enough room for them." ... 'Then those who had respect for the LORD talked with each other. They cheered each other up. And the LORD heard them.'

Revelation 2:10-11 gives the words of Jesus to the church at Smyrna. "Do not be afraid of what you are going to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you. You will be treated badly for ten days. Be faithful, even if it means you must die. Then I will give you a crown. The crown is life itself. Those who have ears should listen to what the Holy Spirit says to the churches. Those who overcome will not be hurt at all by the second [eternal] death."

*Dear God and LORD of all, thank You that You remind us in Your word, "Return to Me, then I will return to you". May we give generously all You desire in serving and worshipping You and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Encourage us to talk and share with other believers about Your promised blessings that you pour down on us when we are generous. Make us faithful under persecution, short term or long term, that we may overcome and receive Your 'crown of life'. Keep us strong if we are "treated badly for ten days". Amen.*

### **25<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Genesis 9 to 11 record God's new beginnings for the people on Earth after the Great Flood. He told Noah, "I have made man in my own likeness. Have children and increase your numbers... I am now making My covenant with you and with all of your children who will be born after you" (9:6-9). Noah praised and blessed his son Shem more than his sons Japheth and Ham (9:25-27). In Chapter 11, the descendants of Shem are listed for the next 500 years to the time of Abraham whom God called to live in the land of Canaan (11:10-31).

Luke 8 describes how Jesus travelled from one town or village to another, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God. He told them the parable of the sower which He explained later to His disciples. "The seed is God's message. People on the path are those who hear. But then the devil comes. He takes away the message from their hearts. He does it so they will not believe and cannot be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who hear the message and receive it with joy. But they have no roots. They believe for a while. But when they are put to the test, they fall away from the faith. The seed that fell among thorns are the ones who hear the message. But as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. So they do not reach full growth. But the seed on good soil are the ones with an honest and good heart. They hear the message. They keep it in their hearts. They remain faithful and produce a good crop."

*Father God, thank You for these foundational accounts which explain how faithful and unfaithful people populate the Earth. We believe we are made in Your image but admit we are easily led astray. Help us to be faithful in living Your "Good News of the Kingdom of God". Amen.*

### **28<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Jeremiah 43:19-22 reveals the truth of God for a remnant of God's people who wanted to escape the fear of Babylon and settle in Egypt. Jeremiah told them, "The LORD has told you who are left in Judah 'Do not go to Egypt'. I am warning you today you made a big mistake. You said, 'Pray to the LORD our God for us. Tell us everything He says. We will do it.' I have told you what the LORD your God wants you to do. But you still haven't obeyed Him. You haven't done anything He sent me to tell you to do... You will die of war, hunger and plague. You want to go and settle down in Egypt. But you will die there." The remnant in Egypt did not survive but the remnant in Babylon repented and obeyed and survived and returned to rebuild Jerusalem in 538 BC.

3 John 4-8,14. The apostle John wrote to his friend Gaius, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are living by the truth. Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the believers. You are faithful even though some are strangers to you... We should welcome people like them. We should work together with them for the truth... Dear friend, do not be like those who do evil. Be like those who do good. Anyone who does what is good belongs to God. Anyone who does what is evil has not really seen or known God."

*Father God, thank You for recording for us the outcome of rejecting Your truth and judgement. Also for refusing to obey Your chosen leader Jeremiah. Lord Jesus, thank You for the ministry of Your apostle John who wrote letters of encouragement to individuals and groups of*

*believers. May we be aware of the importance of welcoming believers who are strangers to us. Grant us wisdom in doing what is good and obeying those You have called into ministry today. Amen.*

### **29<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

1 Chronicles 25:1-7 gives an amazing list of names of musicians and singers in the worship of God at the time of King David. 'David set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun to serve the LORD by prophesying with harps, lyres and cymbals. The sons of Asaph were under the direction of their father. The sons of Jeduthun were under the direction of their father. God gave Heman 14 sons. All of them were under the direction of their fathers. They served at the house of God by playing cymbals, lyres and harps for the LORD. Along with their relatives, the total number was 288.'

Romans 12:1-12. Paul says, "Brothers and sisters, God has shown you His mercy. So I am asking you to offer up your bodies to Him while you are still able. Your bodies are a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God. When you offer your bodies to God, you are worshipping Him. Do not live any longer the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what He wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect... Each of us has one body with many parts. And the parts do not all have the same purpose... We all have gifts. They differ in keeping with the grace that God has given each of us... Love each other deeply. Honour others more than yourselves. Never let the fire in your heart go out. Serve the Lord... When you hope, be joyful. When you suffer, be patient. When you pray, be faithful."

*Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing how You rejoice in the way we offer our gifts to honour You and others. Help us not to let the fire in our hearts go out. Lord Jesus, we give thanks for Your obedience in suffering for our salvation and our service to other believers. Amen.*

### **30<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

Jeremiah 51:49-64 describes the time of the exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. God said, "Babylon's people have killed My people Israel. They have also killed people all over the Earth. So now Babylon itself must fall. You who have not been killed in the war against Babylon, go (to Babylon). Do not wait! In a land far away remember Me and think about Jerusalem... 'A new day is coming' announces the LORD. 'At that time I will punish the gods of Babylon. And all through its land wounded people will groan.' " Jeremiah wrote on a scroll all the disasters that would come upon Babylon. He gave it to the Jewish officer Seraiah to read out aloud all the words when he got to Babylon. He told him to say, "LORD God Almighty, You have said You will destroy this place and no people or animals will live here. It will be empty for ever."

Galatians 3:7-14. Paul says, "Those who have faith are children of Abraham. Long ago, Scripture knew that God would make non-Jews right with Himself by believing in Him. He announced the Good News [of salvation through Israel's Messiah] in advance to Abraham. He said, 'All nations will be blessed because of you.' (Genesis 12:3; 18:18, 22:18) ...We know that no-one is made right with God by keeping the Law. Scripture says, 'Those who are right with God will live by faith.' (Habakkuk 2:4) We have been set free from the curse of the Law "so that the blessings given to Abraham would come to non-Jews through Christ. This was done so that we might receive the Holy Spirit by believing in Christ."

*Thank You Father God for again and again reminding us of Your love, mercy and provision for all who repent and believe. Thank You for filling us with Your transforming power of the Spirit of Christ which He promised after taking the punishment for our sins. Help us to fulfil your promise to bless all nations. Amen.*

### **31<sup>st</sup> August 2023.**

Judges 18 describes the time when the last of the twelve tribes of Israel settled in God's promised land of Canaan. 'In those days the tribe of Dan was looking for a place where they could settle down... So the people of Dan sent out five warriors... "Go! Check out the land." So they entered the hill country of Ephraim.' On the way, the men met a Levite priest who told them, "Go in peace. Your journey has the LORD's approval". 'So the five men left. They came to Laish. There they saw that the people felt secure. They were living in safety... Their land had everything they needed.' So 600 men from the tribe of Dan set out and conquered the land. But they used idols in their worship all the time they lived there until the time of the Babylonian captivity 800 years later.

Hebrews 9:7-12. "Only the high priest went into the inner room... He never entered without taking blood with him. He offered the blood for himself and for the sins the people had committed who didn't know any better. Here is what the Holy Spirit was showing us. He was telling us that God had not yet clearly shown the way into the Most Holy Room... It shows us that the gifts and sacrifices they offered were not enough to remove the worshiper's feelings of guilt... People had to obey this until the new covenant came. Christ came to be the High Priest of the good things that are already here... He did not enter by spilling the blood of goats and calves. He entered the Most Holy Room by spilling His own blood... He paid the price to set us free from sin forever."

*Forgive us most holy Father if we still hold to forms of idols in our lives. Help us enter into the 'inner room' of Your presence through the sacrifice of Christ our Saviour. Thank You Jesus. Grant worldwide freedom to declare this Good News. Amen.*

### **1<sup>st</sup> September 2023.**

Proverbs 1:2-7. King Solomon wrote, "Proverbs teach you wisdom and train you. They help you understand wise sayings. They train you and help you live wisely. They lead to what is right and honest and fair. They give understanding to simple-minded people. They give knowledge and good sense to those who are young. Let wise people listen and add to what they have learned. Let those who understand what is right receive guidance. What I am teaching also helps you understand proverbs and parables. It helps you understand the sayings and riddles of those who are wise. But if you really want to gain knowledge, you must begin by having respect for the LORD God Almighty. Only morally foolish people hate wisdom and discipline."

Philippians 3:7-13. Paul wrote, "I consider everything to be nothing compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. To know Him is the best thing of all. Because of Him I have lost everything. But I consider all of it to be rubbish so I can get to know Christ. I want to be joined to Him. For me, being right with God does not come from the Law. It comes because I believe in Christ. It comes from God. It is received by faith. I want to know Christ better. I want to know the power that raised Him from the dead. I want to share in His sufferings. I want to become like Him by sharing in His death. Then by God's grace I will rise from the dead. I have not yet received all of those things. I have not yet been made perfect. But I move on to take hold of what Christ Jesus took hold of me for."

*Thank you God for the wisdom of Solomon. Also for the wisdom of Paul who suffered much through Your ministry of salvation in him and through him to others. May we grow in "respect for the LORD God Almighty" and in "knowing Christ Jesus my Lord". Amen.*

### **4th September 2023.**

2 Kings 9:1-13 describes the period after King Ahab's death when the prophet Elisha sent for one of Israel's prophets. Elisha said to him, "Take this bottle of olive oil and go to Ramoth. Look for Jehu. Take him away from his companions into an inside room. Then pour the oil on his head. Announce to him, 'The LORD says, "I anoint you as king over Israel."' " The man found the army officers and asked to speak to Jehu. Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the prophet poured the oil on Jehu's head. "The LORD God Almighty says, 'I am anointing you as king over my people Israel. You must destroy the house of your master Ahab. I will pay them back for spilling the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all of my servants that Jezebel spilled. The whole house of Ahab will die out... And dogs will eat up Jezebel on a piece of land at Jezreel.' " Jehu told his fellow officers what was said. Despite some disbelief (v.11), the officers took their coats and spread them out under Jehu. Then they blew a trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!" Then Jehu fulfilled the instructions God gave him to destroy Jezebel and Ahab's family.

Luke 8:46-48. Jesus said, "Someone touched Me. I know that power has gone out from Me." Then a woman, shaking with fear, came and fell at His feet. In front of everyone, she told why she had touched Him. She also told how she had been healed in an instant. Then He said to her, "Dear woman, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

*Father God, thank You for the times when we can see Your hand at work, whether locally or nationally. Help us to follow Your instructions and ignore those who show disbelief. Lord Jesus, encourage us to reach out to You in faith and testify without fear of what others will say. Amen.*

### **5<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Proverbs 16:16-17. King Solomon says, "It is much better to gain wisdom than gold. It is much better to choose understanding than silver. The path of honest people takes them away from evil. Those who guard their ways guard their lives."

Romans 8:18-28. The Apostle Paul says, "What we are suffering now is nothing compared with the glory that will be shown in us... We know that all that God created has been groaning. It is in pain as if it were giving birth to a child... We have the Holy Spirit as the promise of future blessing. But we also groan inside ourselves whilst we look forward to the time when God will adopt us as full members of His family. Then He will give us everything He has for us. He will raise our bodies [our eternal redemption]. That is the hope we had when we were saved... We hope for what we do not have yet. So we are patient as we wait for it. The Holy Spirit helps us when we are weak. We do not know what we should pray for. But the Spirit Himself prays for us. He prays with groans too deep for words. God, who looks into our hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit. And the Spirit prays for God's people just as God wants Him to pray. We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. He called us to be saved in keeping with His purpose."

*Dear God, we thank you that Paul discovered what Solomon knew must be true, that You guard our lives when we seek Your wisdom. Thank You that through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ "we have the Holy Spirit as the promise of future blessing". As the whole of creation groans, we believe that You are working for the good of those who love You. Thank you that in Christ we have been saved for Your special purpose. Amen.*

### **6<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Deuteronomy 27:9-26. Before the tribes of Israel entered God's Promised Land of Canaan, Moses spoke to them on the east bank of the River Jordan. "You have now become the people of the LORD your God. Obey Him. Follow His commands and rules that we are giving you today." Then Moses instructed some to bless the people of Israel and some were told to announce curses. These curses acted as warnings against making idols, or bringing shame on their parents, or moving boundary stones, or leading the blind astray, or mistreating strangers, or taking advantage of people or animals to have sex, or secretly planning to murder, or accepting bribes, or refusing to obey God's Law. Then Moses added, "All the people must say 'Amen'".

John 15:18-27 gives some warnings of Jesus to His disciples. "If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you like one of its own. But you do not belong to the world. I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you... They do not know the One who sent Me... Those who hate Me hate My Father also... This has happened so that what is written in their Law would come true... (But) I will send the Friend (the Holy Spirit) to you from the Father. He is the Spirit of truth who comes out from the Father. When the Friend comes to help you, He will give witness about Me. You also must give witness. This is because you have been with Me from the beginning." Then Jesus added, "I have told you all of this so that you will not go astray" (16:1)

*Thank you Father God for these guidelines to holy living in an unholy world. Thank You that through Jesus our Saviour, His victory over sin brought us holy living with Holy Spirit power. Help us never to go astray. We say, "Amen".*

### **7<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Obadiah verses 15 to 21 is a vision of Israel resettling in the land of Canaan after their exile in Babylon. This was fulfilled in the sixth century before Christ. It also looks forward to the day when all of Israel's enemies will be defeated in the "day of the LORD" (v.15). "The Kingdom will belong to the LORD God Almighty" (v.21).

Acts 26:16-23 gives Paul's testimony before King Agrippa of his calling by Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul explains that Jesus said to him, "Now get up. I have appeared to you to appoint you to serve Me and be My witness. You will tell others that you have seen Me today... I will save you from your own people and from those who are not Jews. I am sending you to them to open their eyes. I want you to turn them from darkness to light and turn them from Satan's power to God. I want their sins to be forgiven when they believe in Me. They will have their place among God's people." Then Paul told the king, "I obeyed the vision that appeared from Heaven. First I preached to people in Damascus then in Jerusalem. I preached also to people who were not Jews. I told them to turn away from their sins to God. The way they live must prove that they have turned away from

their sins... What I am saying is nothing different from what the prophets and Moses said would happen. They said the Christ (Messiah) would suffer. But He would be the first to rise from the dead. He would announce the light of life to His own people and to those who are not Jews."

