

# January to March 2025

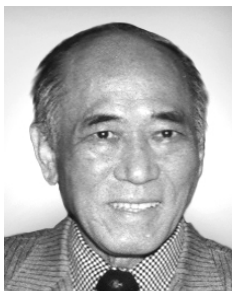
Jan 1 to Feb 4:  
“The Return of Jesus Christ”

Feb 5 to Mar 31:  
“Genesis 32-50”

*by Rev Dr Tow Siang Hwa*

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## About the Author



The late Rev Dr Tow Siang Hwa (1925-2019), who started the RPG (Read, Pray and Grow) Daily Bible Reading Guide in 1982, was the Founding Pastor of Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church.

Saved at the age of ten in 1935 during the revival meetings of Dr John Sung, Dr Tow (a gynaecologist by training) founded more than twenty churches and related institutions in over ten countries. Besides writing for RPG, he was author of several books including “Beyond Versions: A Biblical Perspective of Modern English Bibles” and “Footprints in the Sands of Time.” The present issue of RPG was originally published in 2001.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1

DANIEL 2:28-35

TITUS 2:11-15

*No peace without  
the Prince of Peace.*

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## LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE

For the next four weeks, we shall consider the theme “The Return of Jesus Christ.”

Looking at world events, one inevitably thinks of war and peace. Is mankind headed for an era of peace? Perhaps war is a thing of the past? Some would like to think so, but not the experts who are “in the know.” Roger Hilsman, formerly of the Columbia University Department of International Affairs, knowing man’s incorrigible, murderous nature, wrote in his monumental book “The Crouching Future: International Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy – A Forecast”: “War is part of the future. Nuclear war is also part of the future.”

Except the Lord Creator intervenes, mankind is doomed to self-destruction. Modern weapons of war if unleashed would destroy all life on earth. The nuclear arsenals of the superpowers have the capacity to wipe out every man, woman and child on this planet a hundred times over. In a moment of time the whole world could be turned into “an oven of silent death,” so said Bertrand Russell. Man’s war-like nature has not changed. In 4,000 years of history, fewer than 300 were war-free years. War is part of the future: history will repeat itself, so the thinking goes.

But we see HISTORY as HIS-STORY, the story of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, intervening in the affairs of men. The future of the world is not left to the superpowers and war-mongers. Our God, and not man, is in control. It is He who directs global events and man’s future. Nothing happens without Him. He who came once is coming again. The Lord of Creation will return to earth in HISTORY’S FINAL ACT. The Apostle Paul said that for believers this is “*that blessed hope*” (Titus 2:13). The Christ of Calvary will come again as KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS!

How are you living your life? Are you living for self? Or for God? Redeem the time for the days are evil. Very soon your days on earth will be up and there will be no more time left to serve your Lord and Master. Live with the great expectation that He will return anytime!

**THOUGHT:** When Jesus comes, will I meet Him with joy or terror?

**PRAYER:** Father, teach me to prepare now for Thy coming.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 2  
DANIEL 2:36-45  
REVELATION 1:7-8

*“When He appears:  
a delight of His people,  
the dismay of the ungodly.”*

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### “BEHOLD, HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS”

Our God does not leave us in the dark concerning His future plans. *“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets”* (Amos 3:7). Our Lord Jesus said, *“But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things”* (Mark 13:23). He that hath ears let him hear! Do not doubt His Word. Read. Hear. Take heed. For His Word will come to pass.

To Daniel, a man greatly beloved of God, was given a vision which spanned some twenty-six centuries of future world history. Daniel saw the four major world powers of history portrayed by the four parts of a great image:

Head of gold= Babylon 606-536 BC

Breast and arms of silver = Medo-Persia 536-331 BC

Belly and thighs of brass = Greece 331-168 BC

Legs of iron = Rome 168 BC-AD 476

Feet of iron and clay = (?) “the end time”

The last part of the great image is of debatable interpretation, but one school of prophecy sees in the feet of iron-clay mixture the end time Revived Roman Empire or the “United States of Europe.” According to this view, the world will come under the control of this Rome-dominated European power which will, at the return of Jesus Christ, be destroyed and superseded by the Kingdom of God.

To the Apostle John, God gave a vision of that CLIMACTIC EVENT. *“Behold, he cometh with clouds...”* Who is He, but the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Creator and Almighty JUDGE to come. This MOMENTOUS EVENT which will bring to a conclusion world HISTORY is mentioned in 1,800 passages of the Bible. God has spoken, let the world take heed! The Lord of Creation is coming, soon! Are you ready? Ready to meet your Creator, the Judge?

**THOUGHT:** Not lack of warning, but lack of faith.

**PRAYER:** Father, give me faith, more faith, to believe Thy Word.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 3

DANIEL 7:1-14

2 THESSALONIANS 1:7-10

*He comes not as an infant*

*in swaddling band,*

*but as King to reign.*

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### HE SHALL COME TO BE GLORIFIED

To Daniel, exiled in Babylon, God gave the extraordinary privilege of seeing a “Grand Panorama of History” in two separate but parallel and confirmatory visions. In the visions, he saw a succession of four World Empires dominating the world scene. In chronological order they were the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires. Each superpower in turn ruled the world centred around the Holy Land, but finally God’s Kingdom fills the earth.

Daniel’s amazing preview of world history has mostly been fulfilled by now. Only the last stage is yet to be. In the “Grande Finale,” Daniel saw God’s Kingdom being established in this manner:

1. *“...as a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, and brake them to pieces... and the stone... became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth”* (Dan 2:34-35).
2. *“but the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it... And the kingdom and dominion... shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High...”* (Dan 7:26-27).
3. *“and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion... his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”* (Dan 7:13-14).

The Apostle Paul’s prophecy further confirms: our *“Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them... that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thess 1:7-8).

Reader, do not be found among those that *“obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thess 1:8). Read God’s Word and be wise: be found on the Lord’s side. He shall come to be glorified!

**THOUGHT:** God’s Kingdom shall not be destroyed.

**PRAYER:** Help me, Father, to live with Thy Kingdom in view. Let me not put all my hopes in this passing world that is soon to be destroyed.

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 4

DANIEL 7:15-27

MATTHEW 24:29-30

*We shall see the  
King of Glory in His beauty.*

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### THEY SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING

Christendom at large and the unbelieving world ridicule the doctrine of the Second Coming. Rebellious and ungodly men resent the prospect of coming judgment, just as criminals hate the judge. Let us suppose for a moment that Christ will not return, and that all the 1,800 Bible references to that climactic event were pure fiction. What future has our world if left solely to the charge of violent men? Would you rather men take charge? Or God?

On sober reflection, the future for man without God is bleak. Since the day Adam sinned, hatred and murder have flowed through man's bloodstream. War has become part of human nature. For this malady, man has no cure. God the Creator must intervene: Jesus must return, according to God the Father's everlasting plan of salvation. Man left to himself is headed for destruction. He will NEVER learn peace. "History teaches us that history teaches us nothing!"

God the Creator will not leave His creation to be destroyed by man. What He has ordained and planned to do from before the foundation of the world, will be done even as our Lord prayed, "*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.*" His plan is no secret, although from unbelieving eyes it remains hidden. To certain of His chosen servants, the Lord has revealed it. Daniel was most favoured. God showed it to him.

Today, we are favoured too, for God shows it to us. He speaks to us through none other than His own Son (Heb 1:1-2). This is the greatest kindness, that the Lord has not left us in the dark. His coming is REAL, LITERAL, PERSONAL, SUPERNATURAL. He will come "*...in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*" (Matt 24:30). These are Jesus' own words. Do you doubt? Why do you doubt? Take the Lord at His Word. Believe and live with the hope of His Return.

**THOUGHT:** Every eye shall see Him.

**PRAYER:** Father, I believe. Help my unbelief.

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LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 5

ZECHARIAH 14:1-11

JUDE 14-16

*Sinners, seek His face now  
or His wrath ye cannot bear later.*

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### THE LORD COMETH WITH 10,000s OF HIS SAINTS

Enoch, the seventh from Adam (Gen 5) walked with God in a world of rapidly declining morals, and God took him (Gen 5:24). What a wonderful testimony, and what a marvellous salvation that “*God took him*” to live in Heaven. To this saint of old, God gave a glimpse of the Second Coming. Enoch did not keep it to himself, but prophesied, meaning, declared: “*Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly... of all their ungodly deeds...*” (Jude 14-15).

The Coming of our Lord is the believer's BLESSED HOPE (Titus 2:13). We, who are His redeemed, look with longing eyes and quickening pulse as the day draws near, when He will perfect our redemption. Paul, the Apostle, described this glorious prospect in Romans 8:18-23. In simpler words, he said, “Our present sufferings are bearable when we hold in view the glorious change awaiting us at the Lord's return. Today, we groan, waiting for the redemption of our body from the bondage of corruption. On that great day, it will be worth it all!” The Apostle John said, “*We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him*” (1 John 3:2). We shall have joy unspeakable, full of glory!

For the unbelieving, the ungodly, the murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts, the Lord's return spells judgment and swift sentence to everlasting destruction. Those who spurn Him as Saviour today will have to face Him as He will come “*in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess 1:8).

Reader, be wise. Heed God's Word. Tarry not. Confess your sins. Receive Christ into your heart as your Lord and Saviour. And be saved.

His return as Judge is as sure as tomorrow's sunrise.

**THOUGHT:** The time to repent is NOW. “*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...*” (Heb 2:3)

**PRAYER:** Open my eyes, O Father, to the truth of Thy Word.

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MONDAY, JANUARY 6

DANIEL 2:44-45

MATTHEW 25:1-13

*I love Thy Kingdom, Lord.*

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### GOD'S KINGDOM SHALL STAND FOR EVER

Empire building has been men's vain dream from the days of Nimrod (a greatgrandson of Noah) who "*began to be a mighty one in the earth*" (Gen 10:8-10) and built himself a kingdom. Men's kingdoms come and go, none of them lasts forever, even as men also are of few days. Do not boast that you can build your kingdom on earth. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Hitler boasted that his regime would last 1,000 years. God finished it in ten. "*For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west... but God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another*" (Ps 75:6-7).

Today, the world is carved up into almost 200 separate states, each with its own government. From every aspect of God's Word, it is evident that the existing world order must shortly come to an end. Rebellious men directing the world's affairs without God are simply heading for self-extinction. But men's days are numbered. Our God who removeth kings (Dan 2:21) will shortly conclude the present world order. "*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven*" (Eccles 3:1). God's judgment is on the way.

This is the urgent message for today. He that hath ears, let him hear! The King from Heaven is coming to set up His magnificent everlasting kingdom. Man has no future except in this coming Kingdom of God. To ignore its coming is the height of folly. Recall the words of our Lord's prayer: "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come*" (Matt 6:9-10).

Did you ever pause to think as you recited those words, that one day soon that prayer will be answered? If you are concerned for your future and eternal destiny, think! God's Kingdom will come and you may have a part in it.

**THOUGHT:** The vital question is: do you belong to God's Kingdom?

**PRAYER:** Thy Kingdom come! Father, save me for Thy Kingdom!

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 7

ISAIAH 9:2-7

MATTHEW 25:14-32

*Jesus, the King of kings.*

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### THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER

The ardent longing of every true believer is the soon return of the Lord as KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS. We rest in the sure word of prophecy that one day He will sit on the throne of David and reign over all the earth. God's Word says so, and to us that is enough. But ignorant professors of theology labour to discover the historic Jesus! Academic debate and "research" are futile.

The royal kingship of Jesus was announced by the angel Gabriel to Mary: *"Behold, thou shalt conceive... and bring forth a son... and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end"* (Luke 1:31-33). At our Lord's birth, wise men from the distant east came to do honour to the newborn King of the Jews, and worshipped Him with rare gifts (Matt 2:1-2, 10-11).

Our Lord's Kingdom was announced by John the Baptist. *"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt 3:2). These same words were used by Jesus as He began His ministry (Matt 4:17). One day, after the feeding of the 5,000, the people tried to make him a king (John 6:15). But the time was not yet. Our Lord was merely laying the groundwork for the kingdom in the hearts of men. Today, the Kingdom of God is established in the hearts of obedient believers; in these "temples of the Holy Ghost" the King reigns (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).

But one day the King will come to establish His visible Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. And believers shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev 20:4). This is God's promise. Then shall come to pass Isaiah's prophecy: *"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"* (Isa 9:7). When Jesus reigns, there will be universal peace on earth.

**THOUGHT:** No peace on earth, until the Prince of Peace reigns.

**PRAYER:** Grant us Thy peace in our time, O Father!

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8

MATTHEW 12:22-28

PSALM 51:6-11

*Repent ye for the  
Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

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### DO YOU BELONG TO GOD'S KINGDOM?

If you are not of God's Kingdom, you are of the kingdom of Satan. There is no neutral ground. Satan, the prince of this world (John 12:31), would have you in his dominion. He tempts and lures with all that the world can offer; but having all the world's goods is of no avail. One day we must leave this world. What then will you do, and where will you go? This is the vital question which each of us must answer.

Jesus came to win us to His Kingdom. Today, God's Kingdom seems distant and beyond reach, intangible and invisible. So it is, for it is a spiritual kingdom. To the hearers, the King says, "*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 4:17). It is not for the proud and self-sufficient to enter, but "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 5:3).

Nicodemus was well-endowed with what the world had to offer. He was learned, rich and powerful. Nevertheless, he had an interest in God's Kingdom. Our Lord said to him, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). All of Nicodemus' possessions and prestige could not gain him a place in God's Kingdom. He needed to be born again.

How can a person be born again? Let me explain. You and I gained an entry into this world when our parents gave birth to us. Call it the gift of life, physical life. But this life lasts 70 to 80 years, more or less. It will not admit us into God's Kingdom. You need another life, another birth. Only God can give you that life. To those who come to Him, repenting with a broken spirit and a contrite heart, the Lord gives the "second birth," a new life, God's life. Realise that you cannot save yourself. Only Christ the Lord can fit you for His Kingdom. Only He can give you everlasting life in Heaven. Have you received this life from Him? Have you been born again?

**THOUGHT:** Entry into God's Kingdom is by grace, through faith, a free gift!

**PRAYER:** I acknowledge I am a sinner, O Father, and I need Jesus to be my Saviour. I want to be born again and be part of Thy Kingdom.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 9

LUKE 11:14-20

PSALM 24

*If ye are light in the Lord,  
walk as children of light.*

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### WHERE IS GOD'S KINGDOM TODAY?