*Dear God, we suspect that King Agrippa did not believe but millions of people have believed since the time of Paul. Forgive our doubts and fears and encourage our faith that Your Kingdom will be established soon on Earth for both Jews and Gentiles. Amen.*

### **8<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Psalm 148 is a psalm of praise to God for the wonders of the world He has created. Their beauty all testify of His skills and greatness. The heavens, the angels, our sun and moon and the stars and the source of water above us. "Let all of them praise the name of the LORD God Almighty, because He gave a command and they were created." (v.5) The psalmist continues with a list of other wonders on our planet Earth which testify of God's purpose and provision. The sea creatures, the ocean depths, the lightening, hail, snow, clouds and winds, the mountains, the fruit and timber trees, animals both wild and tame, insects and birds. Also mankind, whether they are rulers or children, they all praise Him for "His glory is higher than the splendour He has created." (v.13). The last verse refers to His provision ('horn') of a leader in Israel at the time of King David, from whose family would come their Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 6:30-43 describes the outcomes of the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. First, His followers "gathered around Jesus and told Him all they had done and taught." (v.30) Second, because of the crowds who were pushing to see Jesus, He said, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place. You need to get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a quiet place. (v.31-32). Third, when the crowds caught up with them, 'He had compassion for them since they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things.' Finally, He miraculously provided food for 5000 of them. (v.35-44).

*Father God, Scripture refers to the wonders of Your creation and also Your promised Messiah who came down from Heaven to suffer death to provide His followers with resurrection life! We join with the rest of Your creation in worshipping You. Help us to live and minister in the way Jesus and His disciples did. Amen.*

### **18<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Jeremiah 29:24-32. Before God restored Israel from exile, Shemaiah, a false prophet, told the people to "build houses and plant gardens" (v.28). Then a message came to Jeremiah. "Tell the people that the LORD says, 'Shemaiah has prophesied to you. But I did not send him. He has made you believe a lie. I will certainly punish him... I will do good things for My people. But he will not see them. This is because he has taught people to turn against Me.' "

Revelation 12:1-12. 'A great and miraculous sign appeared in Heaven. It was a woman wearing clothes like the sun. The moon was under her feet... She cried out in pain because she was about to have a baby. Then another sign appeared in Heaven. It was a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns... The dragon stood in front of the woman to eat her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a Son. He will rule all the nations. Her child was taken up to God and to His throne... Michael and his angels fought against the dragon... He and his angels lost their place in Heaven and were thrown down to Earth. The dragon is that old serpent called the devil, or Satan. He leads the whole world down the wrong path. Then a loud voice in Heaven said, "Salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God have come. The authority of His Christ has come. Satan brings charges against God's people day and night. They overcame him because the Lamb of God gave His life's blood for them. They overcame him by giving witness about Jesus to others. They were willing to risk their lives... The devil has come down to you. He is very angry. He knows his time is short."

*Dear God, help us not to be afraid but to learn, believe and proclaim what You have promised in these evil and deceitful days before Christ returns. Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Zechariah 9:8-9 records a revelation from the LORD God Almighty (an oracle) spoken around the year 500 BC. "I will guard my Temple against enemy armies. No-one will ever crush My people again... City of Zion, be full of joy! People of Jerusalem, shout! See, your king comes to you. He is upright. He has the power to save. He is gentle and riding on a donkey." These words refer not only

to the first coming of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem but also His second coming when "no-one will ever crush my people again."

Philemon verses 4 to 10. Paul writes to Philemon, "I always thank my God when I remember you in my prayers. I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus. I hear about your love for all of God's people. I pray that you will be active in sharing what you believe. Then you will completely understand every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy. It has cheered me up. My brother, you have renewed the hearts of God's people... I could order you to do what you should do but I make my appeal to you on the basis of our love for each other. I, Paul, am an old man. I am now also a prisoner [in Rome] because of Christ Jesus. I make an appeal to you on behalf of Onesimus." Paul then goes on to ask Philemon to take back the newly-converted Onesimus, not as a slave but as "a dear brother in Christ" (v.16).

*Father in Heaven, we thank You for Your teaching and revelations even in the smallest books of the Bible. Grant us understanding, as with Paul, of the experience of persecution and the Roman's later destruction of Israel and its Temple. Help us to know and practise the loving witness of Paul that You call us to make during times of great unrest for Your people everywhere as we watch and wait Your promised events in Jerusalem. Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Isaiah 54:14-17. These are part of God's words to Isaiah regarding the restoration of Israel after their exile in Babylon and their spiritual restoration through their promised Messiah for those who believe and obey. "When you do what is right, you will be made secure. Your leaders will not be unkind to you. You will not have anything to be afraid of. You will not be terrified anymore. Terror will not come near you. People might attack you. But I will not be the cause of it. Those who attack you will give themselves up to you. I created blacksmiths. They fan the coals into flames of fire and make weapons. I also created those who destroy others. But no weapon that is used against you will succeed. People might bring charges against you. But you will prove that they are wrong. Those are the things I do for my servants. I make everything right for them."

2 Corinthians 13:4-5. Paul prepares his readers before visiting them a third time. "It is true that Christ was nailed to the cross because He was weak. But He lives by God's power. In the same way, I share His weakness. But by God's power I will live with Him to serve you. Take a good look at yourselves to see if you are really believers. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you? Unless, of course, you fail the test!"

*Creator God, thank You for speaking to us through Your prophet Isaiah and through Your apostle Paul. Help us to obey Your words and believe Your salvation through Israel's Messiah. Thank You that through His weakness and meekness His risen power is at work in us. Encourage us to "test" (examine) ourselves and prove that Christ Jesus is living in us. Forgive us if we prefer to judge others to judging ourselves! Instead, we fear Your judgement and invite You to "make everything right" in us through "spiritual restoration". Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> September 2023.**

Numbers 15:13-16 gives God's further instructions to Moses for establishing the state of Israel in the promised land of Canaan. "Everyone in Israel must... always do what the Law requires. It does not matter if he is an outsider who is living among you. He must do exactly as you do when bringing an offering that is made with fire... The community must have the same rules for you and for the outsider who is living among you... for all times to come. In the sight of the LORD, this rule applies to you and the outsider alike."

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 gives God's provision for various spiritual gifts among believers, many of whom had come from pagan backgrounds (v.2). "There are different kinds of gifts. But they are all given by the same Spirit... The Holy Spirit is given to each of us in a special way for the good of all. To some people the Spirit gives the message of wisdom. To others the Spirit gives the message of knowledge. To others He gives faith. To others the Spirit gives gifts of healing. To others He gives the power to do miracles. To others He gives the ability to prophesy. To others He gives the ability to tell the spirits apart. To others He gives the ability to speak in different kinds of languages [tongues] they had not known before. And to others He gives the ability to explain what was said in those languages. All of the gifts are produced by one and the same Spirit. He gives them to each person, just as He decides."

*We praise You Father God that whatever our racial or religious background You seek our salvation through Christ and worship and bless us with different spiritual gifts "for the good of all". Show us how to encourage "outsiders" in our midst with a desire to worship You, follow Your Bible truth and share the gifts of the Holy Spirit given through Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

### **22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023.**

1 Samuel 9:15-17. 'The LORD God Almighty spoke to Samuel, His priest and prophet, "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him to be the leader of My people Israel. He will save them from the powerful hand of the Philistines. I have seen how much my people are suffering. Their cry for help has reached Me." When Samuel saw a man coming toward him, the LORD spoke to Samuel again, "He is the man I told you about. His name is Saul. He will govern My people." '

Titus 2:1-8 gives Paul's advice to his young fellow worker in the island of Crete. "What you teach must agree with true teaching. Tell the older men that in anything they do, they must be worthy of respect and control themselves. They must have true faith and love others. They must not give up. In the same way, teach the older women to lead a holy life and not tell lies about others. They must not let wine control them. They must teach what is good and train younger women to love their husbands and children. The younger women must control themselves and remain pure. They must take good care of their homes. They must be kind. They must follow the lead of their husbands. Then no one will be able to speak evil things against God's word. In the same way, help the young men to control themselves. Do what is good. Set an example for them in everything... So teach what is true."

*Dear Father God, thank You for the examples of Samuel and Paul who did their best to warn and encourage Your people. Thank you for the example they set for the untrained young men Saul and Titus, who later on prepared the way for Your plan for Israel's Messiah (through King David's family) and in "teaching what is true" about Jesus Christ in love throughout Europe (through His apostles). Amen.*

### **25<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Psalms 101 is a psalm of David who was determined to lead a blameless life at a personal level and in the administration of the state of Israel. "LORD God Almighty, I will sing praise to You. I will be careful to lead a life that is without blame." In the middle of his commitment to God, he asks the question "When will You come to me?" (v.2). David knew that he needed God's help to live such a life and refuse to work with or mix with those who were not righteous. "I do not want to have anything to do with evil... I will look with favour on the faithful people in the land... Those whose lives are without blame will serve me."

Matthew 17:14-23. A man approached Jesus. "Lord, have mercy on my son. He shakes wildly and suffers a great deal. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to Your disciples. But they couldn't heal him." Jesus replied, "You unbelieving and perverse people! How long do I have to stay with you? How long do I have to put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." Jesus ordered the demon to leave the boy, and it came out of him... Then the disciples came to Jesus in private. "Why couldn't we drive out the demon?" Jesus replied, "Because your faith is much too small... If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, it is enough. You can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

*Father God, we know that King David sinned many times but we thank you for his divine wisdom and purpose which You used to establish his family line fulfilled in Christ our Saviour. Help us to build up the faith You want us to establish and use in our lives to drive out the wicked work of Satan. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **26<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Jonah 4:1-4. After all that Jonah experienced in surviving being swallowed by a whale, he became angry with God when He spared Nineveh the punishment they deserved. 'He prayed to the LORD and said, "LORD, isn't this exactly what I thought would happen when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to run away to Tarshish. I knew that You are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You do not want to destroy them. LORD, take away my life. I'd rather die than live." But the LORD replied,

"Do you have any right to be angry?" ' Despite knowing God's loving and forgiving nature, Jonah was still angry with God for showing compassion to people who did not deserve it!

2 Corinthians 2:5-11. Paul wrote, "Suppose someone has made us sad. In some ways, he hasn't made me sad so much as he has made all of you sad... He has been punished because most of you decided he should be. That is enough for him. Now you should forgive him and comfort him. Then he will not be sad more than he can stand. So I am asking you to tell him again that you still love him... Anyone you forgive I also will forgive. Was there anything to forgive? If so, I have forgiven it for your benefit, knowing that Christ is watching. We do not want Satan to outsmart us."

*Father God thank you for revealing Your true nature to us in showing us through Jonah how You are not happy if the wicked are destroyed instead of turning from their evil ways. Thank You for recording the teaching of Paul to forgive those who have done wrong, for their sake and for ours. Help us to know and express Your "loving and forgiving nature" as revealed by Christ Jesus our Saviour. For His sake. Amen.*

### **27<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Psalms 35:19-28 records King David's plea. "Do not let those who are my enemies without any reason laugh at me and make fun of me... They do not speak words of peace. They make up false charges against those who live quietly in the land... LORD God Almighty, You have seen this. Do not be silent. LORD, do not be far away from me... You always do what is right. Do not let my enemies have the joy of seeing me fall... Let those who are happy when my name is cleared shout with joy, 'May the LORD be honoured. He is pleased when everything goes well with those who serve Him.' You always do what is right. My tongue will speak about it and praise You."

Revelation 12:10-17 records words from Heaven heard by the apostle John. "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God have come. The authority of His Christ has come. Satan, who brings charges against our brothers and sisters, has been thrown down... They overcame him because the Lamb gave His life's blood for them. They overcame him by giving witness about Jesus to others. They were willing to risk their lives, even if it led to death. So be joyful in Heaven! But how terrible it will be for planet Earth! The devil has come down to you. He is very angry. He knows his time is short." John goes on to confirm, "The dragon saw that he had been thrown down to Earth... He was very angry with the woman. He went off to make war against the rest of her children. They obey God's commands and hold firmly to what Jesus has said."

*Father God, help us to have the faith of King David. Help us believe that the witness of the apostles and the brothers of Jesus will continue to prevail against the wicked persecution of Satan. "Help us to obey God's commands and hold firmly to what Jesus has said." Amen.*

### **28<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Ezra 7:23-28. Towards the end of the exile in Babylon, King Artaxerxes gave permission for Ezra to go back to the remaining Jews in Jerusalem and establish obedience to both king and God. He wrote an amazing letter. "Work hard for the Temple of the God of Heaven. Do everything He has required. I do not want Him to be angry with my kingdom and my son's kingdom... Ezra, appoint judges and other court officials. Use the wisdom your God gives you. Those you appoint should do what is right and fair when they judge people... They should do it for everyone who knows the laws of your God. And I want you to teach the people who do not know those laws." Ezra said, "People of Israel, give praise to the LORD God Almighty. He is the God of our people who lived long ago. He has put it in the king's heart to bring honour to the LORD and His Temple in Jerusalem."

Romans 8:9-17 says, "Your sinful nature no longer controls you. You live in the Spirit and the Spirit of God lives in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ. Christ lives in you. So your spiritually dead body is alive because you have been made right with God... The God who raised Christ from the dead will also give (everlasting) life to your bodies, which are going to die. He will do this by the power of His Spirit who lives in you... As His children, we will receive all that He has for us. We will share what Christ receives. But we must also share in His sufferings if we want to share in His glory."

*Almighty God, we ponder over the amazing prospect of Your intervention in the rulers of this world as in the time of Ezra. Prepare us to obey You and suffer in order to share in Your glory in this world and the next. Amen.*

### **29<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**

Job 32 to 38. Job's young friend Elihu advised Job about his complaint to God. He begins: "I am young, and you are old. So I was afraid to tell you what I know. I thought, 'Those who are older should speak first. Those who have lived for many years should teach people how to be wise.' ...But older people are not the only ones who are wise. They are not the only ones who understand what is right. So I am saying you should listen to me. I will tell you what I know. I waited while you men spoke. I listened to your reasoning. While you were searching for words, I paid careful attention to you. But not one of you has proved that Job is wrong. And none of you has answered his arguments." Six chapters later, the LORD God Almighty answered Job. "Who do you think you are to disagree with My plans? You do not know what you are talking about! Get ready to stand up for yourself. I will ask you some questions. Then I want you to answer Me. Where were you when I laid the Earth's foundation?"

Hebrews 9:26-28. "Christ has appeared once and for all time. He has come at the end of the ages to do away with sin. He has done that by offering Himself. People have to die once. After that, God will judge them. In the same way, Christ was offered up once. He took away the sins of many people. He will also come a second time. At that time He will not suffer for sin. Instead, He will come to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him."

*Father God, forgive us as You did Job, for assuming we know and understand Your purpose in creation, Your love in provision and Your mercy in forgiveness. Grant us wisdom this day to take in the costly sacrifice of Christ our Saviour in human form for our eternal salvation. Amen.*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023.**

Daniel 9:1-8. "I learned from the Scriptures that Jerusalem would remain destroyed for 70 years. That was what the LORD had told the prophet Jeremiah. So I prayed to the LORD God. I made many appeals to Him... I admitted that we had sinned. I said, 'LORD, You are a great and wonderful God. You keep the covenant You made with all those who love You and obey Your commands. You show them Your love. We have sinned and done what is wrong. We have been evil. We have refused to obey You. We have turned away from Your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets... LORD, You always do what is right. But we are covered with shame today. We are the people of Judah and Jerusalem... We are now living in many countries. You scattered us among the nations because we were not faithful to you. LORD, we and our kings and princes and people are covered with shame. We have sinned against You.' "

Philemon verses 4-12. "I always thank my God when I remember you in my prayers... Because of the authority Christ has given me, I could be bold. I could order you to do what you should do anyway. But I make my appeal to you on the basis of our love for each other... for Onesimus. He became a son to me while I was being held by chains. Before that, he was useless to you. But now he has become useful to you and to me. I am sending him back to you."

*Thank You heavenly Father for showing mercy on the nation of Israel through the prayers of Daniel. Thank You for revealing to us Paul's prayers for Philemon to show mercy towards his former slave Onesimus. Open our spiritual eyes, that we, too, will understand the need to seek Your mercy on individuals and groups of people large and small and pray for them, like Daniel and Paul. Amen.*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.**

Deuteronomy 2:1-7. Moses records, "For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir. Then the LORD spoke to me. 'Here are the orders I want you to give the people. Tell them that you are about to pass through the territory of your [Arab] relatives from the family line of Esau. They will be afraid of you. But be very careful. Do not make them angry. If you do, they will go to war against you. I will not give you any of their land... I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. Pay them with silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.' The LORD your God has blessed you in everything your hands have done. He watched over you when you travelled through that huge desert. For these 40 years the LORD your God has been with you. So you have had everything you need."

Acts 4:23-31. Luke records, 'The believers raised their voices together in prayer to God. "LORD and King, You made Heaven, Earth and the sea. You made everything in them. Long ago you spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our father David, who served You... [But] all of them made plans against Your holy servant Jesus. He is the one You anointed. They did what Your power and purpose had already decided should happen. Now, LORD, consider the bad things they say they

are going to do. Help us to be bold when we speak Your word. Stretch out Your hand to heal. Do miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They were bold when they spoke God's word.'

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the records of Moses and Luke proving Your love, mercy, purpose and provision for those You have called to live out Your truth and preach the Good News of Jesus our Saviour. Amen.*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Ruth 1:6-22 records the story of how Ruth went with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem to begin a new life God had chosen for her in Israel. 'Naomi prepared to go from Moab back to her home in Israel. Her two daughters-in-law went with her. She told them, "Each of you go back to your own mother's home. You were kind to your husbands, who have died. You have also been kind to me. May the LORD help each of you find a secure place in the home of another husband." But Ruth said, "Do not try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go I will go. Where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die I will die. And there my body will be buried." Naomi realized that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. The two women continued on their way and arrived in Bethlehem.' This is where Ruth married Boaz and gave birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, who became the father of King David.

Galatians 4:28 to 5:1. "Brothers and sisters, you are God's children because of His promise, just as Isaac was. The son born to the servant girl tried to hurt the son born by the power of the Holy Spirit (to Abraham's elderly wife Sarah)... What does Scripture say? 'Get rid of the slave woman and her son. The slave woman's son will never have a share of the family's property with the free woman's son.' Brothers and sisters, we are not the slave woman's children. We are the free woman's children. Christ has set us free. So stand firm and do not let the chains of slavery hold you again."

*Thank You God for this reminder of Your provision for the families of true believers born into Abraham's family through Sarah and Ruth and David and ultimately through Your Messiah, Jesus Christ, born through Mary. Amen.*

#### **5<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Psalms 149 and 150. "Praise the LORD. Sing praise to Him in the community of His faithful people. Let Israel be filled with joy because God is their Maker. Let the people of Zion be glad because He is their King. Let them praise His name with dancing. Let them make music to Him with harps and tambourines. The LORD takes delight in his people. He saves those who are not proud. He makes them feel like kings. Let his faithful people be filled with joy because of that honour... Praise the Lord." The final psalm confirms where, why, how and who should praise Almighty God.

Galatians 3:2-14. Paul says, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the Law? Or did you receive the Spirit by believing (the Good News) what you heard? You began with the Holy Spirit. Are you now trying to complete God's work in you by your own strength? ...Why does God give you His Spirit? Why does he work miracles among you? Is it because you do what the Law says? ...Think about Abraham. Scripture says, 'Abraham believed God. God accepted Abraham because he believed. So his faith made him right with God.' (Genesis 15:6) So you see, those who have faith are children of Abraham... God announced the Good News ahead of time to Abraham. He said, 'All nations will be blessed because of you.' (Genesis 12:3) So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham... We know that no-one is made right with God by keeping the Law. Scripture says, 'Those who are right with God will live by faith.' (Habakkuk 2:4) Christ set us free from the curse of the law... so that the blessing given to Abraham would come to non-Jews through Christ. He did it so that we all might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by believing in Christ."

*We praise You Father God for the Holy Spirit and freedom we have in Christ to worship You. Amen.*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Job 22:21-22 and 23:1-13. Job's friend Eliphaz advises "Job, obey God and be at peace with Him... If you return to the Mighty One, you will have what you had before." Job replied, "I wish I knew where I could find Him and go to the place where He lives!"

Acts 2:25-39. Peter told the crowds on the day of Pentecost, "King David said, 'I know that the LORD is always with me. He is at my right hand. I will always be secure. So my heart is glad. Joy is on my tongue. My body also will be full of hope.' (Psalm 16:8) Brothers, you can be sure that

David... knew that God had made a promise to him that someone in his family line would be king after him... So he spoke about the Christ rising from the dead. He said that the Christ would not be left in the grave... God has raised this same Jesus back to life. We are all witnesses of this. Jesus has been given a place of honour at the right hand of God... It is Jesus who has poured out what you now see and hear... You nailed Jesus to the cross. But God has made Him both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "All of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then your sins will be forgiven. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is also for all who are far away. It is for all whom the Lord our God will choose."

*Father God, we thank You that King David experienced the answer to Job's prayer 500 years later which was fulfilled for all time 1000 years further on through Christ our Saviour. Thank You for the access we have to You today! Amen.*

### **Jeremiah 14:14-22.**

The LORD God Almighty said to Jeremiah, "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name... They try to get you to believe their own mistaken ideas... Those same prophets will die because of war and hunger. And the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem..." "LORD, we admit we have done evil things. We also admit that our people of long ago were guilty... For the honour of Your name, do not turn Your back on us. Do not bring shame on Your glorious throne in the Temple. Remember the covenant You made with us. Please do not break it... So we put our hope in You."

Galatians 4:21-5:1. "You who want to be under the authority of the Law, it is written that Abraham had two sons. The slave woman gave birth to one of them. The free woman gave birth to the other one. Abraham's son by the slave woman was born in the usual way. But his son by the free woman was born because of God's promise. The two women stand for two covenants... Brothers and sisters, you are children of God's promise just as Isaac was. At that time, the son born in the usual way tried to hurt Isaac, the son born by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the same now. But what else does Scripture say? 'The slave woman's son will never have a share of the family's property with the free woman's son.' (Genesis 21:10) Brothers and sisters, we are not the slave woman's children. We are the free woman's children. Christ has set us free. He wants us to enjoy freedom. So stand firm. Do not let the chains of slavery hold you again."

*Father God, have mercy this day for Your people Israel, that they may never return to slavery and destruction as in Jeremiah's day. Show mercy and turn Your people's hearts to You and their Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Deuteronomy 2:13-23. Moses recorded these words on the journey to the Promised Land of Canaan, now Israel. "The LORD spoke to me and said, 'Today you must pass near the border of Moab... When you come to the Ammonites, do not attack them. If you do, they will go to war against you. I will not give you any of their land as your own. I have given it to the people in the family line of Lot' (Abraham's nephew). The Rephaites were strong people... But the LORD destroyed the Rephaites to make room for the Ammonites. The LORD had done the same thing for the people of Esau (Jacob's twin brother). They live in Seir. God destroyed the Horites to make room for them. They have lived in Seir to this very day... The Avvites lived in villages as far away as Gaza. But people came from Caphor (Crete) and destroyed the Avvites. Then they settled in Gaza in the territory of the Avvites."

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5. Paul writes, "Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message will spread quickly. Pray that others will honour it just as you did. And pray that we will be saved from sinful and evil people. Not everyone is a believer. But the Lord is faithful. He will strengthen you. He will guard you from the evil one. We trust in the Lord. So we are sure that you are doing the things we tell you to do and will keep on doing them. May the Lord fill your hearts with God's love. May Christ give you the strength to go on."

*Thank you Father God for the writings of Moses which confirms the land inherited in Canaan by the people of Lot and Esau and the immigrants from Crete who live in Gaza. Thank you also for the writings of Paul advising us to "pray that we will be saved from sinful and evil people, for not everyone is a believer". Amen!*

### **11<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Joel 3:9-17. "Announce this among the nations. Tell them to prepare for battle... Hammer your ploughs into swords and your pruning tools into spears... Come quickly, all of you surrounding nations. Gather together in the Valley of Jehoshaphat... where I will judge them... The nations are ripe for harvest. Come, stomp on them as if they were grapes. Crush them until the winepress of My anger is full... For the nations have committed far too many sins! ...The day of the LORD is near in that valley... The LORD will roar like a lion from Jerusalem... Earth and sky will tremble, but the LORD will keep the people of Israel safe. You will know that I am the LORD your God... Jerusalem will be My holy city."

1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Paul wrote, "Suppose I speak in the languages of human beings and of angels. If I don't have love, I am only a loud gong or a noisy cymbal... Suppose I can understand all the secret things of God and know everything about Him and have enough faith to move mountains. If I do not have love, I am nothing... Love is not happy with evil... It always protects and trusts and hopes. It never gives up. Love never fails... And when what is perfect comes, the things that are not perfect now will pass away... Now we see only a dim likeness of things... But someday we will see clearly and I will know completely, just as God knows me completely. The three most important things to have are faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love."

*Heavenly Father, thank you for Your words through Joel and Paul. Forgive the sins of believers which has provoked Your anger and the anger of the nations. May we seek the true qualities You demand based on love. And then may we soon see the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy when "swords will be turned into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks". Amen.*

### **12<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

1 Chronicles Chapters 2 to 11 summarises the families descended from Jacob (who God called Israel). 2:15 lists King David who God anointed as second king over Israel. 8:33 and 9:39 list Saul, the first king of Israel who was chosen by the people. 10:1-13 tells how Saul took his own life. 'Saul died because he wasn't faithful to the LORD.' 11:1-3 records, 'The whole community of Israel came together to see David at Hebron. They said, "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, Saul was our king. But you led the men of Israel in battle. The LORD your God said to you, 'You will be the shepherd over My people Israel. You will become their ruler.' " All of the elders of Israel who came to see King David at Hebron anointed him as king over Israel.'

1 Timothy 2:1-8. Paul says, "First, I want all of you to pray for everyone... Pray for kings and for all who are in authority. Pray that we will live peaceful and quiet lives. And pray that we will be godly and holy. That is good and it pleases God our Saviour. He wants everyone to be saved. He wants them to come to know the truth. There is only one God. And there is only one go-between for God and human beings. He is the man Christ Jesus. He gave Himself to pay for the sins of everyone. That was a witness given by God at just the right time. I was appointed to be an apostle to preach the Good News... And God appointed me to be a teacher of the true faith to those who are not Jews. I want men everywhere to pray. I want them to lift up holy hands."

*We thank You Father God that you appoint those You want as leaders or allow us to learn by our mistakes regarding our own appointments. Encourage us to pray at all times for all people. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Malachi 4:1-6. This is the word of the LORD God Almighty to the people of Israel through Malachi around 400 BC. "You can be sure the day of the LORD is coming. My anger will burn like a furnace. All those who are proud will be like straw. Also those who do what is evil. The day that is coming will set them on fire. Not even a root or a branch will be left to them. But here is what will happen for you who have respect for Me. The sun that brings life will rise. Its rays will bring healing to My people. You will go out and leap like calves that have just been let out of the barn. Then you will stomp on sinful people. They will be like ashes under your feet. That will happen on the day I act. Remember the law my servant Moses gave you at Mount Horeb. They were for the whole nation of Israel. I will send you the prophet Elijah [Israel's Messiah]... Elijah will teach parents how to love their children. He will also teach children how to honour their parents." These words are at the end of the Old Testament.