God's Kingdom bears no resemblance to any of men's kingdoms. Theirs are worldly and material. God's Kingdom is spiritual and invisible. The world's kingdoms are in the power and dominion of Satan, the prince of this world (John 12:31). Under this malignant evil spirit, men walk in darkness, without hope, without life. Our Lord came to destroy Satan's dark kingdom and to make way for His Kingdom of light. To demonstrate His power, Jesus cast out demons from those poor humans who were miserably possessed. By this divine act, He also demonstrated to the people that "*the kingdom of God is come unto you*" (Matt 12:28).

Where then is God's Kingdom today? Christendom at large is not God's Kingdom. Neither is it in any organisation or church, no matter how large or magnificent. The World Council of Churches promotes the worldwide ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT which is leading the Protestant Churches and the Orthodox Churches back to the fold of ROME. Are you being swept along? A ONE-WORLD CHURCH of some 1,300 million members will result. Will you be part of that? That is not the Kingdom of God!

Today, the Kingdom of God displays no physical organisation or structure. Neither does it manifest itself in mammoth crusades and rallies, or the effusion of "tongues and prophecies," "signs and wonders." But wherever souls are saved from Satan's grasp and delivered from the power of darkness, they have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13). In every such soul-saving situation, there the Kingdom of God is, implanted in the hearts and lives of liberated men and women. Believers everywhere are "temples of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor 3:16) and wherever the Holy Ghost dwells, there we find God's Kingdom, unseen but unmistakable.

**THOUGHT:** Our Lord said, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36).

**PRAYER:** Father, write my name in Thy Kingdom's Book of Life.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 10

MATTHEW 24:3-5, 11, 24

GALATIANS 1:6-9

*Indeed His coming is near,  
even at the door!*

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### A SIGN OF HIS COMING: FALSE CHRISTIANITY

Chapter 24 of Matthew's Gospel is worthy of careful study by those who are interested in the signs of our Lord's return. Like the disciples of old, we would ask the same question: "...*what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*" (Matt 24:3). Curiosity is part of human nature. Let us develop a healthy curiosity and seek humbly to be enlightened by the Spirit of Truth.

Our Lord put at the head of the list of seven cardinal signs the appearance of false Christs and false prophets. This one sign alone suffices to alert us to the fast-approaching return of Jesus Christ, even if there were no other signs. But in His great wisdom and concern, He has given us an over sufficiency of signs. But Satan is a master of deception and the father of lies. As the return of our Lord draws near, he seems to sense his own approaching doom, and redoubles his efforts to subvert the Gospel and mislead the Church. With diabolical subtlety and deceit, the enemy of our souls goes "all out" to multiply his agents.

False Christs and false prophets are like counterfeit currency: they are not easy to detect. They carry Bibles, speak a similar language, invoke the name of Christ, but preach "*another gospel*" (Gal 1:6-7), a subverted Gospel. Like the counterfeit bank note, it resembles the genuine note in most respects, except for perhaps one or two fatal flaws. So it is with false prophets. Only by God-given discernment and constant vigilance can we see through the counterfeit. These agents of deception operate under the "umbrella cover" of a "church" and to all intents and purposes they appear as servants of God, working "*signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*" (Matt 24:24). Be alert. Do not be deceived. Know the truth and sell it not.

Let the elect of God be also good watchmen, to warn against false Christs and false prophets who are wolves in sheep's clothing. This requires courage, godly courage. Are you willing to stand up for Jesus?

**THOUGHT:** How can I know the counterfeit unless I know the genuine?

**PRAYER:** Father, defend us from deceivers.

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 11

PSALM 119:1-16

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

*Take heed that  
no man deceive you.*

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### BEWARE FALSE DOCTRINES

Our Lord, the Master Teacher, in His Olivet Discourse (Matt 24) warned of false prophets in five verses (Matt 24:4, 5, 11, 23, 24). Their deception will be so strong and subtle that *“if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”* (Matt 24:24). What then must we do that we be not deceived? Over-confidence in our own understanding and knowledge is hazardous. Our confidence must only be in the Lord and His Word. Let us therefore “go back to basics” and re-arm ourselves with God’s Word.

Many false teachers come with many gospels, all claiming to be “ways to God.” How can we know the true from the false? Our only sure guide is the Word of God. We say “SOLA SCRIPTURA,” i.e. THE WORD ALONE. Only God’s Word has the complete DOCTRINE OF SALVATION. Any doctrine or practice which is not in the Bible must be rejected as false and of the evil one. Any church or denomination or group which adds to the Bible extra-biblical doctrines and dogmas, dreams and visions, utterances and prophecies, traditions and revelations, must be exposed under the searchlight of God’s Word and rejected. Are you under the bondage of these extra-biblical doctrines? Look only to the Word of God, the Bible. *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32).

Why are we so concerned about doctrine? Simply because false doctrine is deadly poison, and God’s Word has warned against it again and again. We ignore these warnings at our own peril, such as Paul’s warning in 1 Timothy 4:1, that *“in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”* Giving heed to “seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” will result in a false salvation and, ultimately, rejection by Christ at His second coming.

Back then to the Word of God: SOLA SCRIPTURA, SOLA GRATIA, SOLA FIDE, i.e. the Word alone, Grace alone, and Faith alone. We must look to the Word for our salvation to be complete and secure. From these we must never be moved. May we hold fast till He comes!

**THOUGHT:** Some false teachers come as “wolves in sheep’s clothing.”

**PRAYER:** Father, keep me vigilant to the end.

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### A FALLING AWAY FIRST

To the Apostle Paul, God committed the ministry of warning, the solemn charge of alerting the faithful Church to the grave peril which will befall Christendom before our Lord returns. In today's reading, this "*least of the apostles*" says, "*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first...*" "*That day*" here refers to the day of our Lord's return (2 Thess 2:3). What is the Apostle saying to us?

Before our Lord's return there will be a "*falling away*" (2 Thess 2:3) first. This process of departure from the faith must first run its course before our Lord's return can take place. We therefore focus our attention on the "*falling away*" process, and examine the churches in Christendom which have departed from "*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3). When we study the situation objectively and with the searchlight of God's Word, we are struck, nay stunned, by the massive "*falling away*" or defection from the fundamental doctrines of the historic Christian faith. What is the evidence?

Our examination of the doctrines and practice of the main groupings in Christendom reveals an overwhelming infection by the apostasy of the end time affecting ALL the main divisions of Christendom:

- a) The Roman Church (850 million)
- b) The World Council of Churches (over 500 million)
- c) The Evangelicals under the "Lausanne" leadership and the agreement of the ECT documents
- d) The Charismatic Movement, a widespread trans-denominational phenomenon
- e) The United Religions Initiative, spear-heading the compromising, interfaith movement.

All these are converging under the inexorable impetus and genius of the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT to form OIKOUMENE (ONE WORLD). This is the FALLING AWAY! Do not be a part of it! Get out of it!

**THOUGHT:** If OIKOUMENE is on the way, can Christ be far behind?  
**PRAYER:** Father, may I be found faithful to Thy Word when Thou returnest.

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MONDAY, JANUARY 13

REVELATION 17:1-2

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-10

*Teach me Thy way,*

*O Lord.*

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### A FALLING AWAY: THE RC (1)

Today we begin to consider each of the five main categories in the great FALLING AWAY mentioned yesterday. By virtue of its size and global influence, the Roman Church (RC) is pre-eminent in the departure from the faith. Space will permit only the briefest consideration of that church.

The RC is not a true Church of Jesus Christ, although it bears the name “Holy Apostolic Church,” a name it has claimed for some 1,500 years. In actual fact and function, the RC is a global political power with diplomatic missions in over 100 countries around the world. Its socio-economic and political influences encircle the globe, without parallel and without equal, operating under the guise of the ONLY TRUE CHURCH, to which all other churches must turn.

The financial operations of the RC are worldwide and unrivalled even by the multinational corporate giants. Dispensing wealth, power and influence in the name of the church is the greatest FALLING AWAY. God has a name for this travesty of religion. He calls it FORNICATION, meaning spiritual adultery, or abuse of the Gospel. The RC’s power is such that Mr Gorbachev, the then-leader of the atheistic superpower, had to seek its help in December 1989. The Marxist of East Europe had collapsed under the irresistible democratic movement by the RC. Sick Marxism was compelled to ask for a dose of religion, the opium of the people, from the RC!

The immediate pull, and ultimate power, of the RC is yet to be seen in the ecumenical process. While Rome sits in majestic splendour beaming its condescending smile, the separated brethren and the rest of Christendom are being drawn irresistibly back to Mother Church.

WATCH, as Rome leads in the FALLING AWAY.

**THOUGHT:** *“I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”* (Ps 84:10)

**PRAYER:** Father, grant me spiritual eyesight to see beyond the superficial.

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 14

EXODUS 20:1-17

REVELATION 17:3-6

*Lord, lead me  
in the way of Your Truth.*

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### A FALLING AWAY: THE RC (2)

Yesterday, we considered the socio-economic and political strengths of the RC. Today, let us look into some of its religious operations. An honest and detached examination reveals that the RC's system of doctrines and dogmas (which determine its practices) are wholly alien and contrary to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

*"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). God hates idolatry, and in two Commandments (the first and second) specifically prohibits any form of idolatry. For their idolatry in the wilderness, the Lord plagued the people (Exod 32:35). The heathen nations in Canaan were to be utterly destroyed for their idolatry. Despite God's prohibitions and warnings, idolatry crept into the church when the Roman Emperor adopted Christianity as the official religion of the State in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. Since then, images have become an integral part of RC worship. So, the RC worships ("venerates") images of Mary, the "Holy Family" and various "saints." Are you guilty of the sin of idolatry? Confess and repent. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Space will allow us to touch briefly on one other subject: that of Prayer. Our Lord taught the disciples to pray to God the Father, in the name of Jesus, and not to use vain repetitions (Matt 6:6-13; John 14:13-14). The RC's teaching on Prayer contradicts God's Word. RC's prayers are directed to Mary and the saints (who are both dead and buried). Rosary prayers addressed to Mary are made ten times more often than those addressed to Christ, and the vain repetition is directly contrary to our Lord's teaching. Before we leave this topic, we note that the RC has other grave errors and un-christian practices: the mass, purgatory, penance, confession, indulgence, etc. What a massive FALLING AWAY it is, with almost 1,000 million followers!

**THOUGHT:** The marvel is: these erroneous doctrines and practices are gaining wide acceptance by Christians.

**PRAYER:** Father, keep me in Thy narrow way which leadeth unto life (Matt 7:14).

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-12

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

*Put on the whole armour*

*of God to stand against*

*the wiles of the devil.*

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### A FALLING AWAY: THE WCC

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1948 with the primary objective of calling the churches of the world together in visible unity. It is the only worldwide union of churches representing over 300 churches in more than 100 countries, with a combined strength of more than 500 million members. Some refer to the WCC as the “Ecclesiastical United Nations.”

The WCC member churches are overwhelmingly liberal and apostate (i.e. fallen into unbelief). The fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith are no longer regarded as essential for belief. The Bible is no more regarded as the infallible WORD OF GOD and the Christian’s FINAL RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE. Jesus Christ is not considered the only way to God. Christianity is ranked only as one of the world’s great religions, ONE AMONG EQUALS.

The WCC has been the moving force behind the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT. Its objectives are:

- a) union of all Protestant Churches,
- b) union with the RC, and finally,
- c) union with all religions and peoples of the world to form OIKOUMENE or ONE WORLD.

The WCC has abandoned the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ for “another gospel” (Gal 1:6-7). It is a sociopolitical body seeking to create a better and safer world by man’s efforts and genius, without God. It uses the name of God and the words of the Bible, but with other meanings.

The leadership of the WCC is in the hands of Marxists and their sympathisers. It is not surprising then that the WCC promotes Liberation Theology (which is Marxism disguised as Christian Gospel) in schools, churches, seminaries, social organisations, etc. It actively supports terrorist movements to combat racism (i.e. Marxist revolution) around the world.

**THOUGHT:** Is my church in the WCC?

**PRAYER:** Keep me, O Father, from compromise and unbelief.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 16  
2 CORINTHIANS 6:16  
ACTS 16:31-34

*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and thou shalt be saved...”*

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**“THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE”**

(by Charles Spurgeon)

What a sweet title: “My people!” What a cheering revelation: “Their God!” How much of meaning is couched in those two words, “My people!” Here is speciality. The whole world is God’s; the heaven, even the heaven of heavens is the Lord’s, and he reigneth among the children of men; but of those whom he hath chosen, whom he hath purchased to himself, he saith what he saith not of others – “My people.” In this word there is the idea of proprietorship. In a special manner the “Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” All the nations upon earth are his; the whole world is in his power; yet are his people, his chosen, more especially his possession; for he has done more for them than others; he has bought them with his blood; he has brought them nigh to himself; he has set his great heart upon them; he has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish. Dear friends, can you, by faith, see yourselves in that number? Can you look up to heaven and say, “My Lord and my God: mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call thee Father; mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with thee when thou art pleased to manifest thyself unto me as thou dost not unto the world?” Canst thou read the Book of Inspiration, and find there the indentures of thy salvation? Canst thou read thy title writ in precious blood? Canst thou, by humble faith, lay hold of Jesus’ garments, and say, “My Christ”? If thou canst, then God saith of thee, and of others like thee, “My people;” for, if God be your God, and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favour to you; you are the object of his choice, accepted in his beloved Son.

**THOUGHT:** Am I sure I am part of God’s people?

**PRAYER:** Father, I thank Thee that I am Thy child.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 17  
ISAIAH 56:9-12  
ACTS 20:24-32

*“But he that shall endure  
unto the end,  
the same shall be saved.”*

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### A FALLING AWAY: THE EVANGELICALS

More than seventy years ago, the evangelicals, on the whole, stood for the great fundamentals of the faith and kept separate from those who did not. Today, this is not so. They have left the *“old paths, where is the good way”* (Jer 6:16). Some seventy years ago, a movement called “new evangelicalism” began in the USA led by men like Dr Billy Graham, Dr Harold Ockenga, Dr Carl Henry, and others. These men abandoned their former position of separation from those who did not hold to the evangelical doctrines, namely, the RC, the liberals and modernists, and non-Christian or anti-Christian movements.

The result of this shift of position was a disastrous FALLING AWAY. God sent them *“strong delusion, that they should believe a lie”* (2 Thess 2:3, 11). Over the years, by association and friendship with unbelievers, the evangelicals have drifted into the ecumenical current of mainstream Christianity. In 1974, a gathering of evangelicals was convened by Dr Billy Graham in Lausanne to map out the course for the future. There the seeds of compromise and further FALLING AWAY were sown.