Matthew chapter 1 records at the beginning of the New Testament the family line of Jesus Christ. 'He is the son of King David, the son of Abraham' (v.1). 'There were 14 generations from Abraham to David. There were 14 from David until the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon. And

there were 14 from that time to the Christ [the Messiah]. This is how the birth of Jesus the Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (v.17-18)

*Help us Father God never to forget these basic teachings of faith in You and Your Messiah, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Psalms 37:32-40. King David wrote, "Those who are evil hide and wait for godly [righteous] people and try to kill them. But the LORD will not leave the godly in their power. He will not let them be found guilty when they are brought into court. Wait for the LORD to act. Live as He wants you to. He will honour you by giving you the land. When sinners are cut off from it, you will see it... Think about those who are without blame. Look at those who are honest. A man who loves peace will have a tomorrow. But all sinners will be destroyed. Those who are evil will not have a tomorrow. They will be cut off from the land. The LORD saves those who do what is right. He is their place of safety when trouble comes. The LORD helps them and saves them. He saves them from sinful people because they go to Him for safety."

Acts 7:53-60 records the stoning of the apostle Stephen. Stephen said, "The Law you received was brought by angels. But you haven't obeyed it." When the Sanhedrin heard this, they became very angry. They ground their teeth at Stephen. But he was full of the Holy Spirit. He looked up to Heaven and saw God's glory. He saw Jesus standing at God's right hand. "Look!" he said. "I see Heaven open. The Son of Man is standing at God's right hand." When the Sanhedrin heard this, they covered their ears. They yelled at the top of their voices. They all rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city. They began to throw stones at him to kill him.

*LORD God, Your people Israel have sinned many times through disobedience and going against what you have planned for the salvation of the world. Protect them from evil and encourage them to "Wait for the LORD to act. Live as He wants you to. He will honour you by giving you the land." Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Deuteronomy 9. Moses spoke to the people of Israel as they stood on the banks of the Jordan waiting to cross the river into God's promised land of Canaan. "Never forget you made the LORD your God angry in the desert. You refused to obey Him from the day you left Egypt until you arrived here." Moses reminded them how they had made the LORD angry enough to want to destroy them. This was when they built the golden calf and began to worship it. God even wanted to raise up another tribe through Moses instead of Jacob's family to occupy Canaan! Moses pleaded with God. "Do not destroy Your people. They belong to You. You set them free from Egypt by Your great power. Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Forgive the people of Israel for being so stubborn... They are Your people. They belong to You."

Hebrews 2:1-9 says, "So we must pay more careful attention to what we have heard. Then we will not drift away from it... Every time people broke the Law, they were punished... Then how will we escape if we do not pay attention to God's great salvation? ... He (Jesus Christ) suffered death. By the grace of God, He tasted death for everyone."

*Father God, since the rebellion of Adam and Eve Your people have sinned. We read how you chose to destroy Your people apart from Noah and his family. We ask that despite Your anger today, You will hear our repentance, both for ourselves and on behalf of others. We plead with the words of Moses, "Do not destroy Your people. They belong to You." Thank You that You sent Jesus our Saviour as a Son of Man to die for our sins. Thank you that You raised Him up as the Son of God to mediate on our behalf. Save us in Your mercy and grant the compassion of Christ in our lives to help save others from sin. Amen.*

### **18<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Nehemiah 4 records the rebuilding of Jerusalem in 445 BC. Neighbouring enemies of the Jews became angry and ridiculed their work. Nehemiah prayed "Our God, please listen to our prayer. Some people hate us. They are making fun of us... Do not hide your eyes from their guilt... They have made fun of the builders." Then the people were encouraged and quickly reached half way in rebuilding the walls. But their neighbours became more angry and planned to make war. The Jews

prayed and also set up guards day and night. However, they became weary with their labours and discouraged when the supply of good quality stones began to run out and also fearful of what their enemies were saying. Nehemiah told the people, "Do not be afraid of your enemies. Remember the LORD God Almighty is great and powerful." He then instructed half the men to arm themselves and protect the workers from any attack, saying "Our God will fight for us".

Galatians 3:22-29. Paul says, "Scripture announces that the whole world is a prisoner because of sin. It does so in order that what was promised [to Abraham] might be given to those who believe. That promise comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Before faith in Christ came, we were held prisoners by the law... So the law was put in charge until Christ came. He came so that we might be made right with God by believing in Him... You are all children of God by believing in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ as if He were your clothes. There is no Jew or Greek. There is no slave or free person. There is no male or female. Because you belong to Christ Jesus, you are all one. You who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed and will receive what God has promised."

*Thank You God that more and more people trust in Israel's Messiah! "Fight for us" today!  
Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Ezekiel 16:59-63. Ezekiel speaks to his fellow Jews living in exile in Babylon. "God says, 'I will punish you in keeping with what you have done. I sealed with an oath the covenant I made with you. You hated that oath and you broke My covenant. But I will remember My covenant with you. I made it with you when you were young. Now I will make a new covenant with you. It will last forever... I will pay for all of the sins you have committed. Then you will remember what you have done. You will be ashamed of it. Because of your shame, you will never speak against Me again.' "

Revelation 2:1-7. Jesus speaks to John about the church in Ephesus. "Here is what I command you to write to them... 'I know what you are doing. You work long and hard. I know you cannot put up with those who are evil. You have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not. You have found out that they are liars. You have been faithful and have put up with a lot of trouble because of Me. You have not given up. But here is something I hold against you. You do not have as much love as you had at first. Remember how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you don't, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place... Listen to what the Holy Spirit says to the churches. I will allow those who overcome to eat from the tree of life in God's paradise.' "

*Thank you heavenly Father that You promised in the Old Testament "I will pay for all of the sins you have committed. Then you will remember and be ashamed". Thank You that through Your Son, Jesus took on the punishment we deserve. Help us to reflect this amazing love in our lives that the church in Ephesus lacked. Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Deuteronomy 7:17-26 records the words of Moses to the people of Israel regarding the tribes who occupied their Promised Land. "You might say to yourselves, 'These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?' But do not be afraid of them. Be sure to remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and all of the Egyptians... He will do the same things to all of the nations you are now afraid of... So do not be terrified by them. The LORD your God is with you. He is a great and wonderful God... The LORD your God will hand those nations over to you. He will throw them into a panic until they are destroyed. He will hand their kings over to you. You will wipe out their names from the earth. No one will be able to stand up against you. You will destroy them."

Revelation 17:12-14 records a further vision given to John. The angel said to him, "The ten horns you saw are ten kings. They have not yet received a kingdom. But for 'one hour' they will receive authority to rule together with the beast. They have only one purpose. So they give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb. But the Lamb will overcome them because He is the most powerful Lord of all and the greatest King of all. His appointed, chosen and faithful followers will be with Him."

*Father God, in these dangerous days before the return of our Saviour, Jesus the Christ, may Your people Israel heed the words given by Moses 3500 years ago. And may all Your "chosen and faithful followers" of the Lamb of God heed the words given to John as we live through this brief*

*period of "the ten kings". Grant understanding, faith and wisdom as we prepare the way for Christ's return to Jerusalem to rule on Earth. Help us to show His mercy to all. Amen.*

### **23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.**

Ezekiel 17:11-24 gives the word of God to Ezekiel. "King Zedekiah hated the oath he took in My name and broke the treaty... So I will bring him to Babylon and judge him there because he was not faithful to Me. Then you will know that I the LORD God Almighty has spoken." However, Ezekiel is given a parable for the future of Israel and its Messiah and His role in the world. "I myself will get a twig from the very top of a cedar tree and plant it on the high mountains of Israel. It will produce branches and bear fruit. All kinds of birds will make their nests in it. They will live in the shade of its branches."

1 Corinthians 12 gives a parable about the spiritual gifts in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ. "There is one body but it has many parts... We were all baptized by one Holy Spirit into one body. It didn't matter whether we were Jews or Greeks, slaves or free people. We were all given the same Spirit to drink. The body has many parts... God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be... The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you!' The head cannot say to the feet, 'I do not need you!' The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are the ones we cannot do without... God has joined together all the parts of the body... In that way, all of them will take care of [respect] each other." Paul then gives a list of the various spiritual gifts to expect in the church of God. He follows this with the advice to work together in love.

*Thank You Father God for the many parables You give in the Bible. Help us to understand them and the importance of obeying Your will and working together in love to bring out Your gifts in our churches. Amen.*

### **24<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Numbers Chapter 33 describes the 41 stages of the journey of Israel from Egypt to God's Promised Land of Canaan. On the east bank of the River Jordan, the LORD God Almighty spoke through Moses to the people. "Go across the Jordan River into Canaan. Drive out all those who are living in the land... Destroy all their statues and the high places where they are worshiped. Take the land as your own. Settle down in it. I have given it to you... Give out the shares based on the number of men in Israel's tribes. If you do not drive out the people who are living in the land, then those you allow to remain there will become like thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live. Then I will do to you what I plan to do to them." (33:51-56) The next chapter describes God's boundaries for the future land of Israel.

Acts Chapter 5. 'The high priest and all his companions were very jealous of the apostles. So they arrested them and put them in prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord came. He opened the prison doors and brought the apostles out. "Go! Stand in the Temple courtyard," the angel said. "Tell the people all about this new life." ' (5:17-20) After being arrested and flogged, 'the apostles were full of joy as they left the Sanhedrin. They considered it an honour to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Day after day, they kept teaching in the Temple courtyards and from house to house. They never stopped telling the Good News that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah].' (5:41-42)

*Father God, thank You for Your word that teaches us the importance of obedience to Your calling. Help us to persevere under persecution, aware of the promised Holy Spirit and Your ministering angels as we serve Christ our Saviour. Help us to "tell about this new life" in love. Amen.*

### **25<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Joshua 10:1-15 describes the time soon after the successful capture of Jericho at the start of the occupation of the Promised Land of Canaan. The city of Jerusalem is mentioned for the first time (v.1) because their king feared the army of Israel. In 1451 BC, he gained support of four other kings and their five armies unwisely attacked the Gibeonites who had agreed to serve Israel. The LORD God Almighty told Joshua not to be afraid. "Not one of them will be able to withstand you." (v.8) God caused Israel's enemies to be confused. Then Joshua, in front of his soldiers, asked God to make the sun and moon to stand still while they defeated their enemies. "There has never been a day like it before or since... The LORD was fighting for Israel!" (v.14)

Luke 24:44-49. After the resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem and before His ascension, Jesus told His followers, "Everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must come true." Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them,

"This is what is written. The Christ will suffer. He will rise from the dead on the third day. His followers will preach in His name. They will tell others to turn away from their sins and be forgiven. People from every nation will hear it, beginning at Jerusalem... I am going to send you what My Father has promised. But for now, stay in the city until you have received power from Heaven."

*Heavenly Father, we are amazed that the centre of Your focus on Earth is Jerusalem, not far from where You brought Abraham and his family. We are even more amazed how You held up the rotation of planet Earth around the sun to achieve Israel's victory 3500 years ago! Help us to understand the purpose of the death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah in Jerusalem for the salvation of the world. Come soon Lord Jesus! Amen.*

### **26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

1 Chronicles Chapters 1 to 6. Chapter 1 lists Adam to Noah and his three sons. Then the descendants of Abraham are listed through Hagar, Keturah and Sarah. Chapters 2 to 6 list the names of the 12 tribes of Jacob (Israel) through Sarah's only son Isaac. At the end of Chapter 6, the emphasis quickly turns to the worship of Almighty God through the musicians appointed by King David. 'Here are the Levites David put in charge of the music in the house of the LORD... The men used their music to serve in front of the holy tent, the Tent of Meeting.' (6:31-32)

1 Timothy 2:1-10. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he quickly turns to instructions on worship. "First, I want all of you to pray for everyone. Ask God to bless them. Give thanks for them. Pray for all who are in authority to live peaceful and quiet lives. Pray that we will be godly and holy. God wants everyone to be saved and know the truth. There is only one God and there is only one go-between for God and us human beings, Christ Jesus. He gave Himself to pay for the sins of everyone. I was appointed to be a messenger and an apostle to preach this Good News... I want men everywhere to pray. I want them to lift up holy hands. I do not want them to be angry when they pray. I do not want them to argue. I also want women to dress simply. They should wear clothes that are right and proper [avoiding distraction]. They shouldn't braid their hair. They shouldn't wear expensive jewellery nor spend too much on clothes."

*Heavenly Father, we take note that in both Old and New Testament periods, there was much emphasis on worship. Also advice on avoiding distractions to worship in the meetings. Encourage us to value and spend more time in worship and prayer together, whatever our "tent of meeting". For Your glory and Christ's sake. Amen.*

### **27<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Deuteronomy 32. Moses recited to God's people, "I will make known the name of the LORD. How great He is! He is the Rock. His works are perfect... Remember, He is your Father and Creator... Remember the days of old. Think about what the LORD did through those many years." (32:1-7) "Think carefully about all of the words I have announced to you today. I want you to command your children to be careful to obey all of the words of His law... They are now your life. If you obey them, you will live in the land for a long time." (32:46-47) The people listened and obeyed until after the days of Moses and Joshua, then disobey and worshipped other gods.

Luke 16:13-31. Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters at the same time... Or he will be faithful to one and dislike the other. You cannot serve God and Money at the same time." The Pharisees loved money. They heard all that Jesus said and made fun of Him. Jesus said to them, "You try to make yourselves look good in the eyes of other people. But God knows your hearts. What is worth a great deal among people is hated by God. The teachings of the Law and the Prophets were preached until John came. Since then, the good news of God's kingdom is being preached. And everyone is trying very hard to enter it." (16:13-16) Jesus then told them a parable and concluded "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone rises from the dead." (16:31)

*Father God we thank You that both Moses and Jesus warned the people to obey the Law and not worship other gods including the god of money. We note the sad words of Jesus that many would reject His sacrifice for our salvation and reject the fact that You raised Him from death to life everlasting. His words are "now our life"! Amen.*

### **30<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

Ezekiel 12:21-25. "A message came to me from the LORD. He said, 'You have a proverb in the land of Israel. It says, "The days go by, and not even one vision comes true." Tell them, the LORD and King says, I am going to put an end to that proverb. They will not use that saying in Israel anymore. Tell them, the days are coming soon when every vision will come true. There will be no more false visions. People will no longer use magic to find out whether good things are going to happen in Israel. I am the Lord. So I will say what I want to. And it will come true when I want it to. In your days I will do everything I say I will.' "

Revelation 2:8-11 gives the words of the risen Lord Jesus to the church fellowship in Smyrna near Ephesus. "Here are the words of the One who is the First and the Last. He is the One who died and came to life again. He says, 'I know that you suffer and are poor. But you are rich! ...Be faithful, even if it means you must die. Then I will give you a crown. The crown is [eternal] life itself. Those who have ears should listen to what the Holy Spirit says to the churches.' "

*Heavenly Father, thank You for your encouragement to listen and take seriously Your prophetic words in the Scriptures and through Your saints, past and present. In these days of tribulation whilst we await the return of Our Lord and Saviour, help us to be faithful, joyful, bold and enthusiastic about sharing and living Your truth and proclaiming the Good News of salvation through Christ alone. Refine us, change us and use us to prayerfully bring Your eternal new life to others through Your Spirit at work in our lives. Not in our strength but in Yours, with the compassion of Christ at work within us. Amen.*

### **31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.**

Numbers 13 records how the LORD God Almighty instructed Moses in 1490 BC to send spies into the His Promised Land of Canaan. "Send one leader from each of Israel's tribes." So Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. (13:1-3) The list of twelve names follows which includes Hoshea son of Nun from the tribe of Ephraim. Moses renamed Hoshea 'Joshua'. (13:16) This name means 'God's salvation' or 'Yahweh saves'. It is also spelled in Hebrew as 'Jeshua' or 'Yeshua' which is the same as 'Jesus' in the Greek language of the New Testament era. This change of name meant that Moses already knew who would be the next leader for the new state of Israel in Canaan in 1451 BC. (Joshua 1:1-10.)

Romans 15:4-9. "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us. The Scriptures give us strength to go on. They cheer us up and give us hope... May God help you agree with each other as you follow Christ Jesus. Then you can give glory to Him with one heart and voice. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has accepted you. So accept one another in order to bring praise to God. Christ has become a servant of the Jews... He shows us that God will keep the promises He made to the founders of our nation. Jesus became a servant of the Jews so that people who are not Jews could give glory to God for His mercy. It is written, 'I will sing praises to you among the Gentile nations.' " (2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49)

*Thank you Father for the Scriptures "written in the past to teach us" to strengthen our faith "to go on". We see how Moses prepared the way for Joshua who prepared the way for the new Joshua, Jesus the Christ or Messiah, 'God's Salvation'. Help us unite together to "bring praise" to You as we prepare the way for Christ's return. Amen.*

### **1<sup>st</sup> November 2023.**

Psalms 71:15-20. An unknown psalmist speaks of his commitment and faith and readiness to witness of the LORD God Almighty and to praise Him. "I will say that what You have done is right [righteous]. All day long I will talk about how You have saved Your people. It is more than I can understand! LORD and King, I will come and announce Your mighty acts. You alone do what is right. O God, ever since I was young You have taught me about what You have done. To this very day I tell about Your wonderful acts. Do not leave me even when I am old and grey. Let me live to tell my children about Your power and Your mighty acts. Your saving acts [of righteousness] reach to the skies. You have done great things, O God. Who is like You? You have sent many bitter troubles my way. But you will give me new life. Even if I am almost in the grave, you will bring me back."

2 Thessalonians 3:10-15. Paul writes, "When we were with you, we gave you a rule. 'Anyone who will not work will not eat.' We hear that some people among you do not want to work... Instead, they go around upsetting people. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. So we strongly command people like that to settle down and earn the food they eat. Brothers and sisters, do not ever get tired

of doing the right thing. Keep an eye on anyone who does not obey the directions in this letter. Watch that person closely. Have nothing to do with them... But do not think of them as an enemy. Instead, warn them as a brother or sister."

*Father God we thank You for the example of the unknown psalmist. Help us to adopt the many practical examples given by Paul for today and be able to live up to the Old Testament standard of righteousness that You love and enjoy. Amen.*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.**

Malachi 4:1-5. The last chapter in the Old Testament warns us that God's final judgement of evil people will surely come (4:1) just as God's judgement came at the time of Noah. However, it will be a time of blessing for all who believe in and worship Almighty God (4:2). We must "remember the Law my servant Moses gave you. I will also send you the prophet Elijah." This happened during the ministry of John the Baptist in preparing the way for God's Saviour, Jesus the Messiah or Christ (Mark 9:11-13). John's purpose was "to teach parents how to love their children and teach children how to honour their parents. If that does not happen, I will come and I will put a curse on the land." (4:6)

Revelation 22:12-16 gives the final words of Jesus in the New Testament. "Look! I am coming soon! I will reward each person for what he has done... I am the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will have the right to come to the tree of life. They will be allowed to go through the gates into the city. Outside the city are the dogs and those who practice witchcraft. Also those who commit sexual sins and murder. Also those who worship statues of gods, and everyone who loves and does what is false. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this witness for the churches... Let those who hear say, 'Come!' Anyone who is thirsty should come. Anyone who wants to take the free gift of the water of life should do so."

*Father God, thank You for these warnings and promises. Also for the example to follow the Ten Commandments and their fulfilment in Christ our King and Saviour. Help us to "believe in and worship You" and prepare for our King's return by adopting the role of John the Baptist. Forgive us when we fail to teach our children to love and respect You and each other. Amen.*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023.**

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18. "I was king over Israel... I looked into everything that is done on Earth. What a heavy load God has put on us! I have seen what is done on Earth. It doesn't have any meaning... People cannot straighten things that are twisted... I said to myself, 'Look, my wisdom has really been growing. In fact, I'm now wiser than anyone who ruled over Jerusalem in the past.' Then I used my mind to understand what it really means to be wise... But I found out that it is like chasing the wind. A lot of human wisdom leads to a lot of sorrow. More knowledge only brings more sadness." After further moans and groans, the writer concludes, "Here's the final thing I want to say. Have respect for God and obey His commandments... God will judge everything people do. That includes everything they try to hide. He will judge everything, whether it is good or evil." (12:13-14)

Galatians 3:26 to 4:7. "You are all children of God by believing in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ as if He were your clothes. There is no Jew or Gentile. There is no slave or free person. There is no male or female. Because you belong to Christ Jesus, you are all one. You are all Abraham's seed. You will receive what God has promised... When we were children, we were slaves to the basic things the people of the world believe. But then the right time came. God sent His Son... Because you are His children, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts... So because you are His children, you inherit what He promised to give His children."

*Thank You heavenly Father for the time You made us part of Your worldwide family on Earth. Save us from following the foolish ideas of mankind and "have respect for God and obey His commandments" to inherit what You have promised in Christ. Amen.*

### **6<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

1 Samuel 18:12-16. King Saul tried to prevent David from becoming Israel's future king and an ancestor of their Messiah. 'The LORD had left Saul and was with David. So Saul was afraid of David. He sent David away to lead Israel's troops in battle. In everything he did, he was very successful because the LORD was with him. When Saul saw how successful David was, he became more afraid of him... Saul said to David, "Just serve me bravely and fight the LORD's battles." Saul said to himself, "I will not have to lift my hand to strike him down. The Philistines will do that!"' But God did not allow the Philistines to kill David.

James 2:19-24. "You believe there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that! And they tremble. You foolish man, do you want proof that faith without good works is useless? Our father Abraham offered his son Isaac on the altar. Was he not then considered to be right with God because of what he did? So you see that what he believed and what he did were working together. What he did made his faith complete. That is what Scripture means where it says, 'Abraham believed God. God accepted Abraham because he believed. So his faith made him right with God.' (Genesis 15:6; 22:1-18) So you see that a person is made right with God by what he does. It doesn't happen only because of what he believes."

*Almighty God, thank You for the Scriptures which tell us how Abraham and David had faith in You to go forward in trusting you to save them and the future families. Thank You, that over a thousand years later, You used that same nation to establish the birth of Israel's Messiah, our Saviour. Make us strong in our faith to do Your work of extending and caring for Your family of believers. We pray for divine wisdom for Israel's leaders today to protect them from their enemies. Amen.*

### **7<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Obadiah verses 15 to 21 looks forward to the day when all of Israel's enemies will be defeated in the "day of the LORD" (v.15). "The people of Jacob will again receive the land as their own. They will be like a fire. Joseph's people will be like a flame. The nation of Esau [Jacob's twin brother] will be like straw... The LORD has spoken. Israelites from the Negev Desert will take over Esau's mountains. Israelites from the western hills will possess Philistia. They will take over the territories of Ephraim and Samaria. Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin will possess the land of Gilead." (v.17-19) "The Kingdom will belong to the LORD God Almighty." (v.21).

Titus 2:1-7. Paul instructs, "Tell the older men that in anything they do, they must not go too far. They must be worthy of respect. They must control themselves. They must have true faith. They must love others... In the same way, teach the older women to lead a holy life. They must not tell lies about others. They must not let wine control them. Instead, they must teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children. The younger women must control themselves. They must be pure. They must take good care of their homes. They must be kind. They must follow the lead of their husbands. Then no one will be able to speak evil things against God's word. In the same way, help the young men to control themselves."

*Thank You Father God for the awareness of Your teaching in the smallest books of the Bible relating to big truths for today. Keep our minds open to what You are establishing in Israel today. We note the role of Joseph and Benjamin, Jacob's sons born to his beloved wife Rachel. We also see the need for families to avoid social disorder and live holy and disciplined lives to demonstrate love, self control and respect for others. Amen.*

### **8<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Joshua 1:1-9 records Israel's entry into God's Promised Land of Canaan whilst waiting to cross the River Jordan. 'The LORD God Almighty said to Joshua, "I want all of you to go into the land I am about to give to the people of Israel. I will give all of you every place you walk on, just as I promised Moses. Your territory will reach from the Negev Desert all the way to Lebanon. The great Euphrates River will be to the east. The Mediterranean Sea will be to the west. Your territory will include all of the Hittite country. Joshua, no one will be able to stand up against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses... Be strong and brave. You will lead these people, and they will take the land as their very own. It is the land I promised with an oath to give their people long ago... Make sure you obey the whole Law Moses gave you. Do not turn away from it to the right or to the left. Then you will have success everywhere you go... I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go." '

1 Corinthians 4:1-5. Paul wrote, "We serve Christ. We are trusted with God's secret truth. Those who have been given a trust must prove that they are faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court... The Lord judges me. So do not judge anything before the appointed time. Wait until the Lord returns. He will bring to light what is hidden in the dark. He will show the real reasons why people do what they do. At that time each believer will receive praise from God."

*Help us Heavenly Father to proclaim Your truth in the Bible for today's needs and prepare the way for the return of Jesus Christ our Saviour to Jerusalem to rule the world. Amen.*

### **9<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Psalm 34. "I will thank the LORD at all times. Let those who are hurting hear and be joyful. Join me in giving glory to the LORD God Almighty. I looked to the LORD, and He saved me from everything I was afraid of. Those who look to Him are filled with joy and never put to shame. Taste and see that the LORD is good! You people of God, have respect for the LORD... Do you love life and want to see many good days? Then keep your tongues from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn away from evil, and do good. The LORD looks with favour on those who are godly. His ears are open to their cry... He is close to those whose hearts have been broken. He saves those whose spirits have been crushed. Anyone who does what is right may have many troubles. But the LORD saves them... The enemies of godly people will be judged."

Acts 10:30-48. The apostle Peter went to visit Cornelius, a godly Roman army officer. He told Peter, "God is here with us. We are ready to listen to everything the LORD has commanded you to tell us." Peter said, "I now realize how true it is that God treats everyone the same and accepts people from every nation. He accepts all who have respect for Him and do what is right." Peter then preached the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit then came on all who heard the message. Some Jewish believers had come with Peter. They were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on those who were not Jews. So Peter ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

*Thank You God, that "The LORD looks with favour on those who are godly." Thank you for the testimony of Cornelius and his household who received Jesus as their Saviour and were baptised. Amen.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Song of Songs 2:7 and 3:5. The writer praises the joy of love between a man and a woman within marriage as a gift of God Almighty. It brings a man and women together in perfect unity of spirit, mind and body, as between God and His people and between Christ and His Church. Marriage is also the basis for raising a family in love to maintain and support the population through each new generation. These two verses warn against yielding to the temptation of undisciplined 'free' love. "Women of Jerusalem, take an oath and make me a promise. Do not stir up love. Do not wake it up until it is ready." That is, wait until the time is right!

2 Peter 1:3-8. "God's power has given us everything we need to lead a godly life. All of that has come to us because we know the One who chose us... He has also given us His very great and valuable promises. He did it so you could share in His nature and escape from the evil in the world. That evil is caused by sinful longings. So you should try very hard to add goodness to your faith. To goodness, add knowledge. To knowledge, add the ability to control yourselves. To the ability to control yourselves, add the strength to keep going. To the strength to keep going, add godliness. To godliness, add kindness to believers. And to kindness, add love. These good points will make you useful and fruitful as you get to know our Lord Jesus Christ better."

*Thank You Father God that you created us to enjoy the wonders of a fruitful life on Earth and a blessed relationship with Yourself and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Help us to lead godly and useful lives and set examples to each generation to uphold your purpose in marriage between a man and a women without yielding to "evil caused by sinful longings" but waiting until the time is right. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Psalm 37. "Do not be afraid of evil people. Trust in the Lord God Almighty and do good. Delight in the LORD. Commit your life to Him. Be still and be patient and wait on the LORD. Keep from being angry, for the meek will inherit the Earth (see Matthew 5:5). Turn away from evil and do good. Wait for the LORD to act and meanwhile live as He wants you to." Finally, "The salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in times of trouble." (37:39 KJV)

Matthew 6:1-13. Jesus said, "When you pray, do not be like those who pretend to be holy. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. What I'm about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward. When you pray, go into your room. Close the door and pray to your heavenly Father... He will reward you. Your Father sees what is done in secret. When you pray, do not keep talking more and more, the way ungodly people do. They think they will be heard because they talk a lot. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need even before you ask Him. This is how you should pray: 'Our Father in Heaven, may Your name be honoured. May Your Kingdom come. May what you want to happen be done on Earth as it is

done in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we forgive those who sin against us. Keep us from falling into sin when we are tempted. Save us from the evil one.' Forgive people when they sin against you and your Father who is in Heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive people their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

*Help us heavenly Father to live according to the teachings of King David and Christ Jesus.  
Amen.*

#### **14<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Proverbs 31:10-31 praises the wife of noble character. "She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband trusts her completely. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She gets up while it is still dark. She provides food for her family. She opens her arms to those who are poor and needy. She makes her own bed coverings. She makes linen clothes and sells them. She speaks wisely. She teaches faithfully. She watches over family matters. She is busy all the time. Her children call her blessed. Her husband also praises her. He says, 'Many women do noble things. But you are better than all the others.' Charm can deceive you. Beauty fades. But a woman who has respect for the LORD should be praised."