In 1989, the evangelicals gathered at its historic “Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelisation” in Manila, Philippines. Under the patronage of Dr Billy Graham, with other prominent evangelicals such as Dr John Stott, Dr Leighton Ford, the evangelicals welcomed to their fellowship the RC, WCC, the Orthodox Church, and the Charismatics. One small step in 1948, abandoning the biblical separation doctrine, led to a great FALLING AWAY by 1989. And in 1994 and 1997, the Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) Document I and II were signed. These sealed the evangelicals’ sacrifice of the purity of their faith, making a mockery of the sacrifices of the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformers. They are committed to the spirit of ecumenical unity, cooperation with liberals and unbelievers, and sociopolitical involvement as “Christian duty.”

The FALLING AWAY of the EVANGELICALS is a sign of our Lord’s imminent return.

**THOUGHT:** Does my church hold to the doctrine of biblical separation?

**PRAYER:** Keep me, O Father, away from all unholy union.

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## A FALLING AWAY: THE CHARISMATICS

The Charismatic Movement has its roots in the old Pentecostal Movement which originated in America at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The “old Pentecostals” were, by and large, sound Bible-believing Christians, holding to the fundamental doctrines of the faith. They practised their “tongues speaking” and “faith healing” generally on a low key within their own assemblies.

In the sixties, something happened. The “tongues and healing” movement really began to move. Groups of Christians all over America found a new dimension to their hitherto insipid, dull or lifeless Christian experience. Suddenly, members of “dead churches” in non-Pentecostal Protestant denominations discovered “Pentecostal power” in meetings for prayer, Bible study, fellowship and worship. This sort of “revival” swept through all the main line churches, but soon spilled over to the RC and, of course, they began to experience the ecstasy of “tongues speaking” and the “power of faith healing.”

Within a couple of decades almost all churches around the world came under the influence of this “Holy Spirit Renewal” movement. Added to the traditional “tongues and healing” of the old Pentecostals, the new Charismatics have moved into:

- a) trans-denominational unity of the ecumenical sort,
- b) extra-biblical claims of “prophetic utterances, dreams and visions, and wonders,”
- c) wild claims of “miracles, healings, raising of the dead, extra-terrestrial trips,” etc.

But the joining of Protestants with the RC in “ecumenical unity” exposes its FALLING AWAY in no uncertain manner.

**THOUGHT:** Am I in the Charismatic Movement?

**PRAYER:** Help me, Father, to look to Thy revealed Word for wisdom to discern the signs of the time.

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### A FALLING AWAY: URO

In June 1995, the Interfaith Summit Conference was held with the objective of “uniting the world’s religions into a global organization.” Modelled after the United Nations, the proposed United Religions Organisation (URO) would be an international, inter-religious organisation with affiliation to the United Nations. On 26 June 2000 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, the United Religions Initiative (URI) was born. Its birth was marked by a signing by the participants at the Global Summit 2000. The purpose of the URI as set forth in their document is “to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.” In line with this religious unifying endeavour, it is inevitable that a unifying “book” be produced. So, it is no surprise that the “World Scripture” came forth. It is a composite of the major beliefs of all the faiths in the world. It accepts as equally valid and true all the teachings of all religions.

Where is all this leading to but a further falling away!! The “World Scripture” to replace the Bible! “All ways lead to God” instead of “Jesus is the only way!” Save the earth, never mind the souls of the people!! Christian, what is your response to this? It is easier to just flow with the tide, do what is acceptable and take the broad way. But, Christian, awake! Do not be lulled by the lullaby of the world. Do not be drawn into this compromising position.

2 Peter 3:10: “...*the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*” *This earth is not worth saving. Your efforts will only go to waste!* Peter says further, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness... *be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless*” (2 Pet 3:13-14). To be forewarned is to be forearmed! It is easy to get onto the slide of compromise. But once on it, you have only one way to go. Down! Be wise, do not even get onto it!

**THOUGHT:** To whom have I given my life: Jesus or the world?

**PRAYER:** Father, may I double my effort to share the Gospel.

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MONDAY, JANUARY 20

ISAIAH 59:16-21

JUDE 3-4

*Teach us to follow Thee  
closely every day.*

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### A FALLING AWAY FIRST

In the last few days' readings, we have seen how the RC, the WCC, the Evangelicals, the Charismatics and the URO are leading and promoting the falling away of the Christian Church.

Startling advances by these groups in this end-time development are seen in:

- a) interdenominational worship and meetings,
- b) interfaith worship of "Christians" with other religions,
- c) the gathering momentum of the "back to Rome" pilgrimage of Protestants led by the Anglicans,
- d) the WCC wooing the RC with increasing "success," and
- e) the Pope waiting with masterly inactivity for the "separated brethren" to return to the fold.

When ultimate ecumenical union takes place, we shall see OIKOUMENE, ONE WORLD, with the Head of the RC on the throne. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Revelation 17:1-6. When you see these things, lift up your head, for the Lord cometh!

The urgent and compelling duty of Bible-believing churches and faithful Christians today is to warn others of the rapid FALLING AWAY and SUBTLE DECEPTION now overtaking Christendom everywhere. This falling away or departure from the faith is to prepare the way for the ultimate demise of BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY, and the union of APOSTATE CHRISTENDOM with ALL RELIGIONS.

Do not be misled. Be like the church in Philadelphia (Rev 3:10-11) which the Lord commended: *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*

**THOUGHT:** Big is better? Not so in God's eye!

**PRAYER:** Father, keep me from all deception. Help me be faithful to Thee to the end.

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 21

DANIEL 12:1-3

MARK 13:4-8

*“It is better to trust  
in the LORD than to put  
confidence in princes.”*

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### SIGNS OF HIS COMING: WARS

War is part of history. We may say, “Hatred and killing flow through men’s bloodstream.” According to the Society of International Law Journal, during the past 3,400 years of history there have been no more than 268 years of world peace. Men have not grown more benign with the years. The future is unlikely to be more peaceful than the past.

This century has seen the most deadly, brutal and destructive wars in all history. In two World Wars and countless regional wars, 100 million lives and more have perished. The Second World War alone cost 78 million lives. In the likely event of a Third World War, it has been estimated that one-third of the world population will be destroyed. The superpowers have enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world 100 times! Mankind’s potential for self-destruction has reached a point where, at the press of a button, all life on earth could be extinguished.

While the Cold War has ended and there are talks of peace and trade, and more talks of peace and trade, nevertheless the underlying suspicion and hatred remains. Watch the developments of peace talks in the Middle East especially. Without a radical change of heart, the prospects of WWIII are very real. Roger Hilsman has said, “War is part of the future.” And because men have used every weapon ever invented when the occasion demanded, he concluded, “Nuclear war is also part of the future.”

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has seen the greatest proliferation of “...wars and rumours of wars...” (Matt 24:6) in history. This is one sure sign of Jesus’ coming!

**THOUGHT:** When WWIII breaks, where will my security be?

**PRAYER:** Father, help me to see the nearness of Thy return and to labour for Thee while it is day.

---

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22

1 KINGS 8:37-40

LUKE 21:8-11

*The Lord is on my side;*

*I will not be afraid.*

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## SIGNS OF HIS COMING: FAMINES, PESTILENCES

### a) Famines

Despite advances in modern agriculture and increased food production in the major agricultural countries, masses of Third World people are starving or actually dying from under-nutrition. Ethiopia and parts of Africa bordering the Sahara Desert are in the famine zone. It is said that “every night a quarter of the world goes to bed hungry.” The world’s food reserves will last slightly over one month. Famine may be experienced in only a few countries, but climatic changes and natural disasters can cause global crop failures very quickly and precipitate widespread famine. When that happens, remember our Lord’s words in Luke 21:11. Famine also reminds us that “*man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD...*” (Deut 8:3).

### b) Pestilences

With WHO’s world health programme controlling most communicable diseases, the general state of health everywhere is getting better. But our Lord foretells of the outbreak of pestilences or deadly epidemic diseases as a sign of His coming. In recent years two health problems seem to fit in with this definition. The first is DRUG ABUSE. There has been a worldwide explosion in the use of “psychotropic drugs.” Millions of mindless youths have been hooked by habit-forming and addictive drugs (cocaine, heroin, cannabis, amphetamines, LSD, ecstasy pills, etc). The second is AIDS (Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome), a mysterious scourge linked with homosexuality and sexual promiscuity. The AIDS virus destroys the body’s immune defence system, rendering the victim helpless against invading organisms and malignant processes. The disease is estimated to have infected hundreds of millions persons around the world, and there is no prospect of cure. Mankind just has no answer to these two pestilences.

**THOUGHT:** THE LORD MUST RETURN! GOD MUST INTERVENE!

**PRAYER:** Open my eyes to the signs of Thy Return, O Father, that I may redouble my efforts in serving Thee.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

PSALM 114

REVELATION 6:12-17

*Are we like the fools who despise  
wisdom and instruction?*

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### SIGNS OF HIS COMING: EARTHQUAKES

The 20th Century has seen twenty times more earthquakes than the 19th, and they are bigger and more destructive. The world was horrified by the quakes in Turkey and Taiwan. The two quakes in Turkey in August and November 1999 took more than 18,000 lives (<http://kaynasli.homepage.com> on 7 December 1999). The one in Taiwan in September 1999 took more than 1,100 lives (<http://cnn.com>, 21 September 1999).

Devastating quakes have struck many countries of the world during the past three decades eg. China, Algeria, Turkey, Central Asia. In the mid-1970s in Tangshan, China, half a million were killed. In October 1980, 20,000 were killed in two quakes in Algeria. In January 1990, Perth in Western Australia, regarded as “quake-free” was hit by a modest quake.

The disciples asked Jesus, “*What shall be the sign of thy coming?*” (Matt 24:3). Our Lord’s reply merits close study by all who are concerned about this MOMENTOUS EVENT. Among other signs mentioned in Matthew 24:4-7, Jesus said, “There shall be earthquakes in diverse places,” just as the world experienced in the 20th Century. What is the meaning? The royal household staff tremble at the king’s return after a long absence. In the same way, the creation shakes at the approach of its Creator after a long absence. “*Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord...*” said the inspired Psalmist in Psalm 114:7. Joel said, “*The day of the LORD cometh... the earth shall quake... for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible...*” (Joel 2:1, 10-11).

**THOUGHT:** Have you ever experienced an earthquake? It is said to be a most fearful thing.

**PRAYER:** Father, help me not to fear that which can kill the body but is not able to kill the soul, but rather to fear God who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt 10:28).

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### SIGNS OF HIS COMING: THE FIG TREE (1)

The fig tree symbolically represents the nation Israel. Ponder the significance of our Lord's words: "*Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors*" (Matt 24:32-33).

What is our Lord saying? Recall that Jesus was about to be crucified by the Roman governor Pilate, as Israel was under the Roman yoke. Nationalistically speaking, Israel was non-existent: the fig tree was dead or languishing. It was to remain so for the next 1,900 years. In fact, some thirty-five years after our Lord spoke, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, slaughtered a million Jews and dispersed the rest throughout the world. Humanly speaking, Israel was finished.

Jesus spoke about the "Parable of the Fig Tree" with an eye on the eventual return and reinstatement of Israel in the land. With this background, let us explain His words: "Now draw a lesson from the nation Israel. When Israel begins to take its place again as a nation, and flourish (like the fig tree in summer), be discerning and know: my coming is near, even at the doors." Soon after our Lord spoke, He went to His death, and His people paid dearly for killing their Messiah, even as they said, "*His blood be on us, and on our children*" (Matt 27:25).

The years of dreadful persecution and dispersion have passed. The land has been trampled underfoot by foreign conquerors. The Jews were settled in 100 countries around the globe. Suddenly, "out of the blue" on 14 May 1948, the modern state of Israel was born. In the face of Arab opposition, the fig tree took root and began to grow, "*...his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves...*" Now read Matthew 24:32 with better appreciation of our Lord's return.

**THOUGHT:** Why are the Jews, scattered all over the world, returning to Israel?

**PRAYER:** May my eyes see with wisdom and understanding what Thou art doing with Israel, Thy chosen nation, O Father.

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

DEUTERONOMY 28:63-68

JEREMIAH 30:1-11

*Rekindle the flame of love  
for God in our hearts.*

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### SIGNS OF HIS COMING: THE FIG TREE (2)

The unprecedented and miraculous revival of the Jewish nation, after a turbulent 3,500-year history of dispersion and destruction never yet experienced by any other people, was all in precise fulfilment of Scripture prophecy. It is sufficient evidence to convince any unbiased reader of the Bible that this Book is truly the WORD OF GOD.

Some 1,500 years before it happened, the Jews were warned by God of grievous punishment and scattering among the heathen, if they sinned. All that the Word of God promised came to pass. Read again Deuteronomy 28:65-67 and appreciate the plight of God's people. The persecutions, expulsions, plunderings, tortures, rape, extremes of inhuman treatment, mass killings, experienced by the Jews are unique. No other people have tasted even a tenth of their sufferings.

In spite of Pharaoh of Egypt, the Assyrian and Roman conquerors, the holy Inquisitors, and Hitler the beast, the Jewish people have survived, supernaturally preserved. "It is a miracle," said Connor Cruise O'Brien in his book "Siege." In spite of all their sins, God has not forsaken Israel. He promised to keep His covenant with them, and be a sanctuary to them, and eventually to regather them in the Land (Lev 26:44; Ezek 11:16; Isa 14:1; 60:4).

In 1948, according to God's promise, the Jewish people regained their Land, and from 100 countries they began to return, in ever swelling numbers. In forty years, the population increased five-fold (from 800,000 to 4 million). The fig tree is putting forth leaves. Therefore, the summer of our Lord's return is nigh! By God's doing, the Russian Jews were allowed to return to Israel in great numbers. In April 1990, 10,000 Jews arrived, and another 70,000-100,000 returned by 1991. Gorbachev was acting a shade like Cyrus of old.

**THOUGHT:** Jesus says in Matthew 24:33, "...when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."

**PRAYER:** Thy will be done, O Father, on earth as it is in heaven.

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### SIGNS OF HIS COMING: DAYS OF NOAH

*“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matt 24:37). These are our Lord’s own words, giving us yet another sign or clue of the nearness of His coming. What are *“the days of Noe”*? These are days of unrestrained physical and pleasurable living, days of corruption and violence, and days of unbelief and ridicule of God’s Word.

- a) Days of unrestrained physical and pleasurable living. In the comfortable environment of the pre-Flood world, men lived 900 years and more, lives of carnal lust and enjoyment. *“Marrying and giving in marriage”* refers to men’s preoccupation with the pleasures of sex, including homosexuality and other related perversions. Today’s “free love,” cohabitation, and “penthouse culture” hark back to the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. The world is ripe for judgment.
- b) Days of corruption and violence. *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen 6:5). These words would fit quite well in describing any modern society in the east and west. Violent crime is on the rise everywhere, and every form of corruption has proliferated beyond imagination. The present moral decay demands our Lord’s return in judgment.
- c) Days of unbelief and ridicule of God’s Word. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, spoke to deaf ears. He warned of God’s judgment by a flood. The people laughed at him in scorn. “Silly old man! How utterly foolish. What flood? What rain?” So, they would have ridiculed Noah. Peter the Apostle said that *“in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts”* will laugh at the idea of Christ’s return (2 Pet 3:3). Why? Because their deeds are evil.

When you see these things, know this: The Lord’s coming is near!

**THOUGHT:** Do I also laugh at His appearing? Or do I love His appearing?

**PRAYER:** Increase my love for Thee, Father. Increase my desire for Jesus’ return.

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MONDAY, JANUARY 27

MATTHEW 24:40-46

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

*It will be worth it all  
when we see Jesus.*

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### CAUGHT UP TO MEET THE LORD

Like the expectant bride awaiting her bridegroom's arrival, the believing Church looks for the Lord coming from heaven. With what longing and yearning does the Bride await her heavenly Husband! Has He not promised, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:3)?

To some of weaker faith, the idea of being "...*caught up...*" (1 Thess 4:17) may sound incredible. Indeed, how can it be? But, be not faithless! The process is no different from our Lord's resurrection and ascension. Thomas doubted the eye-witness testimony of the ten. The Lord, at His next appearing to the disciples, therefore chided the doubting Thomas, *"Be not faithless, but believing"* (John 20:27). We talk reality, not science fiction. Facts, not imagination.

Besides our Lord's resurrection and ascension, we have other examples in Scripture for our instruction and assurance. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, *"walked with God: and... God took him"* (Gen 5:24). Before his transformation and rapture, Enoch was also given a preview of the Second Coming, recorded by Jude: *"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all..."* (Jude 14). God also "caught up" Elijah *"by a whirlwind into heaven"* (2 Kings 2:11).

The "catching up" is sometimes called the rapture. It will be a selective gathering, not indiscriminate or haphazard. It will certainly not be ecumenical or all-inclusive. The Lord knows who are His. So, of two in the field, one shall be taken, and the other left. There will be a sorting out and separating of the nearest and dearest of human ties: school-mates, work-mates, life-mates – there will be a separation. It will happen when Jesus comes.

**THOUGHT:** Am I His?

**PRAYER:** Father, save me and make me wholly Thine.

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

ROMANS 8:18-23

1 JOHN 3:1-3

*So till He come,*

*I'll watch and pray rejoicing.*

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### WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

Today, let us take a closer look at what the Scripture teaches about the transformation of our bodies at our Lord's return. 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."* In Philippians 3:20-21, Paul says, *"...the Lord... shall change our vile (or corruptible) body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body..."* The Apostle John says, *"...when he shall appear, we shall be like him"* (1 John 3:2). At the Lord's coming, all believers, past and present, dead and alive, shall undergo a miraculous transformation: our bodies will be changed to be like our Lord's resurrected body: perfect, forever free from the ravages of age, sorrow, sickness and death.

But that is not all. We shall be caught up in the air to be forever with the Lord. This is the first resurrection. *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years"* (Rev 20:6). Such a glorious prospect makes any present suffering, no matter how grievous, bearable and worth it. The Apostle Paul said, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Rom 8:18). Even the physical creation, our world, fallen under curse since Adam, will be restored (Rom 8:22-23).

With the whole creation delivered from the curse, the animal kingdom will also be restored. Then wolf and lamb, leopard and kid, calf and lion, cow and bear - these will be at peace with one another and with mankind. All animals will return to a vegetarian diet as in the beginning (Isa 11:6-9).

Reader, are you not excited by this revelation of God? Does it not thrill your heart that such a perfect world will soon be a reality? The present earth is not our home, so live like a pilgrim, live expecting to arrive "home."

**THOUGHT:** *"...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD..."*  
(Isa 11:9)

**PRAYER:** I praise Thee, O Father, for Thou art from eternity to eternity.

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

JEREMIAH 30:1-11

REVELATION 6:12-17

*The Lord knows who are His.*

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## THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The great tribulation refers to a seven-year period during which God's judgments are poured down on the rebellious earth. It is also referred to as "The Day of the Lord" and "Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week" (Dan 9:25-27). The seven-year period begins after the "catching up" of believers (rapture) before the coming of our Lord to earth in power and great glory to establish His Millennial Kingdom.

The Day of the Lord. This is the day of reckoning when God unleashes His judgments on a rebellious world, on both Jews and Gentiles. Isaiah wrote: *"Howl... for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty... with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof... I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity..."* (Isa 13:6-11). *"It is even the time of Jacob's trouble"* (Jer 30:7).

The Reign of the Beast. Mankind, having rejected God's Lamb, falls into the grip of Satan's Beast who rules over the world with Satan-inspired power, exercising absolute control for forty-two months, over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, demanding to be worshipped. His power is such that no man can buy or sell without the mark of the beast, or his name, or number (Rev 13).

The Wrath of the Lamb. Strange, isn't it, that the Lamb should be angry? But He is also the Lion of the Tribe of Juda (Rev 5:5) and those on earth who had spurned the sacrifice of the Lamb will have to face His righteous wrath. However, instead of repenting and begging for mercy, *"the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, And said ... Fall on us, and hide us...from the wrath of the Lamb"* (Rev 6:15-16).

**THOUGHT:** Whom will I worship: Beast or Lamb?

**PRAYER:** May my life be pleasing to my Lord and bring glory to His Name!

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

PSALM 89:1-8, 28-34

ROMANS 11:25-36

*“Great peace have they  
which love Thy law...”*

---

### HAS ISRAEL A FUTURE?

- a) God’s Word cannot be broken. God called Abraham and sealed the call by an everlasting covenant (Gen 12, 15, 17). The promise was renewed to Isaac, Jacob and David. To Jacob, He said, “... *I... will give this land... for an everlasting possession*” (Gen 48:4); to David, “*Thy seed will I establish for ever... my mercy will I keep for him for evermore... my covenant will I not break...*” (Ps 89:4, 28, 34). God has spoken. His Word cannot be broken.
- b) God is regathering Israel. Through their thousands of years of suffering, bondage in foreign lands, dispersion and decimation by Gentile enemies, God has not forgotten Israel. In spite of their obstinacy and repeated rebellion, God has not cast them away. But in the fullness of time, He is regathering them, according to His promise: “*For, lo, the days come... that I will bring again the captivity of my people...*” (Jer 30:3; cf. Isa 14:1).
- c) God is chastening Israel. Despite the chastening already received from God, Israel today persists in unbelief. The majority today are atheists. Therefore, God will further chasten them, for His plan cannot be frustrated. “*I will punish you for all your iniquities*” (Amos 3:2). The dreaded day of Jacob’s trouble is yet to come (Jer 30:5-7).
- d) God will yet save Israel. All of God’s dealings with Israel are working toward her eventual conversion. God will take away their blindness (Rom 11:25), and “*they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn... as one mourneth for his only son*” (Zech 12:10). “*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins*” (Rom 11:26-27).

**THOUGHT:** Israel will be saved when Jesus returns (Rom 11:26-27).

**PRAYER:** I thank Thee, Father, for Thy love and mercy to Israel. I thank Thee, too, for Thy love and mercy to me.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

TITUS 2:11-15

DANIEL 7:13-14

*We shall see the King in royal state  
riding on the clouds, His chariot.*

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### THE GLORIOUS APPEARING (1)

All HISTORY and PROPHECY look to the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, the believers' BLESSED HOPE. What is the nature of His coming?

1. He comes IN PERSON. Our Lord said so. *"I will come again, and receive you... that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:3). *"Ye now... have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice..."* (John 16:22). And Acts 1:11: *"This same Jesus... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."*
2. He comes VISIBLY. *"This same Jesus"* who appeared as the RISEN CHRIST to His disciples has *"flesh and bones"* (Luke 24:39). When He returns *"every eye shall see him"* (Rev 1:7). "Behold, He comes" and "Behold, I come" occur five times in the book of Revelation. What are we to BEHOLD except it be a VISIBLE APPEARING?
3. He comes WITH CLOUDS. Daniel saw it 500 years before Christ! He said, *"Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven"* (Dan 7:13). When our Lord ascended to heaven *"a cloud received him"* (Acts 1:9). The angels said that He *"shall so come in like manner..."* So, Revelation 1:7 said, *"Behold, he cometh with clouds."*
4. He comes SUDDENLY. Our Lord's coming from heaven will be a momentous, startling, sudden and dazzling event. *"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"* (Matt 24:27). It will be with awesome rapidity and awesome finality. There will not be time to "get ready"!
5. He comes WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY. Not as a helpless Babe of Bethlehem, or Suffering Servant to be crucified, but as Alpha and Omega, the Almighty Creator, KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS. On that day, *"at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..."* (Phil 2:10-11).

THOUGHT: Will I share in His glory or flee from His presence?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, the Lord Jesus is coming for me soon.

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### THE GLORIOUS APPEARING (2)

6. He comes WITH ALL HIS ANGELS. Our returning Lord, the KING OF HEAVEN will come, clothed with unspeakable glory, honour, power and majesty, with the armies of heaven in attendance. The angelic hosts, clothed in fine linen, follow Him on white horses (Rev 19:14). Our Lord said in Matthew 25:31, *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him..."* It will be an awesome and dazzling spectacle.
7. He comes WITH ALL HIS SAINTS. God planned it from the beginning that when *"...Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"* (Col 3:4). Enoch saw and testified, *"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints"* (Jude 14). So did Zechariah: *"And the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee"* (Zech 14:5). The resurrected, transformed believers, caught up to be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:16-17) will return to earth with Him. O glorious day!
8. He comes BACK TO JERUSALEM. The KING OF THE JEWS must return to the CAPITAL! God showed His plan to Zechariah: *"...his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west..."* (Zech 14:4). The angels at the Ascension said it too: *"This same Jesus... shall so come... as ye have seen him go..."* (Acts 1:11). Jesus shall come back to the mount of Olives.
9. He comes to REIGN ON EARTH. This will be the fulfilment of the prophecies by God's holy prophets through the ages, and the realisation of the hopes of all the redeemed of God. God's plan of salvation will finally be fully accomplished. The glorified, triumphant CRUCIFIED LAMB returns to His created planet, on which He perfected our redemption, to establish His glorious millennial reign (Rev 20:4).

**THOUGHT:** We shall reign on earth with Him a thousand years.

**PRAYER:** May I read Thy Word with eyes of understanding and believe with a heart of faith.

---

## A THOUSAND GLORIOUS YEARS ON EARTH

Let us let Scripture speak for itself. If we do this, we shall find great profit. May the Holy Spirit guide us into all truth as we ask ourselves, "Where will Christ's everlasting kingdom be: on earth or in heaven?" We find the answer from prophecy.

- a) DANIEL. God gave Daniel visions to see the "end of the story." All the kingdoms of men will ultimately be destroyed by God's kingdom which is depicted as a stone "*cut out without hands... became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth*" (Dan 2:34-35). In his second vision, Daniel saw that "*the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High...*" (Dan 7:27). The two visions say the same thing: Christ's kingdom will be ON EARTH.
- b) ZECHARIAH. In his prophecy, Zechariah foresaw the return of Christ in the "*day of the Lord*" (i.e. Great Tribulation, Zech 14:1). "*And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...*" (Zech 14:4). And where is the mount of Olives? In Israel. ON EARTH.
- c) GABRIEL. Consider the archangel's words to the virgin Mary: "*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever...*" (Luke 1:31-33). David's throne is ON EARTH.
- d) PAUL. Read again Romans 8:19-23. Paul spoke of the "*whole creation*" groaning, waiting for the adoption or "*the redemption of our body,*" and that the creation itself "*also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption...*" Amazing truth! At Christ's coming, He will redeem not only our bodies, but the physical creation as well. He will redeem EARTH for the MILLENNIUM.

**THOUGHT:** Christ died on earth to restore MEN AND EARTH.

**PRAYER:** Father, Creator and Redeemer! Blessed be Thy Name!

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3

ISAIAH 11:6-9

MATTHEW 6:9-10

*Think of our Saviour's  
return with longing.*

---

### THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH

Did you ever consider the words of the LORD'S PRAYER, the one and only prayer that He commanded believers to pray? What are we asking for when we say: "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matt 6:10)?

Did you ever appreciate that since God's will has been violated on earth since the Fall, this LORD'S PRAYER will be totally frustrated if our Lord Jesus does not establish His Millennial Kingdom ON EARTH?

Did you ever realise that if our Lord, after His devastating victory at Armageddon (Zech 12; Rev 16), should gather His forces and return to heaven, the story of man on earth will be one of rebellion to the end, and GOD'S will will NEVER be done "*in earth as it is in heaven*"?

If that be the case, then for 2,000 years the church has prayed the LORD'S PRAYER in vain, if indeed our Lord did leave us a vain prayer. But God forbid. Our Lord knows the end from the beginning. He comes to redeem mankind and the whole creation so that the earth is created "*not in vain*" (Isa 45:18).

In His omniscient wisdom, Jesus commanded us in Matthew 6:9-10 to pray: "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" He did it with the full knowledge that our prayer will be fully answered, by Himself and the Father, by His redemptive sacrifice on the cross. "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matt 28:18). Praise God! When Christ reigns on earth with His saints, for the first time since Eden, God's will shall be done, ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN.

**THOUGHT:** The LORD'S PRAYER shall be answered.

**PRAYER:** I thank Thee, Father, that Thou art a God of Thy Word. Grant me faith to believe and trust Thy Word.

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

REVELATION 20

2 TIMOTHY 2:12

*Life's trials will all be over  
when we see Christ.*

---

### WE SHALL REIGN WITH HIM

One of the blessings, and a reward, which we shall receive from the Lord is that we shall reign with Him. O what condescension and what grace that we should be accorded such honour! "It's too good to be true!" And so it is. But God's Word says so. The Apostle Paul said, "*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...*" (2 Tim 2:12).

In the song of the redeemed in heaven, it is written, "*...thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*" (Rev 5:9-10). When and how shall this be?

For answers, we turn to Revelation 20:6. "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*" All believers shall be resurrected / transformed at the Lord's coming (1 Thess 4:16-17; 1 Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:20-21). This is the first resurrection. These shall then enter the Millennial Kingdom to assist in the administration of the earth which will be populated by the believing survivors of the Great Tribulation and Armageddon.