Matthew 12:25-29. Jesus said, "I praise You, Father. You are Lord of Heaven and Earth. You have hidden these things from the wise and educated. But You have shown them to little children. Yes, Father, this is what You wanted. You My Father has given all things to Me. The Father is the only one who knows the Son. And the only ones who know the Father are the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to make Him known. Come to Me, all of you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servants and learn from Me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls. Serving Me is easy, and My burden is light."

*Thank you Jesus for confirming that we are able to know our Father God through the choice You have made in saving us from eternal death. Help us to learn from You in serving You. Help us to be like You, "gentle and free of pride". Help us to value our relationship with Yourself and Your heavenly Father and also with Your people on Earth, like the husband and wife of noble character.  
Amen.*

#### **15<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Job 33:12-30. Job's friend Elihu gave him this advice. "God is greater than a mere man. Why do you claim that God never answers any of our questions? He speaks in one way and then another. We might not even realize it. He might speak in a dream or in a vision at night... His warnings might terrify them. He warns us in order to turn them away from sinning. He wants to keep them from being proud. He wants to stop them from going down into the grave... But there is an angel who will speak up for him... He will say to God, 'Spare him from going down into the grave.' God makes him right with Himself again. Then that person will say 'I sinned. I made what was wrong appear to be right. But I wasn't punished as I should have been. God set me free.' God does all of those things again and again. He wants to stop people from going down into the grave. Then the light that leads to life will shine on them."

Acts 11:19-24. Before Paul's ministry began, the Jewish believers were scattered because of the persecution. Some went to Antioch in Syria. 'There they began to speak to Gentiles also. They told them the Good News about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's power was with them. Large numbers of people believed and turned to the Lord. The church in Jerusalem heard about this. So they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad. He told them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts... Large numbers of people came to know the Lord.'

*Thank You Lord Jesus that the word of God reveals that it does not always require great men like Paul to establish Your Church around us. It requires just ordinary people like Elihu to tell the Good News, together with unseen ministering angels. Praise God! Amen.*

#### **16<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Haggai 2:1-9. The words of the LORD God Almighty through His prophet Haggai in 520 BC. "Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and to all of My people who are still left alive. 'Did any of you who are here see how beautiful this Temple used to be? ...Start rebuilding. I am with you. That is what I promised you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit continues to be with you. So do not be afraid... I will shake all of the nations. Then what they consider to be priceless will come to my

Temple. And I will fill the Temple with glory. The new Temple will be more beautiful than the first. And in this place I will give peace to My people.' " This refers to the final age when Israel's Messiah returns to establish His Kingdom on Earth.

2 Timothy 2:14-19. Paul instructs Timothy, "While God is watching, warn the believers not to argue over words... It only destroys those who listen. Do your best to please God... Teach the message of truth correctly. Stay away from godless chatter... Hymenaeus and Philetus are two of those teachers. They have wandered away from the truth... They destroy the faith of some people. But God's solid foundation stands firm. Here is the message written on it. 'The Lord knows who His own people are.'" (Numbers 16:5) Also, "All who say they believe in the Lord must turn away from evil." Paul goes on to warn about the "terrible times in the last days".

*Heavenly Father, thank You that You keep reminding us to be prepared in "the final age" or "the last days". Thank You for warning us to "turn away from evil" with the promise that "You know who Your own people are". Grant us wisdom and boldness to reject ungodly teachers and to avoid godless chatter and rebuild the Church of Jesus our Saviour. Also to support the rebuilding of Your Temple in Jerusalem for His return. Amen.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Deuteronomy 5:27-33. In 1451 BC, the Children of Israel invited Moses to go listen to Almighty God on the top of Mount Sinai. "Then tell us what He tells you. We will listen and obey." Moses reported back, "The LORD heard you when you spoke to me. He said to me, 'Everything they said was good. But I wish they would always have respect for Me in their hearts. I wish they would always obey all of my commands. Then things would go well with them and their children forever... You must teach the people to follow them in the land I am giving them as their very own.' "

2 Timothy 2:22-26. Paul continues instructing Timothy. "Run from the evil things that young people desire. Try hard to do what is right. Have faith, love and peace. Do these things in unity with other believers who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Do not have anything to do with foolish arguments. You know it only leads to quarrels. Anyone who serves the Lord must not quarrel. Instead, they must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach and not hold anything against anyone. They must gently teach those who oppose them in the hope that God will give a change of heart to those who are against you. That will lead them to know the truth and escape the devil's traps."

*Lord Jesus, we thank you for the freedom You have provided through your sacrifice and promised Holy Spirit. Freedom to "know the truth and escape the devil's traps" and temptations of our youth. We note that nearly 3500 years ago, Father God said to His special people "Everything they said was good. But I wish they would always have respect for Me in their hearts." Help all Your people today to be obedient to the truth in our Scriptures with the understanding of Your Holy Spirit and respond "from a pure heart" as we "listen and obey". Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Ecclesiastes 2:3-11. "I wanted to see what was really important for people to do on Earth during the few days of their lives. So I started some large projects. I built houses for myself. I planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks. I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made lakes to water groves of healthy trees. I bought male and female slaves. And I had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem ever had before. I stored up silver and gold for myself. I gathered up the treasures of kings and their kingdoms. I had male and female singers and also many women for myself. I became far more important than anyone in Jerusalem had ever been before. In spite of everything, I didn't lose my wisdom. However, I gave myself everything my eyes wanted... But when I looked over everything my hands had done, I saw what I had worked so hard to get and nothing had any meaning. It was like chasing the wind. Nothing was gained on this planet Earth!" The writer's conclusion to his book was, "Have respect for God and obey His commandments. That is what everyone should do. God will judge everything people do. That includes everything they try to hide. He will judge everything, whether it is good or bad." (12:13-14)

Philemon verse 6. Pauls prayer for Philemon. "I pray that you will be active in sharing what you believe. Then you will completely understand every good thing we have in Christ."

*Thank You Father God for the everlasting truth recorded by the writer of Ecclesiastes that nothing is meaningful in life without faith and trust in You for Your divine wisdom and purpose. May*

*we take note of Paul's love and concern for his friend Philemon in encouraging him to share his faith and life with others in a way that portrays "every good thing we have in Christ." Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> November 2023.**

2 Samuel 23:1-4. King David declared, "God has given me a message. The Most High God has greatly honoured me. The God of Jacob anointed me as king... The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me... The Rock of Israel said to me, 'A king must rule over people in a way that is righteous. He must have respect for Me when he rules. Then he will be like the light of morning at sunrise when there are no clouds. He will be like the bright sun after rain that makes the grass grow on Earth.' "

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 and 2:1-2. Paul says, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the things of this world that are lowly and looked down on. He chose what is not considered to be important to do away with what is considered to be important. So no one can boast to God. Because of what God has done, you belong to Christ Jesus. He has become God's wisdom for us. He makes us righteous before God. He makes us holy and sets us free. It is written, 'The one who boasts should boast about what the Lord has done.' When I came to you I did not come with fancy words or great wisdom. I preached to you the truth about God's love. I made up my mind to pay attention to only one thing while I was with you. That one thing was Jesus Christ and His crucifixion."

*Thank You Father God for Your Bible truth that focuses our attention on those You chose to lead Your people. David, the lowly shepherd boy who became king of Israel and Paul, the tentmaker from Tarsus and educated in Jerusalem by Gamaliel whom You humbled on the road to Damascus when he met Jesus Christ our Saviour. Keep us open this day to listen only to Your anointed ones. Amen.*

### **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.**

**2 Chronicles 32:9-23.** Bible history reveals that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, boasted that no god of any nation could deliver Israel from his hand (v.15). He even sent letters to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem, insulting God Almighty (v.17) which prompted Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah to "cry out in prayer to heaven" (v.20). God answered by sending an angel to destroy the Assyrian army and Sennacherib withdrew in disgrace (v.21) after which the Lord God gave rest to Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem and respect from other nations (v.22-24).

**Acts 28:1-6.** The people who lived on the island of Malta showed "unusual kindness" to the Apostle Paul when he and the other prisoners were shipwrecked on the way to court in Rome (v.1). A poisonous snake attached itself to Paul but he freed himself without being bitten (v.3-5). Later, Malta's governor cared for the shipwrecked men and Paul healed the governor's father (v.7-8). Quickly the sick came to Paul from all over the island to be healed (v.9).

*Father God, in times of aggression may our leaders cry out to You for mercy to save our nation, shame our enemies and gain respect from other nations. In the name of Jesus. Amen. May God protect and bless us this and every day when our freedom or life is in danger, with miracles large and small that glorify the name of Jesus. And may we be quick to welcome and bless strangers with "unusual kindness". Amen.*

### **23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023.**

Jeremiah 23:16-20. God warned Jeremiah to tell the people, "Do not listen to what the prophets are saying to you. They fill you with false hopes. They talk about visions that come from their own minds. What they say does not come from My mouth. They keep telling those who hate Me, 'The LORD says you will have peace'. They speak to all those who do what their stubborn hearts want them to do. They tell them, 'No harm will come to you'. But which of them has ever stood in My courts? ...Who has listened and heard My message there? A storm will burst out because of My burning anger and sweep down on the heads of sinful people. My anger will not turn back. I will accomplish everything I plan to do. In days to come you will understand it clearly."

2 Timothy 3:1-9. Paul warns Timothy, "There will be terrible times in the last days. People will love themselves. They will love money. They will boast and be proud. They will tear others down. They will not obey their parents. They won't be thankful or holy. They won't love others. They won't forgive others. They will tell lies about people. They will be out of control. They will be wild and hate what is good. They will turn against their friends. They will act without thinking and believe they are better than others. They will love what pleases them instead of loving God. Some will act as if they

are serving God. But what they do will show that they have turned their backs on God's power. Have nothing to do with those people... Their foolish ways will be clear to everyone."

*Thank You Father God for warning us that in these last days disobedience and false advice will deceive many people. Please make things "clear to everyone". May we grow in love for You and each other as we prepare the way for the return of Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

### **24<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Daniel Chapters 11 and 12 (NIV) predicts how the king of the north country will turn from God's covenant with Israel. He will invade the south but "ships of the western coastlands" will oppose him. He will turn back in fury but "show favour only to those who forsake God's holy covenant" (12:28-30). "The people who know their God will firmly resist him" (12:32). Daniel is then told that the angel Michael will come to protect God's people. "There will be times of distress but all whose names are in the book of life will be saved." In the end days, "those who sleep will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (12:1-2).

1 John 2:28 to 3:3 (NIRV). John, the last surviving apostle of Jesus, writes, "Dear children, remain joined to Christ. Then when He comes, we can be bold. We will not be ashamed to meet Him when He comes. You know that God is right and always does what is right. And you know that everyone who does what is right has been born again because of what God has done. How great is the love the Father has given us so freely! Now we can be called children of God. And that is what we really are! The world doesn't know us because it doesn't know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God. He still hasn't let us know what we will be. But we know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him. We will see Him as He really is. He is pure. All who hope to be like Him make themselves pure."

*Thank You Jesus for these reassuring words from Your favourite apostle. 600 years before John died, Your prophet Daniel also spoke of these end times. During these times of distress, help us in faith to prepare ourselves and our loved ones for Your return. Meanwhile, send in Your "ships of the western coastlands" to save Your people Israel. Amen.*

### **27<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Psalms 11. "I run to the LORD for safety... When the foundations of law and order are being destroyed, what can godly people do?" The LORD is on His throne in Heaven. He watches all people. He watches over those who do what is right and those who love to hurt others... The LORD always does what is right. He loves justice when people do what is correct. Those who are honest will enjoy His blessing."

Acts 28:25-31. Paul spoke to the Jews in Rome. He said, "The Holy Spirit was right when he spoke to your people long ago. Through Isaiah the prophet the Spirit said, 'Go to your people. Say to them that you will hear but never understand, you will see but never know what you are seeing. These people's hearts have become stubborn. They can barely hear with their ears. They have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see. They might hear with their ears. They might understand with their hearts. They might turn, and then I would heal them.' (Isaiah 6:9,10) Here is what I want you to know. God has sent His salvation to people who are not Jews. And they will listen!" For two whole years Paul stayed there in a house he rented. He welcomed all who came to see him. He preached boldly about God's kingdom. No-one could keep him from teaching people about the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the reassurance of Your love and blessings. We pray today for Your people Israel that they will return to You and show compassion to the aliens in their midst and see the evidence of their Saviour's return in these end days. May we all seek delivery from darkness into Your light. For Christ's sake for suffered and sacrificed His life for our salvation. Amen.*

### **28<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Malachi 1:1-5. This is the LORD's message to Israel. "Israel, I have loved you. But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' Wasn't Esau Jacob's brother? But I chose Jacob instead of Esau. I turned Esau's mountains into a dry and empty land. I left that land of Edom to the wild dogs in the desert. Edom might say, 'We have been crushed. But we will rebuild our cities.' The LORD God Almighty who rules over all says they might rebuild their cities. But I will destroy them. They will be called the Evil

Land. My anger will always remain on them. You will see it with your own eyes. You will say, 'The LORD is great! He rules even beyond the borders of Israel!' "

Hebrews 13:5-12 says. "Do not be controlled by love for money. Be happy with what you have. God has said, 'I will never leave you. I will never desert you.' (Deuteronomy 31:6) So we can say boldly, 'The Lord helps me. I will not be afraid.' (Psalm 118:6,7) Remember your leaders. They spoke God's word to you. Think about the results of their way of life. Copy their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good that God's grace makes our hearts strong. Do not depend on foods the Law requires... The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Room. He brings their blood as a sin offering. But the bodies are burned outside the camp. Jesus also suffered outside the city gate. He suffered to make the people holy by spilling His own blood."