For 1,000 years we shall reign with the Lord. It will be a redeemed earth (Rom 8:21-23), Paradise restored. As servants of the Lord, we shall be assigned, each according to his faithfulness, to rule over "*ten cities*" or "*five cities*" as the case may be (Luke 19:16-19).

When the thousand years are over, our Lord will create a NEW HEAVEN and NEW EARTH! There we shall dwell with Him for ETERNITY! (Rev 21-22)

**THOUGHT:** What is my life of 70 to 100 years compared to the 1,000-year reign with Christ?

**PRAYER:** I thank Thee, Father, for revealing to me Thy Plan. May I draw much comfort knowing that Thou hast planned it all. All glory and praise to Thee, Father, in the highest!

---

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

GENESIS 32:1-8

PSALM 9:1-10

*The Lord is my Helper.*

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### DANGER AHEAD!

From today, we shall turn our attention to Genesis 32 to 50. Genesis 32 begins with Jacob returning home with his family from Haran.

As Jacob and his family proceeded along the way, the angels of God met him. But soon they were gone and Jacob was left to prepare for the encounter with his brother Esau, alone. How should he greet the elder brother whom he had grievously offended? He thought of a brilliant diplomatic move: by dispatching messengers ahead, ambassadors of goodwill. At least they might “break the ice,” soften Esau’s heart with sweet words, and size up the situation before Jacob made the next move.

The messengers were carefully instructed to use correct diplomatic language. Esau was “*lord*,” Jacob was “*servant*.” Let Esau be informed of Jacob’s respectful and conciliatory attitude, even though he was now a man of considerable wealth. The clear message to Esau: “that I, Jacob, might find grace in thy sight.”

Receiving no particular response from Esau, the messengers returned with this report: “Esau is on his way to meet you, with 400 men.” What could this mean but one thing! Vengeance and violence! Old scores will be settled! Jacob read the message and saw grave danger ahead. To fight was foolhardy, to flee impossible. “*..Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed...*” (Gen 32:7).

In the crisis situation, he resorted to some quick thinking. He split the camp into two bands, each one to look after its own survival. If Esau should descend with sword and knife, perhaps one half of the camp might escape. That was Jacob’s “strategy for survival” based on his reasoning at the level of nature. Jacob was acting not by faith but by sight.

**THOUGHT:** In times of danger, better “look up” than “look out”!

**PRAYER:** Show me Thy way, O Lord. And lead me in Thy plain path.

---

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

GENESIS 32:12

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-11

*“...we both labour and  
suffer reproach, because  
we trust in the living God...”*

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## “I WILL SURELY DO THEE GOOD”

(by Charles Spurgeon)

When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and Esau was coming with armed men, he earnestly sought God’s protection, and as a master reason he pleaded, “And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.” Oh, the force of that plea! He was holding God to his word – “Thou saidst.” The attribute of God’s faithfulness is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is a yet mightier holdfast – “Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.” And has he said, and shall he not do it? “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” Shall not he be true? Shall he not keep his word? Shall not every word that cometh out of his lips stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleaded with God to remember the word which he had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note, his honour is engaged; he signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonours his bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment: he never is before his time, but he never is behind it. Search God’s word through, and compare it with the experience of God’s people, and you shall find the two tally from the first to the last. Many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua, “Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass.” If you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an “if;” you may urge it with certainty. The Lord meant to fulfil the promise, or he would not have given it. God does not give his words merely to quiet us, and to keep us hopeful for awhile with the intention of putting us off at last; but when he speaks, it is because he means to do as he has said.

**THOUGHT:** My God is a faithful God, and He keeps His word. I can fully trust in Him.

**PRAYER:** Forgive me, Father, for my unbelief and lack of faith and trust in Thee. Help me to always know that Thou art a God of Thy word.

---

### JACOB'S PRAYER IN TROUBLE

In times of trouble, what distinguishes a believer from an unbeliever? The privilege of prayer! This makes all the difference in the world. *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:16).

Grace to help in time of need! If anybody needed it, it was Jacob at the River Jabbok! In his extreme distress with no earthly help to turn to, he looked up and the way opened for him to the heavenly throne of grace. Notice the main points in Jacob's prayer:

1. *“O God of my father Abraham... my father Isaac...”* (Gen 32:9). Jacob acknowledged the greater worth of Abraham and Isaac: to call God their God, because the covenant was first made with them. In his humility, he dared not presume to call God his own God. He must have felt unworthy.
2. *“the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country..”* (Gen 32:9). His hazardous journey was not of his own making, but in strict obedience to God's command. If God initiated the return, will He not ensure its success?
3. *“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies...”* (Gen 32:10). Before the righteous and holy God, who can be worthy? Jacob was so humbled that he could only offer up self-denial and self-abasement as his credentials. And yet, God had so prospered him beyond measure!
4. *“Deliver me, I pray thee... from the hand of my brother... Esau...”* (Gen 32:11) who comes with his four hundred, and what defence have we poor travellers, women and children?

**THOUGHT:** *“Salvation is of the LORD”* (Jonah 2:9).

**PRAYER:** May I always look to Thee for guidance, Heavenly Father.

---

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

GENESIS 32:13-23

PSALM 10:1-9

*Wisdom is better than strength.*

---

### AFTER SUPPLICATION – ACTION!

While prayer is essential and indispensable, yet there are times when timely action on man's part is also very necessary. Jacob prayed hard, committing the matter to God. After that he thought hard, and then worked hard! Is there not anything that could be done to win Esau's favour beyond the use of diplomatic language? Surely the giving of a proper gift as a gesture of goodwill would help. Jacob made a quick "on the spot" decision.

"I shall send ahead by the hands of messengers, valuable presents from among my flocks, 580 heads in all. These will move forward in droves, each drove in the charge of a servant. Each servant on meeting Esau will announce that the animals are a gift from Jacob the servant to his lord Esau." Thus, he sent the servants on their mission of appeasement.

In this act of Jacob's, we see God's wisdom. Some other men might have clung on to their wealth, grudging to part with valuable animals. Not Jacob. After all, he had nothing to begin with. If Esau's men should descend on them with the sword, all of them would perish, both men and beasts. Furthermore, where there is life, there is hope. The most important consideration at that particular time was to preserve life. Whatever was given away as gifts could always be recovered.

Jacob was right. Whatever the cost, he had to seek peace and reconciliation. To save a few animals might mean total loss!

It was crisis after crisis. All the camp had passed over the ford Jabbok. Jacob's wives and children included. The animals of appeasement had proceeded ahead in their strategic arrangements. Jacob had done all that could have been done, humanly speaking. Perhaps he thought that with his scheming and clever deployment, things would turn out well, and his entry to the Promised Land opened. This was reasoning and planning at the level of nature.

**THOUGHT:** He who will save his life shall lose it.

**PRAYER:** Help me to pray and help me to act, O Father, in accordance with Thy bidding.

---



### WRESTLING WITH AN ANGEL

Jacob still had to learn the lesson of faith, before he gained the Promised Land. To trust in his own strength, keeping to his old ways would not do. God had to come into his life and take over. That night, while the camp awaited Esau's approach with uncertainty and fear, Jacob found himself alone with God's angel. There followed a great struggle and wrestling through the night. Jacob's strength matched the angel's, until daybreak. He was very strong and seemed to hold his own. Then, a mere touch from the angel and Jacob's thigh was dislocated. In an instant, his strength was turned to weakness.

*"...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts"* (Zech 4:6)! Jacob had learnt his lesson. The angel gave him a new name: no more Jacob "the supplanter," but Israel, "prince of God." Then the angel blessed him. Strength and blessing come from God! Striving in our own strength, striving in the flesh, will mean defeat in the end. Jacob learnt this lesson, wrestling with God's angel. It was the lesson of faith.

Jacob had expected the worst. All sorts of wild ideas must have run riot through his head. Esau and his four hundred! What hope of escape was there? If only he could see, might he not have been amazed by the angels of God (Gen 32:1) who met him earlier and were still encamped round about them? King David said in Psalm 34:7, *"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."*

For all his fears and sleepless nights, Jacob's meeting with Esau turned out to be an emotional reunion. With bowings and embracings, kisses and tears, the bitterness and vengeance instantly melted away from Esau's heart. Jacob, his long-lost brother was back, a rich man with a flourishing family, humbling himself as "servant" before his lord Esau. With not one bow, but seven, Jacob did Esau honour and, in an instant, they were reconciled.

**THOUGHT:** God's strength is the greatest.

**PRAYER:** May my reliance always be on God's strength.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10

GENESIS 33:4-20

PSALM 12

*Blessed are those whose  
transgressions are forgiven.*

---

### “LET BROTHERLY LOVE PREVAIL”

No more striving over the disputed blessing and coveted birthright. Those had been settled. What mattered then was just the joy of brothers restored, and the pleasure of seeing the large family gathered from Padanaram. What a gathering it was that day! Jacob's prayer of the night before was more than answered. The wrestling angel's blessing also came to pass. Israel, prince of God, had prevailed!

Once the initial doubts were cleared and the brothers were reconciled, their relationships were back to normal. Each one was literally overflowing with kindness towards the other. The old rivalry and ill feelings were instantly dissolved, “forgiven and forgotten.” Here is a lesson for brothers and relatives. There are no grievances or hard feelings that cannot be resolved. While there is life and opportunity to love one another, we ought to do so. As Christ has loved us, so we ought to love one another. And loving means acts of kindness, and not mere words. All too often, someone will say, “I wish we had visited him earlier. Now he's gone.” Yes, do not wait until the opportunity is past.

Looking back on Isaac's household, one is tempted to ask hypothetical questions, e.g. supposing the parents had not played favourites and had treated the twin boys impartially, would all the conflict and trickery have arisen? We are prone to run up imaginary situations, to no good purpose. The fact is this. God uses imperfect and even disobedient men and women, with their interplay of human emotions and interactions, to bring about the fulfilment of His eternal purposes.

So, we see: Esau's threat caused Jacob to flee to Padanaram, Laban's deceit caused Jacob to marry two sisters, the sisters' strife brought in their handmaids to increase the family, and so on. Thus, Jacob ended up with twelve sons!

**THOUGHT:** A word at the right time is better than thousands at the wrong time.

**PRAYER:** Father, teach me to love my brother as myself.

---

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

GENESIS 34-35

PSALM 13

*I thank Thee, Father,  
for saving my soul.*

---

### WORKS OF THE FLESH

In Genesis 34 and 35, the spotlight focuses on the children of Jacob during the first few years of their return to the land. Remember that they were as strangers in a strange country, among alien people. There were no Bibles, no churches or pastors or Sunday School teachers to instruct them in the faith. What little knowledge they had of God would have come from Jacob, their father. There is no evidence that Jacob had taught them the worship and fear of God. Jacob's own example at home, with free access to four women, could not have set for the children a high moral standard.

We are therefore not unduly surprised with the children's conduct: Dinah's seduction by a heathen prince, Reuben's incest with his father's concubine, and in a later chapter, Judah's incest with his daughter-in-law. Most shocking and contemptible were the treachery of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, and their murder of the Shechemites in cold blood. It seems more than pure coincidences that all these five children belonged to one mother, Leah.

In spite of the multitude of their transgressions, God did not cast them off, but in grace He continued to honour His covenant promise with Jacob. For Jacob and his sons, God had many lessons for them to learn so as to equip them to be inheritors of the covenant blessings. Their works of the flesh must be replaced by the fruit of the Spirit. For this great transformation to be possible, Jacob had to return to God and His House, together with his sons, and establish their family altar. "*Salvation is of the LORD*" (Jonah 2:9).

**THOUGHT:** "*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*" (Ps 103:10)

**PRAYER:** I thank Thee, Father, for being patient with me.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

GENESIS 34:1-12

PSALM 14

*Let us search and try our ways.*

---

### A DAMSEL DEFILED

Dinah was Jacob's only daughter and darling of the family. Just about fifteen or sixteen years of age, she was awakening to the urges and impulses of young womanhood. Home was perhaps dull and restrictive, especially when her brothers were away in the field with the flocks. Wouldn't it be exciting to have friends of her age to talk and play with? She longed to see how the girls of the neighbourhood dressed and lived. Presently, the opportunity came along. The thrill of meeting the prince of the land and the receiving of his attention led to her swift downfall. Shechem's advances disarmed her and into sin's seductive snare they both fell. He came, he saw, he conquered! He "...took her, and lay with her, and defiled her" (Gen 34:2). This small slip by one person was to lead to a tragic chain of events which marred forever the name of Israel.

In the ensuing dealings between Jacob and Hamor, we see Jacob's weakness in leaving things in the hands of his sons while Hamor showed more strength of character in making a sincere and honest proposal on his son's behalf. Jacob's authority having been eroded, the sons boldly conceived of a foul plot of vengeance, quite unjustified when weighed against the Canaanites' offer of free inter-marriage, access by Israel to the land, unrestricted trade and business transactions, and generous goodwill, on one condition: "...I pray you give her him to wife" (Gen 34:8), so pleaded Hamor with Israel.

Shechem's proposition to Jacob and his sons was more than just and honourable. "*Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give*" (Gen 34:11). His love for Dinah was such that no dowry would be too much.

Despite the conciliatory talk and cordial relations, the fact remained in the mind of Dinah's brothers: "Our sister has been defiled, our pride has been hurt."

**THOUGHT:** Let every man bear rule in his own house, and have his children in subjection with all gravity.

**PRAYER:** May God help every father to be a godly father.

---

“WHIFFS OF LEBANON AND BEIRUT”

Jacob's sons had their minds set on murder, but answered deceitfully:

1. We cannot give our sister to one who is not circumcised. Our family observes circumcision. Unless you are circumcised, there can be no deal.
2. Inter-marriage also cannot be considered unless ALL your males are circumcised, like us. If you agree and undergo the rite, then we can enter into union with you, as you propose.

Shechem and his father Hamor gladly received the proposal and persuaded all the men to agree. The entire community had their men circumcised. To the Shechemites, the prospect of union with a flourishing family with vast herds and flocks meant increased political strength, social status and material wealth. It reminds one of the commercial “mergers” of modern business.

Jacob's sons did their father the greatest disservice and brought to God's name the greatest dishonour by their hypocrisy and deceit. Their use of the covenant sign of circumcision in order to facilitate their malicious plot is without parallel.

The 1982 incursion of Israel into Lebanon and Beirut bears a strange resemblance to the slaughter of the Shechemites. “Our sister has been defiled...” This was sufficient justification for the wholesale massacre of a whole community. The sons of Jacob (Simeon and Levi) came upon the city boldly and slew all the males.