*Thank You Father God for Israel's leaders who spoke Your word to us. Help us to copy their way of life and their faith including Your chosen one Jacob. Also to follow Jesus Christ our Saviour, who is "the same yesterday, today and forever" who "suffered to make the people holy".*

### **29<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Daniel 4 records the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar which was interpreted for him by God's prophet Daniel. The dream was of a mighty tree that stretched to the heavens. But an angelic messenger came and ordered the tree to be cut down. Daniel was asked what the dream meant and became terrified. He said, "You O king are that tree! You will be driven out and eat grass like the animals... Then you will recognize that the Most High God rules over all of the kingdoms of men... But He gave a command to leave the stump of the tree. That means your kingdom will be given back to you when you recognize that the God of Heaven rules." (4:25-27) Some time later, Nebuchadnezzar was restored as king and became even greater than before. "Now I give praise and honour and glory to the King of Heaven. Everything He does is right and fair. He is able to bring down those who live proudly." (4:36-37)

Revelation 4. John writes, "The Holy Spirit took control of me. There in front of me was a throne in Heaven... Around the throne, were four living creatures... Day and night, they never stop saying, 'HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD WHO RULES OVER ALL. HE WAS, AND IS, AND WILL COME.' The living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to the One who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever. At the same time, the 24 elders say, 'You are worthy, our Lord and God! You are worthy to receive glory and honour and power. You are worthy because You created all things' "

*Thank you heavenly Father for these amazing words recorded by Your servants Daniel and John. We believe and take encouragement from the fact that You are in control and will establish Your Kingdom on Earth in these last days. Help us to see "the bigger picture" based on Scripture and prepare the way for Christ's return. Amen.*

### **30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Proverbs 8:10-12. "Choose my teaching instead of silver. Choose knowledge rather than fine gold. Wisdom is worth more than rubies. Nothing you want can compare with her. Wisdom lives together with understanding. I gain knowledge and good sense."

2 Corinthians 13:9-11. Paul writes, "I pray that you will become perfect. That is why I write these things before I come to you. Then when I do come, I will not have to be hard on you when I use my authority. The Lord gave me the authority to build you up. He did not give it to me to tear you down. Finally, brothers and sisters, try to be perfect. Pay attention to what I am saying. Agree with one another. Live in peace. And the God who gives love and peace will be with you."

*Father God, we thank You for Your written word that instructs us to seek Your truth and not the selfish desires of this world. Grant wisdom to benefit from the wonders of Your creation and the amazing eternal salvation through the mystery You have revealed in Christ Jesus our Saviour. Grant the desire to grow in understanding of His teaching and ministry and build up a more perfect life taught by Him and Paul and other devout leaders You authorise. May we therefore welcome spiritual teaching, knowledge, wisdom and understanding and grow in love and peace with those around us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, in order to meet the needs and demands of each and every day with His compassion as we await His return, in accordance with our calling and in obedience to Your word. Grant us the ability to expose evil and false leaders in state and church for the glory of Your name. Also the ability to deal wisely with problems in the church as they arise. Amen.*

### **1<sup>st</sup> December 2023.**

Deuteronomy 32:46-47. Before crossing the River Jordan into the Promised Land of Canaan, Moses spoke out his warnings and advice from God known as the 'Song of Moses'. "Think carefully about all of the words I have announced to you today. I want you to command your children to be careful to obey all of them. They are not useless words. They are your very life. If you obey them, you will live in the land for a long time. It is the land you are going across the Jordan River to take as your own."

Romans 8:12-17. Paul says, "Brothers and sisters, we have a duty. Our duty is not to live under the control of our sinful nature. If you live under the control of your sinful nature, you will die. But by the power of the Holy Spirit you can put to death the sins your body commits. Then you will live. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave to fear once again. Instead you received the Holy Spirit, who makes you God's child. By the Spirit's power we call God 'Abba.' 'Abba' means 'Father'. The Spirit Himself joins with our spirits. Together they give witness that we are God's children. As His children, we will receive all that He has for us. We will share what Christ receives. But we must share in His sufferings if we want to share in His glory."

*We take notice of the warning of Moses to obey God's word and also the warning of Paul to "put to death the sins our body commits" so that we can "live ...as children of God". Father God, keep reminding us to "command our children to be careful to obey all of Your words" and indeed other children we know and care about. As Your child, may we fully "share what Christ receives", including His sufferings, to Your glory. Amen.*

### **4<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

1 Chronicles 11-13. David became more and more popular with the people. This was a fulfilment of God's promise to extend David's future kingship over the whole of Israel (11:3,10). Then follows the names of many chiefs and army men who supported David. This encouraged him to go recover the Ark of the Covenant and bring it back to Jerusalem. This did not happen exactly as planned because of an accident on the journey and the move was postponed for three months (13:9-14).

Matthew 25:1-13 is the parable of the ten virgins Jesus told to describe the coming of the future Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. It is meant to portray the behaviour of the church members as they await the second coming of Christ. Five were wise but five were foolish. As the ten virgins awaited the arrival of the bridegroom (meaning Christ), someone cried out, "Here comes the groom!" Then all the bridesmaids woke up and got their lamps ready. The foolish ones said to the wise ones, "Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out." "No," they replied. "There may not be enough for all of us. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." So they went to buy the oil. But while they were on their way, the groom arrived. The bridesmaids who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast. Then the door was shut." Jesus warned his followers, "So keep watch. You do not know the time the groom will come." We must be sure we remain filled with the oil of the Spirit to have the wisdom of God within us in the Last Days.

*Heavenly Father, we note the importance of receiving Holy Spirit wisdom regarding the timing of Your future events and our readiness to act. We also note that man's plans do not always agree with Your plans, as happened when the Ark was taken Jerusalem. Come soon Lord Jesus to Jerusalem! Amen.*

### **5<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Genesis 1:14-19, 31. These are the words Almighty God gave to Moses to write down over 3500 years ago when little was known about the Universe that God created. "God said, 'Let there be lights in the huge space of the sky. Let them separate the day from the night. Let them serve as signs to mark off the seasons and the days and the years. Let them serve as lights in the huge space of the sky to give light on Earth.' He made the larger light to rule over the day. He made the smaller light to rule over the night. He also made the stars... And God looked at everything He had made. And it was very good."

Matthew 1:18-25. 'This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby... Her husband Joseph did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly. But an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. She is going to have a Son. You must give Him the name Jesus. That is because He will save His people from their sins." ...Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife. But he did not make love to her until after she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.'

*God in Heaven we thank You for these amazing records of Your truth to mankind, regarding creating the Earth and Universe thousands of years ago and recreating Yourself in the form of a human being in the womb of Mary 2023 years ago. Amen!*

### **6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Job 34:9-15. Job's good friend Elihu tells him, "The wicked man asks, 'What good is it to try to please God?' Listen to me. God would never do what is evil! The Mighty One would never do what is wrong! He pays a man back for what he has done. He gives him exactly what he deserves. It is not possible for God to do wrong. The Mighty One would never treat people unfairly. Who appointed Him to rule over Earth? Who put Him in charge of the whole world? If He really wanted to, He could hold back His Spirit and Breath. Then everyone would die together. We would return to the dust!" Elihu tells Job that mankind only continues to exist because of God's mercy. His understanding of God Almighty prepared the way for God to speak directly to Job (chapters 38 to 41).

2 Peter 2:5-9 says, "God did not spare the world's ungodly people long ago. He brought the Flood on them. But Noah preached about the right [righteous] way to live. God kept him safe. He also saved seven others. God judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He burned them to ashes. He made them an example of what is going to happen to ungodly people. God saved Lot [and his family]. He was a man who did what was right... That good man lived among them day after day. He saw and heard the evil things they were doing. They were breaking God's laws. And his godly spirit was deeply troubled. So the Lord knows how to keep godly people safe in times of testing. He also knows how to keep ungodly people under guard until the day they will be judged."

*Father God, help us to be like Elihu to reveal your truth and prepare others to know You better. Help us to be like Peter, who failed Jesus His Saviour but afterwards spoke the full truth with great spiritual understanding. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

### **7<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Numbers 17:1-1 records 'the budding of Aaron's staff' after the people of Israel rebelled in the desert against Moses and Aaron on the way to the Promised Land of Canaan. They did not like what their spies had found in Canaan and the people wanted to go back to Egypt (chapter 14). 'The LORD God Almighty spoke to Moses. "Say to the people of Israel. Get a wooden staff from the leader of each of Israel's twelve tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff... Put them in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Ark. The staff that belongs to the man I choose will begin to grow new shoots. The people of Israel are never happy with what you do. I will put an end to what they are saying." The next day Moses entered the tent. He looked at Aaron's staff for the tribe of Levi. Moses saw that it had not only begun to grow new shoots but had also produced buds and flowers and almonds. Then Moses brought out all twelve staffs to show to the people. The LORD said to Moses, "Put Aaron's staff back in front of the Ark. It will be kept there as a warning to those who refuse to obey Me. They are never happy with what I do. Aaron's staff will put an end to what they are saying. Then they will not die."'

Acts 28:23-29 records Paul's final two years in Rome. The Jews there met with him and Paul 'told them about God's Kingdom and explained it to them... He tried to get them to believe in Jesus. Some believed what he said. Others did not.' Paul then told the unbelievers what Isaiah said 800 years earlier, "You will hear but never understand. You will see but never understand what you are seeing."

*Dear LORD, forgive us when we disobey You. Help us to be faithful followers of Jesus and those You appoint as Your leaders. Amen.*

### **8<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Ruth Chapter 1. In the days before the kings of Israel, there was a famine in the land. Elimelech took Naomi and their two sons from the town of Bethlehem to the land of Moab. (Bethlehem had been a town in the former land of Canaan before the tribe of Judah settled there.) In the next few years, Elimelech died, then also his two sons. Naomi returned to Israel and Ruth, one of

her daughters-in-law, chose to go with her. She said, "Your people will become my people and your God my God." It was harvest time in Bethlehem where Boaz, a relative of Naomi, owned fields where Ruth gleaned barley seeds for Naomi to bake bread. Boaz married Ruth and God used their family to bring blessings to Israel through their descendant King David. David was an ancestor of Mary and Joseph who were briefly in Bethlehem 1300 years after Ruth lived there. Whilst there, Mary had her Son who was born of the Holy Spirit. He was Jesus, Israel's Messiah and Christ our Saviour.

Acts 7:51-53. The apostle Stephen told the Jewish leaders, "You people won't obey! You are stubborn! You are just like your people of long ago! You oppose the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your people didn't try to hurt? They even killed those who told about the coming of the Blameless One [Jesus]. And now you have murdered Him! The Law you received you haven't obeyed."

*Dear God, thank You for reminding us of the amazing true story of what happened in Bethlehem, originally occupied by families descended from Esau as well as from Jacob, and still is today! Thank You for showing us how You used Canaan and Moab to serve Your divine purpose of sending Your Son our Saviour into the world. May Jews and Gentiles alike learn to respect aliens of every race. Open our eyes today to understand what You are doing in these last days to avoid unnecessary conflict. Amen.*

### **11<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

1 Chronicles 8:1-34 lists the tribes who returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon. The writer clarifies in verse 3 that it included survivors of the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) by the Assyrians which God allowed because of their disobedience. The writer's main focus is on the list of priests and Levites by name and their future duties in the new Jerusalem and its Temple. This included the gatekeepers and musicians. Note: Psalm 84:10 says "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

Colossians 3:1-14 provides rules for holy living. "You have been raised up with Christ. So think about things that are in Heaven... Do not think about things that are on Earth. You died [to self]. Now your life is hidden with Christ in God. Christ is your life... So put to death anything that belongs to your earthly nature including sexual sins and unclean acts. Do not let your feelings get out of control with evil longings... You must put away anger, rage, hate and lies. Let no dirty words come out of your mouths... Christ is everything. And He is in everything. You are God's chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved. So put on tender mercy and kindness as if they were your clothes. Do not be proud. Be gentle and patient. Forgive the things you are holding against one another. Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you. And over all put on love."

*Father God, we are amazed at the detailed records in the Old Testament that prove your mercy in bringing survivors of all the tribes of Israel back to Jerusalem despite their disobedience. Thank You for the value you place in the humble role of gatekeepers and the desire You have for musicians to lead our worship. Thank You also for Your New Testament teaching to "put on love" now that we "have been raised up with Christ" who lives in us. Help us to obey Your word and understand fully what it means to be "holy and dearly loved". Amen.*

### **12<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Psalm 76. "In the land of Judah [Judea], God is known and in Israel [including to the north in Ephraim]. His tent [home] is in Jerusalem... There He broke the weapons of war... At Your command both horse and chariot lie still. People should have respect for You alone. Who can stand in front of You when You are angry? From Heaven you handed down Your sentence. The land was afraid and became quiet when You rose up to judge. It happened when You came to save all of Your suffering people in the land. Your anger against sinners brings you praise. Those who live through Your anger gather to worship You... Let all of the neighbouring nations bring gifts to the One who should be respected. He breaks the proud spirit of rulers and kings."

Romans 11:33 to 12:2. "How rich are God's wisdom and knowledge! How He judges is more than we can understand! The way He deals with people is more than we can know! ...All things come from Him. All things are directed by Him. All things are for His good. May God be given the glory forever! Brothers and sisters, God has shown you His mercy. So I am asking you to offer up your bodies to Him while you are still alive. Your bodies are a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God. When you offer your bodies to God, you are worshiping Him. Do not live any longer the way this world lives.

Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what He wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect."