This sort of senseless, unrestrained and ruthless slaughter of defenceless men seems to a large degree to have been re-enacted in Israel's invasion of Lebanon. “Our northern provinces have been under attack. We will hit back in self-defence.” Suddenly, with the speed of lightning, the sons of Israel, numbering 100,000 overran the country, killing at will, and ravaged the city of Beirut. All in the name of justice.

**THOUGHT:** Some baptisms are received for similarly unworthy motives.

**PRAYER:** May hypocrisy and deceit not be part of my life.

---

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

GENESIS 35:1-9

PSALM 17:1-7

*Fear the Lord. and  
depart from evil.*

---

### RETURN TO BETHEL

The sons of Jacob had set the example 3,500 years ago. No males were spared. Following the slaughter came the plunder. Read Genesis 34:28-29. Prophetically, Jacob said to his sons, “*Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land... they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house*” (Gen 34:30).

At the slaughter of Shechem, Jacob must have been stunned by his sons’ wickedness and violence. If the family was to survive, the kind of life they lived had to stop! God appeared to Jacob in his distress, and ordered him to move on to Bethel, the memorable place of blessing. Shechem and its attractions had proved to be a snare. A clean-cut severance was necessary, if the nation was to be established on a right footing.

And how was the nation to be built except the sons of Jacob come into a position of blessing? Bethel, house of God, was where their father had received the covenant blessing. There, Jacob set up a pillar of remembrance and vowed his allegiance to God. Jacob’s sons had to also appear before God at Bethel. But before that, a purging of sin was necessary. Jacob had to get right with God, and his sons as well. All the strange gods, images and articles of heathen worship and related ornaments were surrendered to Jacob by everyone in the household, and buried in Shechem. Then God granted them safe passage through the land.

At Bethel, Jacob built an altar and they assembled before the Lord in worship. He called the place Elbethel: God of Bethel. God had more than blessed Jacob, far beyond his hopes earlier expressed, to keep him, give him bread to eat and raiment to put on (Gen 28:20). When God calls, there is no doubt or ambiguity. Any uncertainty in Jacob’s mind was completely dispelled by God at this meeting at Bethel. There, God affirmed His previous promise to Jacob that he was to be bearer of the covenant. It could not be done until Jacob returned to Bethel and there fulfilled his vow in solemn worship, with his sons.

**THOUGHT:** God minces no words.

**PRAYER:** May we set up our Bethel wherever we go.

---

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

GENESIS 35:10-29

PSALM 18:1-5

*This earth is not  
our permanent home.*

---

### LIFE'S CHANGING STAGE

At Bethel, God reaffirmed the change of name from Jacob to Israel, a new and princely name. God repeated His earlier promise to Abraham (Gen 17:5-8): "...a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee... And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee..." (Gen 35:11).

Shortly after, as they journeyed from Bethel to Ephrath, Rachel came into labour. She travailed in hard labour so much so that it cost her her life. On her dying lips, she called her newborn son Benoni (son of my sorrow). Rachel's childbirth fulfilled her earlier expectation (Gen 30:24). Her death brings to mind Jacob's judgment of death to the one who had stolen Laban's idols. To Jacob, the departure of his true love was a most grievous blow. In his sorrow, he named the child Benjamin, "the son of my right hand," very dear and close to support him in his old age.

As one follows the story of Jacob, the familiar lines from Shakespeare's "As You Like It" come to mind: "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players. They have their entrances and their exits." And so the players on life's stage move on! In our story, we see the demise of three of the household of faith, called and beloved of God, who are now in glory, awaiting the resurrection.

It is with some sadness that we read: "*And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died...*" (Gen 35:28-29) going to his well-earned rest. This concludes the history of a man of faith, who had passed the acid test of faith on Mt Moriah. When Jacob left home, Isaac was at Beersheba. On returning, he found him at Hebron. Rebekah had died years before, and had been buried in the cave of Machpelah. So it must have been a great comfort that in his last years, Isaac was able to have Jacob near him, for about ten years. We see God's great faithfulness again in granting Jacob's wish (made at Bethel) "*that I come again to my father's house in peace*" (Gen 28:21).

**THOUGHT:** All may change but Jesus never! Glory to His name.

**PRAYER:** In life, in death, O Father, abide with me!

---

LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 16

GENESIS 35:18

ROMANS 8:26-28

*"...ye thought evil against me;  
but God meant it unto good..."*

---

## NOT BENONI, BUT BENJAMIN

(by Charles Spurgeon)

To every matter there is a bright as well as a dark side. Rachel was overwhelmed with the sorrow of her own travail and death; Jacob, though weeping the mother's loss, could see the mercy of the child's birth. It is well for us if, while the flesh mourns over trials, our faith triumphs in divine faithfulness. Samson's lion yielded honey, and so will our adversities, if rightly considered. The stormy sea feeds multitudes with its fishes; the wild wood blooms with beautiful florets; the stormy wind sweeps away the pestilence, and the biting frost loosens the soil. Dark clouds distil bright drops, and black earth grows gay flowers. A vein of good is to be found in every mine of evil. Sad hearts have peculiar skill in discovering the most disadvantageous point of view from which to gaze upon a trial; if there were only one slough in the world, they would soon be up to their necks in it, and if there were only one lion in the desert they would hear it roar. About us all there is a tinge of this wretched folly, and we are apt, at times, like Jacob, to cry, "All these things are against me." Faith's way of walking is to cast all care upon the Lord, and then to anticipate good results from the worst calamities. Like Gideon's men, she does not fret over the broken pitcher, but rejoices that the lamp blazes forth the more. Out of the rough oyster-shell of difficulty she extracts the rare pearl of honour, and from the deep ocean-caves of distress she uplifts the priceless coral of experience. When her flood of prosperity ebbs, she finds treasures hid in the sands; and when her sun of delight goes down, she turns her telescope of hope to the starry promises of heaven. When death itself appears, faith points to the light of resurrection beyond the grave, thus making our dying Benoni to be our living Benjamin.

**THOUGHT:** God's hands are on the good as well as on the bad.

**PRAYER:** Father, may I always believe in Thee, and wait to see the good that will come out of all things.

---



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

GENESIS 36-37

PSALM 18:6-10

*“...Blessed is the man  
that trusteth in Thee.”*

---

### ESAU AND THE EDMITES

Genesis 36 concludes the account of Esau and his family. For despising his birthright, he had forfeited the covenant blessing. He lost both the successions to the headship of the clan and the inheritance of the land to younger brother Jacob. Nevertheless, God kept His promise to Abraham that he should be the father of many nations, and also the prediction to Rebekah: *“...Two nations are in thy womb...”* (Gen 25:23). From father Isaac, Esau received a lesser blessing: *“Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother...”* (Gen 27:39-40).

Esau was also called Edom, meaning “red,” for at birth he *“...came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau”* (Gen 25:25). Edom also harks back to the sale of his birthright. When Esau lusted after Jacob’s red pottage: *“therefore was his name called Edom”* (Gen 25:30). By his three wives, Esau had five sons. From these, a vast family of Edomites was built to become a nation.

Since Canaan was to be Jacob’s inheritance, God gave Esau a lesser inheritance around Mount Seir (Deut 2:5; Josh 24:4). This was the inheritance of the Edomites. From Genesis 33, we saw that after his affectionate reunion with Jacob, Esau returned in peace to Seir (Gen 33:16), southeast of the Dead Sea. Whereas once Esau had struggled for Canaan and would have warred over it, now he tamely retired to Mt Seir. God’s Word is mighty and powerful. His counsels shall certainly stand. They determine the course of things appointed, and set limits to man’s habitation.

So, for Abraham’s sake, Esau also received his portion of blessing, but it was, alas, of a temporal nature *“...the fatness of the earth...”* (Gen 27:28). From him came forth many dukes and kings who “lived by the sword” and became Israel’s enemies.

**THOUGHT:** Kings and kingdoms come and go. Only the King of kings is from everlasting to everlasting.

**PRAYER:** All glory and praise to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

---

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

GENESIS 37:1-4

PSALM 18:11-20

*Be steadfast in the Lord.*

---

### ENTER JOSEPH THE BELOVED OF THE FATHER

The last fourteen chapters of Genesis is a fascinating account of God's preservation and raising of the nation Israel through the interaction of human emotions of love, hate, envy, jealousy, loyalty, treachery, violence, murder among the sons of Jacob. Occupying centre stage in this real-life story was Joseph, the deliverer sent from God.

Son of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, Joseph had a special place in his father's affections. The Bible record states that "...*Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age...*" (Gen 37:3). This bond increased after Rachel's death in childbirth. From later accounts of his extraordinary wisdom and moral uprightness in the face of extreme temptation, we may safely infer that even from his youth, Joseph had shown these godly characteristics. This naturally brought greater delight to his ageing father, who put explicit trust in the young lad.

In his unrestrained enthusiasm, Israel openly demonstrated his affection by making Joseph a coat of many colours, i.e. a garment to mark his status. This sort of partiality aroused the envy and hatred of the elder sons, so that considerable ill feeling was worked up between them. To make matters worse, Joseph in his youthful innocence and loyalty to his father, kept a watch on the elder brothers and reported on them.

We see then, Joseph the object of his father's love was equally the object of his brothers' mounting hatred. But, behind it all, was God's unseen hand moving and ordering events, preparing for the eventual salvation of the family and nurturing of the nation.

**THOUGHT:** God's wisdom is past finding out.

**PRAYER:** May my eyes see beyond the physical.

---

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

GENESIS 37:5-16

PSALM 18:21-30

*“For who hath known  
the mind of the Lord?...”*

---

### JOSEPH DREAMT, THE BROTHERS SCHEMED

There is a Chinese saying: day's thoughts are night's dreams. The thought is mother of the dream! Some psychologists analyse dreams as expressions of one's unconscious desires or fears. Most of us will agree that the vast majority of our dreams have no real meaning or significance. Often, they are the result of indigestion and / or disturbed sleep.

In biblical times, however, there were exceptional instances of God communicating with men by means of dreams. Joseph is one and Daniel another, that all Sunday School children love to hear. Joseph's dreams were clearly God-given and prophetic. He was God's chosen vessel; being prepared for special service in a foreign land. God was grooming him to become the ruler of Egypt through a series of unusual and extraordinary happenings.

The two dreams were self-explanatory. There was no need for an interpreter. In his childlike frankness, Joseph shared the dreams with his brothers. The message was clear. Joseph was seeing himself as ruler over them, and even their parents. In their jealous state of mind, they could only regard them as idle dreams. How could he, the youngest, lord over the rest of them, older and superior to him! Father Israel was puzzled and gave Joseph a gentle rebuke. He asked a sincere question, but held his peace. He kept the matter in his heart. Not so with the brothers. Already green with envy over their father's favouritism, they began to boil and fume with hatred, and to plot Joseph's destruction.

In the meantime, Israel's large and hungry flocks were constantly needing pastureland. So, while the ageing father sat at home in Hebron, the sons led the flocks to Shechem, a distance of some seventy km, in search of pasture. Over such distances the shepherds might not return home for days or even weeks at a time. One day Israel, worried about his sons' safety, sent Joseph to look for them. Joseph, out of duty to father and kindness to brothers, readily set out alone. In all this, God's purpose and providence were being fulfilled, step by step, in His good time!

**THOUGHT:** Today, God speaks to us through His Word.

**PRAYER:** May I love to read Thy Word, Father.

---

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

GENESIS 37:17-28

PSALM 18:41-50

*“Lead me, O LORD,  
in Thy righteousness...”*

---

### SOLD FOR SILVER!

The search for his brothers took Joseph past Shechem on to Dothan, another thirty kilometres further north. At Shechem, when the brothers were nowhere to be seen, he dutifully and without complaint, persevered. His father was awaiting news.

At Dothan, the brothers spotted the lone figure of their brother approaching in the distance. Immediately, they conspired to kill him and put an end to his pompous dreams. Death to the dreamer would rid them of the young upstart! Then they would no more have to bear the sight of their father's favourite, aspiring to lord over them. But Reuben, moved by conscience, softened his heart and thought to save by an alternative plan. “Let us shed no blood, but throw him in a deep pit in the wilderness,” he counselled. In his mind, he purposed to return and deliver him.

Picture in your mind the reception Joseph got from his brothers after his long and weary trek from home. Ten of them pounced on him, stripped him of his special coat, and threw him into a deep hole in the ground. Blind to his tears, deaf to his pleadings, they left him there to die from hunger and thirst, from cold and nakedness, alone in a pit. How unfeeling and cruel they were in satisfying their own pent-up hatred. While their brother starved, they sat down to eat bread.

Then, over the horizon, God's messengers appeared, to carry Joseph to be a prince! A company of Midianite traders on camels from Gilead carrying spices to Egypt soon came in sight. A bright idea came to Judah. Why slay their brother when they could sell him? What profit was there to leave Joseph to die? Judah's counsel prevailed. The Midianites got Joseph, the brothers got twenty pieces of silver. Now, good riddance, he would never lord over us! So they thought. Men's evil devices cannot destroy God's anointed. The counsel of the Lord shall stand. Man's plans were futile, for neither one worked. God was using men's intrigues to bring to pass His eternal plan! Praise His name!

**THOUGHT:** The counsel of the Lord shall, and must, stand.

**PRAYER:** Help me, Father, to still trust in Thee when the storm rages around me.

---

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

GENESIS 37:29-36

PSALM 19

O Lord, my God,  
Thou art the great God.

---

### A DOUBLE CRIME

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! Man proposes, God disposes. The brothers thought Joseph was finished, but his star had just begun to rise! The ten wicked brothers satisfied their envy and hatred by their cold-blooded crime against their brother. In their eyes they were brilliantly successful, but they were running the ways of death. O how fearful is man's lust for revenge and blood, especially when without just cause. So, the Apostle James says, "*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*" (James 1:14-15).

If Joseph could have spoken, he would have said, "*Do not err, my beloved brethren*" (James 1:16). They were tempted, drawn away of their own lust and enticed. Then their lust conceived an evil plan, bringing forth a heinous sin, a heartless crime to take their brother's life. Back home, they covered their crime with a lie, making it a double crime. These ten young men were heading for death. Their crime and foul villainy had disposed of their brother. Now by lies and deception, they put their aged father to grief. They pretended to comfort him, but to no avail. Jacob mourned Joseph many days. In the meanwhile, the Midianite merchants had sold Joseph to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard. The crime of his jealous brothers was opening for Joseph the way to Pharaoh's court. With amazement, we see God's plan unfold.

**THOUGHT:** "...how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom 11:33)

**PRAYER:** Help me, Father, to fear Thee, and Thee alone.

---

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22

GENESIS 37

PSALM 20

*Walk with the Lord daily.*

---

### THE SINNING SONS

Jacob's sons (children of the covenant promise and founders of the Jewish nation) were tainted with immorality, lust, violence and crime. They had slaughtered an alien people in Shechem. They were prepared to kill their own brother. Yet, on them rested God's plan of raising a nation and fulfilling His covenant promise. Through them "...*shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen 12:3).

How can this be? Can such gross evil become a source of blessing to the people of the world? Obviously, some great and radical transformation of the brothers was necessary before God could use them. By a series of events in the domestic happenings of Jacob's family, God was setting the stage for the brothers to learn their lesson and undergo the necessary conversion before they could become inheritors of God's promised blessing and patriarchs of the tribes.

Let us recapitulate the events in order: Jacob's partiality and favouritism, the brothers' resentment, Joseph's dreams adding fuel to fire, the mission to Dothan, the vile plot to kill, to starve to death, to sell into slavery. Finally, we find Joseph a servant in Egypt mourned by a grieving father at home in Canaan. In future chapters, we shall see the story unfolding with fascination and excitement, until the brothers are brought to full repentance and reconciliation, through their brother, God's deliverer. God has a way of dealing with sinning sons, to His own great glory and honour!

Dear reader, are you going through some trial, some tribulation, which seems so unjust in your eyes that you wonder where God is? Rest assured, God is still on the throne and He takes care of His own! Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus. God's Word says, "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Rom 8:28). Take God at His Word. Praise God for His omniscience and His omnipotence!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Proverbs 14:34.)

**PRAYER:** I thank Thee, Father, that I am on Thy side. Help me to walk closely with Thee daily.

---

### BROTHERS IN CONTRAST

The story of Judah and Joseph is a study of contrast. One was a free man, enjoying the comforts and freedom of Canaan. The other a bond man, serving a foreign master far from family and home. How should they fare in their separate situations? Should not the free man do better?

Judah's record leaves much to be desired.

1. As a late teenager, he left home, associated with a stranger and married a Canaanite wife Shuah.
2. Raised three sons, two of whom the Lord slew.
3. Committed incest with his daughter-in-law Tamar.

That, in a nutshell, is Judah's life.

Joseph, on the other hand, distinguished himself in all that he did, in spite of his being in bondage and separated from father and brothers.

1. Joseph found grace in the sight of his master, Potiphar. He prospered in all that he did.
2. Because of Joseph, God blessed the Egyptian's house.
3. He was put in great trust by Potiphar.
4. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. Joseph rejected her sinful advances, day after day.
5. Finally, she tried to force him to lie with her without success. For this, she falsely accused Joseph and “turned the tables on him.”

Result: Joseph was cast into prison.

What a contrast between the two lives. Why the difference, you may ask? The record states clearly and repeatedly: The Lord was with Joseph. Even in prison, the Lord was with him. Joseph's freedom was taken from him, but no one could take from him God's grace and wisdom. He was forcibly sold into slavery, separated from his beloved father, but nothing could separate him from the love of the Heavenly Father.

On the other hand, the free man Judah abused his freedom.

**THOUGHT:** Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ?

**PRAYER:** May submission and obedience to Thee, Father, be a hallmark of my life.

---

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24

GENESIS 38:1-11

PSALM 22:1-10

*"Teach me, O LORD,  
the way of thy statutes..."*

---

### YOUNG MAN IN A HURRY!

When Judah left home, it is computed that he was a late teenager, unlearned and raw in the weightier things of life. He joined himself to Hirah, an Adullamite. Next, he married a Canaanite woman called Shuah who bore him three sons: Er, Onan and Shelah. In all this, did Judah seek the counsel of his father or brothers? Apparently not, for his only close associate at that time was Hirah. Judah married young and in a hurry. When his eldest son was marriageable, he found him a wife and quickly got them married too. Judah was always in a hurry!

The record tells us, *"And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him"* (Gen 38:7). His wickedness remains a mystery. The practice then was for the dead man's younger brother (if he was unmarried) to marry the widow and raise children on behalf of the deceased. Judah therefore ordered the second son, Onan, to marry the widow Tamar. Onan however refused to have any children by Tamar and so he spilled his "seed" on the ground. This was an offence against the purpose of his marriage, against Tamar and against his own body. So the LORD slew him as well.

Seeing his two elder sons dead, Judah feared to give his youngest son to Tamar, in case he would also lose his life. He therefore dispatched Tamar to her parents' home, making the excuse that Shelah was too young. This action by Judah left Tamar a frustrated widow, vainly waiting for her prospective husband. Tamar was twice widowed. Both husbands were slain by the Lord for their wickedness.

Judah had no intention of letting Tamar have his third son for fear that he, too, might be struck dead. Judah was so spiritually down that he had not perceived that his two elder sons had been slain not because of Tamar but because of their sins. When Tamar saw that Judah was not honouring his word, she proceeded to force the issue.

**THOUGHT:** *"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."* (Prov 11:14)

**PRAYER:** Lead me to godly counsel who will point me to Thee, Father.

---



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

GENESIS 38:12-30

PSALM 22:11-20

*The marvellous grace of God is  
greater than our sin.*

---

### TAMAR PLAYED THE HARLOT

Judah's wife had died earlier. It was told Tamar that her father-in-law had gone sheep-shearing, usually a time of mirth and merry-making, a time when men were easily tempted. Tamar took the opportunity to play on Judah's carnality by disguising herself as a prostitute and waited by the wayside. Her bait was swallowed readily by Judah who came along, taking her for a common prostitute. In return for her favour, she demanded and received Judah's bracelet, signet and staff, a very wise move on her part. Had Judah recognised her, he could have caused her to be burnt, that being the punishment for harlotry. When he later sent her the full payment of a kid, she was nowhere to be found. Tamar's plot had worked according to plan. Judah was left in a fix.

Carnality and immorality were fast becoming a way of life for Judah. His adultery with Tamar was deserving of death, according to the prevailing custom. But he was trapped by his lust. Tamar had secured from him vital tokens as a pledge. Having gotten these, she withdrew to the shelter of her father's house. The demand for a pledge was a measure of wisdom on her part, in case she was found out, eg. if she became pregnant, which she did. In the process of time, her pregnancy was evident, and a hue and cry was raised. Judah, her legal custodian, was informed. What should we do with her? Without hesitation, Judah pronounced judgment: Let her be burnt!

At the trial, Tamar calmly produced the three exhibits: Judah's signet, bracelet and staff. If there was a case against her, the man responsible for her condition must share the punishment. The evidence was irrefutable. At this point, Judah confessed his guilt in not letting Shelah marry Tamar, which was the cause of her immoral act. It is interesting to note that from Tamar came two sons, Pharez and Zarah. From Pharez came King David and our Lord Jesus Christ! We see how despite Judah's foul sin, God did not cast him off but still used him to carry the most important Messianic line in fulfilment of God's great plan of redemption. It is all of mercy and grace. God did what He pleased. Men can claim no merit.

**THOUGHT:** Your sin will find you out.

**PRAYER:** (Confession of sins in my life.)

---

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

GENESIS 39:1-10

PSALM 23

*God sends us miseries  
not to make us worse but better.*

---

### JOSEPH PROVED HIMSELF

Joseph, hated by his brothers, but chosen of God to be the deliverer, was sold by the Midianites to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard. In this important household, Joseph began to prove himself by his character and his capabilities. Both are vitally essential in the making of a good administrator and ruler of people.

From the outset, Joseph distinguished himself as a godly and exceptionally able person. He must have made known to Potiphar his faith in God. *"And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand"* (Gen 39:3). So, Joseph was made overseer over his house and all that he had. That led to even greater prosperity for *"...the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake..."* (Gen 39:5). What Joseph's tasks were, we are not told, but we may call him the chief manager. His performance was uniformly successful. Joseph saw his servanthood in this foreign home as an opportunity to prove himself. There was no need nor ground for self-pity. He had committed his way to the Lord, so wherever the Lord put him, he was contented. When he arrived in Egypt, Joseph was just over 17 years of age. It is likely that he spent at least ten years serving Potiphar and growing in stature both physically as well as intellectually. Verse 6 indicates that Joseph was an attractive person and very personable (*"well favoured"*).

Joseph was tall and handsome. By and by, Potiphar's wife began to entertain seductive thoughts towards him. She must have been tremendously persuasive. It could be so "hush hush." What pleasures and delights were calling! But Joseph had his sense of right and wrong. He saw the whole proposition for what it was: a sin against God and against his master. Yielding to his master's wife would be betraying the trust his master had put on him. Joseph was a man of honour. He honoured God and his master. He refused to go along.

**THOUGHT:** The Lord made all that Joseph did to prosper.

**PRAYER:** Guide me in Thy path, Father. And may I be submissive to Thy guidance.

---

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

GENESIS 39:11-23

PSALM 25:1-11

*Yield not to temptation  
for yielding is sin.*

---

### SUFFERING INJUSTICE, YES. PLEASURES OF SIN, NO!

What would you do, young man, if you were in Joseph's place? Your master's wife, a person in authority above you, whose orders you would do well to obey, whose favour you could hardly afford to lose, keeps urging you to yield to her. She keeps up the temptation day after day, using every means to disarm you. Nobody would know! What would your response be?

Joseph faced mounting and unbearable pressure from the woman. He could not run away or change his job. He was but a bond slave, owned by Potiphar. To complain to his master carried certain risks. Potiphar might not believe him. If he did, it would be too shameful and embarrassing. Could he have someone accompany him in the course of his duty? Yes, but not all the time.

In the days following, the advances kept coming, without abating. The sex-hungry Egyptian woman put on the pressure, using her wiles and powers of seduction. Joseph had his mind fixed. To him, a moment's pleasure, nay, even a lifetime's pleasure could not compensate for God's displeasure and everlasting wrath to come. He had no pastor or elder to counsel him. There was no one to supervise his conduct. Everything was simply perfect for him to enjoy himself.

One day, Potiphar's wife found Joseph alone in the house. At last! She snatched at the opportunity and held on to his coat. He was resolute. But she would not let go. The only way was to leave his coat in her hands, and run. Then, what next? Her lust turned to cruel hatred that sent Joseph to prison. She called the other servants, summoned her husband, spun a tale that turned the truth upside down. She got him thrown into prison. But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy and gave him favour in the sight of the prison keeper. When God chooses a man, He sees to his preservation. Joseph walked with God. He yielded to God, without reserve. Whereas many other men would have fallen, Joseph stood firm. In a short time, Joseph became the deputy prison keeper!

**THOUGHT:** Prison bars cannot keep the Lord out!

**PRAYER:** May the temptation to sin have no power over me, O Father!

---

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

GENESIS 39:12

PROVERBS 1

*“My son, walk not thou  
in the way with them...”*

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**BE WISE, FLEE!**

(by Charles Spurgeon)

In contending with certain sins there remains no mode of victory but by flight. The ancient naturalists wrote much of basilisks, whose eyes fascinated their victims and rendered them easy victims; so the mere gaze of wickedness puts us in solemn danger. He who would be safe from acts of evil must haste away from occasions of it. A covenant must be made with our eyes not even to look upon the cause of temptation, for such sins only need a spark to begin with and a blaze follows in an instant. Who would wantonly enter the leper's prison and sleep amid its horrible corruption? He only who desires to be leprous himself would thus court contagion. If the mariner knew how to avoid a storm, he would do anything rather than run the risk of weathering it. Cautious pilots have no desire to try how near the quicksand they can sail, or how often they may touch a rock without springing a leak; their aim is to keep as nearly as possible in the midst of a safe channel.

This day I may be exposed to great peril, let me have the serpent's wisdom to keep out of it and avoid it. The wings of a dove may be of more use to me to-day than the jaws of a lion. It is true I may be an apparent loser by declining evil company, but I had better leave my cloak than lose my character; it is not needful that I should be rich, but it is imperative upon me to be pure. No ties of friendship, no chains of beauty, no flashings of talent, no shafts of ridicule must turn me from the wise resolve to flee from sin. The devil I am to resist and he will flee from me, but the lusts of the flesh, I must flee, or they will surely overcome me. O God of holiness preserve thy Josephs, that Madam Bubble bewitch them not with her vile suggestions. May the horrible trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil, never overcome us!

**THOUGHT:** To flee from sin is not cowardice but wisdom.

**PRAYER:** Father, help me to always know my own weaknesses and never toy with temptation and sin.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 1

GENESIS 40:1-8

PSALM 25:12-22

*God is omnipresent.*

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### GOD'S POWER IN PRISON

Do you think it was “happy coincidence” that brought Joseph and the two servants of Pharaoh together? Or were their dreams chance happenings? What about the timing of the dreams, just three days before the most auspicious national event, the king’s birthday?

Following Joseph’s story, let us have a clear and overall understanding of the plan of God in raising up the nation-to-be, by using the man of His choice to bring about His eternal purpose. God was promoting Joseph to the palace, but by way of the prison! By His all-seeing eye and special providence, He caused the two servants of the King to be cast into prison with Joseph. Three days before the king’s birthday, God sent them each a dream, which clouded their faces with sadness the next morning. What perfect timing! If the two servants had arrived much earlier, Joseph would have been in no position to speak to them and befriend them. Now things were different. Joseph was no ordinary prisoner, for “*the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison...*” (Gen 39:22). It was therefore Joseph’s business to look after the welfare of the two from Pharaoh’s palace.

So, on that fateful morning, the two servants confided in Joseph, “*We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it*” (Gen 40:8). Fortune tellers and soothsayers of Egypt were not available in prison! But God the author of the dreams and the director of human events was with Joseph. “Tell me your dreams!”

Strange dreams were revealed to Joseph by the butler and the baker. Joseph listened and gave his reply without hesitation. There was none of the heathen methods of crystal ball gazing, palm reading, communicating with spirit mediums, going into a trance, or any such thing. None can say that Joseph had made a good guess or was lucky. His interpretation was precise, sure and correct in every detail. This was done twice, a double confirmation that the Spirit of God was with him.

**THOUGHT:** Interpretation of dreams belongs to God.

**PRAYER:** My situation is not beyond Thee, Father. I daily trust in Thee for help and strength.

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### STIRRINGS IN THE PALACE

Three branches of a vine, three baskets of bread. In three days, Pharaoh celebrated his birthday. The butler was restored to favour, but the baker sent to the gallows, just as Joseph had said. But the butler forgot to put in a word for Joseph to Pharaoh. So Joseph remained two more years as “deputy prison keeper.”