*Father God, indeed show us Your good and pleasing and perfect will for us. As in days of old, "save all of Your suffering people in the land" so that even neighbouring nations will respect You. May Your anger and mercy bring You praise. Amen.*

### **13<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Jeremiah 9:23-25. 'The LORD God Almighty says, "Do not let a wise man boast about how wise he is. Do not let a strong man boast about how strong he is. Do not let a rich person boast about how rich he is. But here is what the one who boasts should boast about. He should boast that he has understanding and knows Me. I want him to know that I am the LORD. No matter what I do on Earth, I am always kind, fair and righteous. And I take delight in that," announces the Lord.' This message from God to Jeremiah goes on to warn that the days are coming when all people who are uncircumcised in their hearts will be punished – Jews and Gentiles alike.

Acts 7:2-5. The apostle Stephen spoke to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham. At that time Abraham was still in Mesopotamia. He had not yet begun living in Haran. 'Leave your country and your people,' God said. 'Go to the land I will show you.' (Genesis 12:1). So Abraham left the land of Babylonia. He settled in Haran. After his father died, God sent Abraham to this land where you are now living. God did not give him any property here. He did not give him any area of land. But God made a promise to him and to all his family after him. He said they would possess the land. The promise was made even though at that time Abraham had no child." Stephen went on to accuse the Jewish leaders of killing Jesus, their own Messiah (7:52).

*Father God, thank You for Your reminder that You take delight in being kind, fair and righteous to all people. Also that You will punish all who are uncircumcised in their hearts. Prepare us all to welcome Your Messiah, Jesus Christ our Saviour, into our hearts in advance of His return to Jerusalem. Amen.*

### **19<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Joshua 3:5-11. 'Joshua spoke to the people of Israel. "Consecrate yourselves to the LORD God Almighty. Tomorrow He will do amazing things among you..." He then told the priests, "Go and get the Ark of the Covenant. Walk on ahead of the people." ...Then the LORD told Joshua, "Today I will honour you in the eyes of all of the people of Israel. Then they will know that I am with you, as I was with Moses. Tell the priests, 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan River, go into the water and stand there.' " Then Joshua told the people of Israel, "Listen to what the LORD your God is saying. You will soon know He is among you. You can be sure that He will drive out the people who are now living in the land... the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites." '

1 Corinthians 2:1-5. Paul says, "Brothers and sisters, when I came to you I did not come with fancy words or great wisdom. I preached to you the truth about God's love. I made up my mind to pay attention to only one thing while I was with you. That was Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. When I came to you, I was weak and afraid and trembling all over. I did not preach my message with clever and compelling words. As I preached, the Holy Spirit showed His power. That was so you would believe not because of human wisdom but because of God's power."

*Heavenly Father, we thank You for sending humble servants to lead Your people, like Joshua and Paul. Establish Your truth this day through Your chosen leaders whose only purpose is "Jesus Christ and his death on the cross". We note that the Hebrew name for Jesus is Yeshua with similar meaning to Joshua, 'God's Salvation'. Live among Your people and set us apart to humbly proclaim Your salvation through Christ alone. For His sake. Amen.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Jeremiah 42:20-21 records one of many warnings to God's people 600 years before the ministry of their Messiah, Jesus Christ began in Jerusalem. God's prophet Jeremiah told them, "You made a big mistake when you asked me to pray to the LORD your God. You said, 'Pray to the LORD our God for us. Tell us everything He says and we will do it.' I have told you today what the LORD your God wants you to do. But you still haven't obeyed Him. You haven't done anything He sent me to tell you to do!"

James 1 & 2 contains gems of wisdom written by James the step-brother of Jesus. "If any of you need wisdom, ask God for it. He will give it to you. God gives freely to everyone. He doesn't find fault. But when you ask, you must believe. You must not doubt. People who doubt are like waves of the sea. The wind blows and tosses them around." (1:5-6) "Do not just listen to the word... You must do what it says." (1:22) "Speak and act like people who are going to be judged." (2:12) "A person is made right with God by what they do. It does not happen only because of what they believe... The body without the spirit is dead. In the same way, faith without good works is dead." (2:24,26)

*Heavenly Father, help us to take in what Jeremiah and James said to believers. Help us not only to read or listen but believe Your Old Testament teachings and the Good News of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. Help us also to believe you raised Jesus from death for His Spirit to live in us so that we can live obedient, loving and powerful lives with wise actions and words. Help us then to learn and obey then radiate much joy as we daily invite the compassion of Christ to rule in our lives. For His sake, who suffered much for the whole of mankind. Amen.*

### **21<sup>st</sup> December 2023.**

Joshua Chapters 14 to 19 give the allocation of land to the people of Israel west of the River Jordan. This includes Gaza "as far as the Wadi of Egypt and the coastline of the Great Sea" (15:47). It also notes that "the tribe of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites who were living in Jerusalem. So they live there with the people of Judah to this very day" (around 1440 BC).

2 Corinthians 13:1-5. Paul writes, "This will be my third visit to you... I warned you during my second visit. I now say it again while I'm away. When I return, I will not spare those who sinned earlier nor any of the others either. You are asking me to prove that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you. He is powerful among you. It is true that Christ was nailed to the cross because He was weak. But He lives by God's power. In the same way, I share in His weakness. But by God's power I live with Him to serve you. Take a good look at yourselves to see if you are really believers. Test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you?"

*Thank you heavenly Father that Your love and provision revealed many years ago remain true to this day. May Your people Israel share Your love for their Promised Land and witness Your provision with compassion to all its inhabitants, whether in Gaza, Jerusalem or other places west of Jordan. Like Paul, may all of Your people "take a good look at yourselves to see if you are really believers" and "not spare those [believers] who have sinned". Help us to be obedient and remember that when judging others, the Good News is not only that Christ took the punishment for our sins but rose from death and is alive and at work in us today through His promised Holy Spirit. Now and for ever, Amen!*

### **22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.**

Joshua 1:6-9 are the words of the LORD God Almighty to Joshua after the death of Moses. "Be strong and courageous. You will lead these people, and they will take the land as their very own. It is the land I promised with an oath to give their people long ago. Be strong and very courageous. Make sure you obey the whole Law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn away from it to the right or the left. Then you will have success everywhere you go. Never stop reading this scroll of the Law. Day and night you must think about what it says. Make sure you do everything that is written in it. Then things will go well with you. And you will have great success. Here is what I am commanding you to do. Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not lose hope. I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go." Joshua shared these words with the people of Israel and they promised to obey and "be strong and courageous" (v.17-18).

Colossians 3:2-5,12-14 gives some of Paul's advice for holy living. "Think about things that are in Heaven. Do not think about things that are on Earth. Your old life died. Now Christ is your life. When He appears again, you also will appear with Him in Heaven's glory. So put to death anything that belongs to your earthly nature... You are God's chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved. So put on tender mercy and kindness... Do not be proud. Be gentle and patient. Put up with each other. Forgive the things you are holding against one another. Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you. And above those good things put on love. Love holds them all together perfectly as if they were one."

*Help us Father God to obey Old and New Testament teachings and promise to "be strong and courageous" and "put on tender mercy and kindness". Amen.*

## **25<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Ezekiel 47 records the vision of fresh water flowing east from the Temple in Jerusalem into the waters of the Dead Sea. "When it empties into it, the water there becomes fresh. Large numbers of creatures will live where the river flows... This water flows there and makes the salt water fresh. So where the river flows, everything will live. People will stand along the shore to fish... The Dead Sea will have many kinds of fish. They will be like the fish in the Mediterranean Sea... Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not dry up. The trees will always have fruit on them. Every month they will bear fruit. The water from the Temple will flow to them. Their fruit will be used for food. And their leaves will be used for healing." (v.1-12) This vision is followed by instructions from God for the reallocation of land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea (v.13-20) "You must divide up this land among yourselves... You must also give some land to the outsiders who have settled among you and who have children. Treat them as if they had been born in Israel. Let them have some land among your tribes. These outsiders can settle in any tribe of Israel. There you must give them their share." (v.21-23)

Luke 11:1-4 is where Jesus taught His followers how to pray 'The Lord's Prayer'.

*Father God, forgive us for neglecting to pray as Jesus taught His followers. Forgive us also, in failing to uphold the vision of rivers of fresh water from Jerusalem which will bless the land of Israel, as will the instructions to open the land to non-Jewish people living in the midst of Your people. On this Christmas Day, may all of us humbly learn to reapply Bible teaching through the inspiration of Your Holy Word for living in 2024 to Your glory and in readiness for our Saviour's return. Amen.*

## **26<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Isaiah 65:8-12. "When juice is still left in grapes that have been crushed, people say, 'Do not destroy them. Some good juice is still left in them.' That is what I will do for the good of those who serve Me. I will not destroy all of My people... They will possess My land. My chosen people will be given all of it. Those who serve Me will live there... who follow Me. But some of you have deserted Me... You prepare a table for the god that is called Good Fortune... So I will make it your fate to be killed with swords... That is because I called out to you, but you did not answer Me. I spoke to you, but you did not listen... You chose to do what does not please Me."

Colossians 3:15-25. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. As parts of one body, you were appointed to live in peace. And be thankful. Let Christ's word live in you like a rich treasure. Teach and correct each other wisely. Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with thanks in your hearts to God. Do everything you say or do in the name of the Lord Jesus. Always give thanks to God the Father through Christ. Wives, follow the lead of your husbands. Husbands, love your wives. Children, obey your parents in everything. Fathers, do not make your children bitter. If you do, they will lose hope... Work as if you were working for the Lord, not for human masters... You are serving the Lord Christ. Anyone who does wrong will be paid back for what he does. God treats everyone the same."

*Father God, help us to obey the words You gave to Isaiah and Paul. Forgive us for those times we "chose to do what does not please You" which hindered Your purpose and provision in our lives and families and fellow believers. Keep reminding us we are "serving the Lord Jesus Christ". Amen.*

## **27<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Ezra Chapter 7. After the exiles returned to Jerusalem from Babylon to rebuild the Temple of God, a new king of Babylon sent Ezra there. King Artaxerxes sent Ezra with a letter to command the Law be taught by Ezra in Jerusalem. "Anyone who does not obey the law of your God must be punished." (v.25-26) Then Ezra praises the LORD God Almighty. "People of Israel, give praise to the LORD... He has put it in the king's heart to bring honour to the LORD's temple in Jerusalem... The strong hand of the LORD my God has helped me." (v.27-28) God also used Ezra to speak against marrying non-believers, see Chapters 9-10.

James 1:19-22; 2:23-24. "My dear brothers and sisters, pay attention to what I say. Everyone should be quick to listen. But they should be slow to speak. They should be slow to get angry. A man's anger doesn't produce the kind of life God wants. Get rid of everything that is dirty and sinful. Get rid of the evil that is all around us. Do not be too proud to accept the word that is planted in you. It can save you. Do not just listen to the word. You fool yourselves if you do that. You must do what it says... 'Abraham believed God. God accepted Abraham because he believed. So his faith made him

right with God.' (Genesis 15:6) And that's not all. God called Abraham His friend. So you see that a person is made right with God by what he does. It doesn't happen only because of what he believes."

*Thank You Father God in Heaven for these reminders to not only to believe in You but to demonstrate our faith in You by obeying Your instructions. And help us not to compromise our faith when we mix with non-believers. Enable us to live with the Spirit of Christ at work within us to "produce the kind of life God wants" in 2024. Amen.*

### **28<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Ruth 1:15-19 records the true story of Naomi returning with Ruth to her home town of Bethlehem. 'Ruth said, "Do not try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go I will go. Where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God." Naomi stopped trying to make her go back home [to Moab]. The two women continued on their way and arrived in Bethlehem. The whole town was excited because of them.'

Mark 3:31-35. 'The mother and brothers of Jesus came and stood outside the house. They sent someone in to get Him. A crowd was sitting around Jesus. They told Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are outside. They are looking for You." "Who is My mother? Who are My brothers?" He asked. Then Jesus looked at the people sitting in a circle around Him. He said, "Here is My mother! Here are My brothers! Anyone who does what God wants is My brother and sister and mother." '

*Dear God, we see how the story of Ruth began with devotion to Naomi yet led to her marriage with Boaz, an ancestor of Joseph. The story of Mary began with her devotion to Joseph yet led to her giving birth in Bethlehem to the Lord Jesus Christ before she married Joseph and had further sons. We thank you for the faithfulness of Ruth to Naomi then Boaz. We also thank You that, 1300 years later, Mary and Joseph were faithful to the baby Jesus, despite the persecution in Bethlehem of King Herod over His birth. We thank You that later on Mary and her other sons also tried to be faithful to Jesus, despite their doubts and fears. They suffered and witnessed His death but also His resurrection as a testimony for us all today. May we, too, have the faith and vision of ordinary people like Ruth and Mary, Boaz and Joseph, and witness to our Brother and Saviour. Amen.*

### **29<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Joshua 10 describes the events after the successful capture of Jericho and Ai in the Promised Land of Canaan. The city of Gibeon made a peace treaty with Israel, so the king of Jerusalem decided to attack the Gibeonites. (v.1-5) Joshua's army protected the Gibeonites and defeated the armies of the king of Jerusalem. The LORD God Almighty supported them by causing confusion among the enemies of Israel and even sent huge hailstones upon them. (v.9-11) The faith of Joshua grew so strong, he said to the LORD God Almighty in the presence of Israel these famous words: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon." So the sun stood still until the nation won the battle over its enemies. (v.12-13)

Romans 11:25-32 gives Paul's understanding of God's mercy for Jews and Gentiles. "Part of Israel has refused to obey God. That will continue until the full number of non-Jews has entered God's kingdom. Then Israel will be saved. It is written, 'The One who saves will come and remove sin from Jacob.' ...That is because of God's promises to the founders of our nation. God does not take back His gifts. He does not change His mind about those He has chosen. At one time you did not obey God. But now you have received mercy because Israel did not obey. In the same way, Israel has not obeyed God. But now they will receive mercy because of God's mercy to you. God has yielded everyone over to disobedience so that now He can have mercy on everyone!"

*Father God, we are amazed at what You do to establish Your truth and purpose and provision for all believers. Even to the extent of allowing us to be disobedient so that You can act in mercy to save us! We thank you for the great cost and sacrifice of Your Christ our Saviour! Help us to put behind us our disobedience and declare the Good News of salvation in Christ with faith like Joshua and Paul! Amen.*