Ponder again the extraordinary integrity and character of this young man under the most discouraging circumstances. His one unswerving objective in life was to serve others, anybody who needed help. Advantage to self was never the motive. “Difficult dream? Here’s the interpretation!” Some others would say, “If I do this for you, what will you do for me in return?” Step by step, God was preparing Joseph for a greater work.

After two years, while Joseph served his time in prison, the Spirit of God was still working. We may blame the butler’s forgetfulness. But when we realise again that God was directing every event to the finest detail, then we rest in His perfect wisdom and timing of events. Man cannot out-think or out-smart God. Two years was God’s precise timing for Joseph’s further development before he ascended to high honours. Our God knows best, we need to be patient.

They were strange dreams, but no idle dreams. One dream confirmed the other. Seven fat cows eaten up by seven lean cows, seven good ears of corn devoured by seven lean ears. They were in fact one dream, with one message. Pharaoh did not dismiss the dreams, for God caused his spirit to be troubled. He sent for the magicians and wise men of Egypt, but they were of no help. The story of the dreams reached the butler’s ears. This reminded him of his earlier neglect: forgetting Joseph’s request. So, thinking to do Pharaoh a favour, he related his own experience of two years before. Then things began to move. Stirrings in the palace would soon unlock prison doors! Our God acts in His own time.

**THOUGHT:** Today, it is better to read God’s Word than to dream dreams!  
**PRAYER:** Thy timing is perfect, O Father. May I be patient and not run ahead of Thee.

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MONDAY, MARCH 3

GENESIS 41:14-24

PSALM 28

*Wait upon the Lord.*

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### FROM PRISON TO PALACE

The sun rose over Joseph's prison cell like any other day, but for Joseph it smiled as never before! This was his day of release after "two full years" (Gen 41:1). Suddenly, he found himself the centre of attention: "The King has sent for you! Hurry!"

Egypt was then at its highpoint in history. Pharaoh was a king among kings. The grandeur and splendour of his palace were incomparable. To appear before his imperial majesty, Joseph had to be "prim and proper." A clean shave was essential. Then a change into new clothes to make him presentable.

Now we see Joseph ushered into the presence of Pharaoh in his magnificent throne room. A young Hebrew stood before the great king! Pharaoh explained his purpose in sending for Joseph: two perplexing dreams which confounded the royal magicians. "I hear that you can interpret difficult dreams!" Joseph's reply was just like his modest self, a true servant of God. "*It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace*" (Gen 41:16). No boasting or self-seeking. Then he listened attentively as the king related his twin dreams. But "*there was none that could declare it to me*" (Gen 41:24), said Pharaoh.

Egypt is one of the countries in the Middle East which has played, and shall play, a vital part in God's dealings with His people, the Jews. Joseph's admission to Pharaoh's court marked the first step in the eventual emigration of Jacob's family from Canaan to Egypt, where seventy souls were to multiply to a multitude of over two million. This was foretold by God to Abraham, "*Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them...*" (Gen 15:13). God's counsel stands fast. Joseph was God's advance troop! And for the sake of His people, God was speaking to Pharaoh, a heathen king! "Make way for My people Israel!"

**THOUGHT:** Failure through pride. Success through humility.

**PRAYER:** May all credit and glory be given to Thee, O Father!

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TUESDAY, MARCH 4

GENESIS 41:25-45

PSALM 30

*“The fear of the LORD is  
the beginning of wisdom...”*

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### JOSEPH EXALTED

Joseph’s interpretation was clear: “Your two dreams are one. God is showing Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout Egypt. Then, there shall arise after that seven years of very grievous famine.” The diagnosis had been given. Now, the prescription. Joseph proceeded to prescribe treatment. *“Let Pharaoh... appoint officers over the land... And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine”* (Gen 41:34-36).

No sooner had he given Pharaoh the solution to the problem than the king asked all his assembled ministers of state: *“Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?”* (Gen 41:38). Of course they could only keep silent, for none even understood the dream. The obvious course, then, was for Pharaoh to appoint Joseph to the task.

In a moment, the prisoner from the dungeon was promoted to be Prime Minister over the whole country. The shepherd boy became Supreme Commander. To confirm him in his office, Pharaoh put on him the highest marks of office.

1. He gave him his own ring which carried the Pharaoh’s authority and seal.
2. He outfitted him with *“...vestures of fine linen...”* (Gen 41:42).
3. He made him ride in the second chariot, and they cried before him, *“Bow the knee...”* (Gen 41:43).
4. He gave him a new name, “Zaphnathpaaneah,” Revealer of Secrets.
5. He gave him Asenath (daughter of the priest of On) to be his wife.
6. He put a gold chain about his neck.

Because God was with Joseph, he endured all. God sustained him through thirteen years or more. Joseph was never bitter, despondent, rebellious, revengeful or self-pitying. He simply waited on the Lord.

**THOUGHT:** “With Christ in the vessel, I can smile at the storm!”

**PRAYER:** I praise Thee, O Father, for all Thy marvellous works!

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

GENESIS 41:46-57

PSALM 31:1-12

*“In thee, O LORD,  
do I put my trust...”*

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### ACCORDING AS JOSEPH HAD SAID

What a stupendous and wide-ranging national effort it was, with the whole of Egypt mobilised under a Hebrew! Credit had to go to Pharaoh for his implicit trust in Joseph and Joseph’s God! With his authorisation, Joseph put into action his bold plan to stock up food grain during the seven fruitful years. As Joseph had predicted, “seven fat cows” and “seven full ears of corn” filled the land with super abundance. In every city and neighbourhood, Pharaoh’s officers gathered into grain stores for seven years.

After seven years, the famine set in, even as Joseph had said. The famine was “...over all the face of the earth... the famine was so sore in all lands” (Gen 41:56-57). As their food stocks were exhausted, the hungry people came and bought from Pharaoh’s stores, not only Egyptians but people from neighbouring countries.

As the story unfolds, we see how God’s man, Joseph, turned out to be deliverer of the Egyptians as well as others affected by the famine. As we follow the story enacted by Jacob’s sons in the land of Egypt, let us turn our minds back to the great promises made by God to the father of the race, Abraham. “*And I will make of thee a great nation... in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed... all the land... to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever... I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven...*” (Gen 12:2-3; 13:15; 22:17).

This prophecy was fulfilled in stages over many years: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob’s twelve sons. As we saw earlier, carnality and immorality had invaded the family, seriously threatening its spiritual vitality. Now their physical survival was also in question because of the famine. Could such a family become a blessing to all the earth? Could this worldly and carnal lot become the forerunner of the Saviour of mankind? Truly, they were sorely in need of both spiritual and physical salvation before they could fulfil God’s great purpose.

**THOUGHT:** “Famine” will come upon the earth before our Lord returns.

**PRAYER:** I believe, O Father, that Thy every Word will come to pass. Help me to love and trust Thy Word.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 6

GENESIS 42:1-20

PSALM 32

*“Be still, and know  
that I am God...”*

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### PROPHECY DETERMINES HISTORY

God’s instrument to meet Israel’s need was ready, in Egypt, sent there by His higher hand. God had raised up His man Joseph, for such a time as this. God’s Spirit in him had led him on, and up, to become Deliverer of Egypt and Israel. Years ago, God had revealed His plan for Israel in Joseph’s dreams. Then God worked, quietly, mysteriously through human intrigue, envy, hatred, and through natural disaster to determine the course of history. The brothers’ sheaves had bowed in a vision in Canaan, now they bowed in person in Egypt. Vision and fulfilment were separated by time and distance, but what are these to God? Nothing! Prophecy determines history!

In these verses, we see the first steps in the reclamation of the wicked brothers. They had once hissed at Joseph: *“Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?...”* (Gen 37:8). Now they *“... bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth”* (Gen 42:6). Cruel hatred was replaced by cowering submission.

Compelled by hunger, they had journeyed to Egypt to buy food as their father had commanded (Gen 42:2). When they appeared, Joseph recognised them, but they knew him not. Not in their wildest dreams would they have thought that this Ruler of Egypt was the brother whom they had sold off, and presumed dead. To Joseph, it was a thrill to see his brothers again, but it was not the time to rejoice or to reveal himself. The brothers had to be renewed and reclaimed first. So he accused them of being spies of a foreign power, coming to spy out the land for future conquest. They protested their innocence and gave an account of their family. *“Prove it! Or you shall die as spies!”* Joseph then shut the brothers in prison for three days. These three days in confinement must have done their souls more good than their past thirty years! It was a time of soul searching, reflection, remorse, confession and repentance for all their wickedness, in particular their heartless treatment of their brother.

**THOUGHT:** HISTORY is simply HIS STORY, the story of God’s dealings with men.

**PRAYER:** Open my eyes, O Father, to see Thy Hand working in every event, bringing to pass Thy Will and Plan.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 7

GENESIS 42:21-28

PSALM 33:1-11

*“Search me, O God,  
and know my heart...”*

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### PRICKING OF THE CONSCIENCE

For twenty years, Jacob’s wayward sons lived with their secret concealed from their father. Having disposed of Joseph to satisfy their blood lust, they thought that was the end of the matter. Their conscience benumbed by envy and hatred, they lived on as though nothing had happened.

*“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper”* (Prov 28:13). *“Be sure your sin will find you out”* (Num 32:23). Suddenly, in Egypt they were confronted by a man of authority and power. To prove it, he promptly threw them into prison. On the third day, he declared himself to be one who feared God! And he who was the Egyptian Governor, demanded to see their youngest brother! The brothers’ deadened conscience began to stir to life and their crime of twenty years ago flashed to mind. With Joseph looking on, they confessed their guilt concerning their brother. They publicly admitted that they were reaping what they had sown. Reuben chided the rest by reminding them how his pleading for their brother had fallen on deaf ears, and thus the greater was their evil.

The words of remorse moved Joseph to tears. How he longed to reveal himself to them, but no! The great work of chastening had to be completed, for their sakes, and for the sake of the nation-to-be. So Joseph detained Simeon in bonds, and sent off the others with their corn, but secretly commanded the servants to return their money in the bags.

Confrontation by the *“...lord of the land...”* (Gen 42:30) in Egypt and three days in prison had revived the brothers’ conscience. With the threat of death and Simeon detained as hostage, they hurried home to report to their father. On the way, they had been shocked to find in one of the sacks of corn the money returned. But their greater shock was when they found that *“every man’s bundle of money was in his sack...”* (Gen 42:35). Mystified and fearful, they wondered what new charge the Egyptian Governor would hurl at them. Their conscience was stirred, but the testing had to go on to full conversion!

**THOUGHT:** Remorse is good, but not good enough.

**PRAYER:** Soften my conscience and my heart, O Father. Make me malleable under Thy moulding hand.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 8

GENESIS 42:29-43:14

PSALM 34:1-11

*“Commit thy way unto the Lord...”*

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### YIELDING AND TRUSTING

With their reviving spiritual condition, they said one to another, *“What is this that God hath done unto us?”* (Gen 42:28). The happenings of the past few days had built up such great tension and anxiety that the brothers began to recognise that God’s hand was in the whole matter. To continue to run their own lives “in the flesh” would not do! God was dealing with them. They had to fully yield, otherwise they would not have peace.

Jacob refused to entertain the demand for Benjamin to be taken to Egypt: “You have bereaved me of two sons. Now you want to take Benjamin away. Everything is against me!” For Jacob, there was a lesson to be learnt also. Over the years, he had slackened in his zeal towards God. He had to come back to the place of full trust and obedience. Their physical need compelled them to submit to another lesson in God’s school of chastening. Even Jacob had to re-learn the same lesson. As their food stocks ran dry, he had to yield: *“Go again, buy us a little food,”* (Gen 43:2). But without Benjamin! At this impasse, Judah assumed leadership of the brothers. He set out the case for going down to Egypt with Benjamin: “Let Benjamin go with me. I will be surety for him. Let me personally be responsible for his safe return. We must go and get food that we may live and not die.” The argument was forcibly driven home to Jacob: “If you fear for Benjamin and keep him at home, then we will all starve to death. If we see the Egyptian without Benjamin, we will also die!”

Then Jacob saw the light. “If it has to be, it has to be! But do things the right way: with dignity, courtesy, honesty! Take along the best gifts for the Governor, and also double the money to make good the payment for the previous supplies. Take also your brother.” Finally, Jacob demonstrated his implicit trust in God. *“And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved... I am bereaved”* (Gen 43:14). Jacob had arrived at the place of total surrender to the hand of God.

**THOUGHT:** (Read Hebrews 12:7.)

**PRAYER:** Let me not struggle against Thee, Father, but let me do Thy bidding willingly.

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LORD'S DAY, MARCH 9

GENESIS 43:15-34

PSALM 34:12-22

*"The blessing of the LORD,*

*it maketh rich, and he*

*addeth no sorrow with it."*

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### UNEXPECTED RECEPTION

Let us journey along with the ten brothers to Egypt, laden with gifts for the Governor, and with not a little apprehension at the prospect of appearing before him again. As they spoke to each other, they would have turned over the unusual happenings of the first visit: the Governor had put them in prison, and threatened them with death. Yet, he had enquired about their father and demanded to see their youngest brother. Then, the money in their sacks! Was it a trap?

Then they arrived. Carefully taking their gifts and double money in their hands, they appeared before Joseph with their brother Benjamin. Joseph, seeing Benjamin, was satisfied. He then gave orders to the ruler of his house (speaking still in Egyptian) to take the brothers to his home and make the necessary preparations for a lunch reception. Not knowing the purpose of their transfer to Joseph's house, wild fears began to assail their troubled conscience. The burden and guilt of twenty years ago weighed heavily on their minds. They tried to explain to the steward of the house, but that was not necessary. He said, "Peace be to you, fear not. It was I who returned your money into the sacks. It is a gift from God." Then he brought out Simeon and treated the brothers royally.

At noon, the Governor arrived. The eleven brothers presented their presents and bowed themselves to the ground. Did they recall the dreamer brother's infuriating dreams? Joseph enquired kindly after their father. They bowed again. Seeing Benjamin, he pronounced a special blessing on him. The tenderness of the moment so touched Joseph that he had to retire to his room to weep and recompose himself. What compassion, what love!

The seating at meat was according to Egyptian protocol. The Governor sat by himself; his Egyptian officials by themselves. They could not mix with the Hebrews because of their strict dietary laws. But the strange thing was: the brothers were seated according to age. They were served with the best food, with Benjamin having five times as much as the others.

**THOUGHT:** Promotion comes from God.

**PRAYER:** Father, let me dine with Thee at the Heavenly Banquet.

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MONDAY, MARCH 10

GENESIS 44, 45

PSALM 35:10-18

*“In thee, O LORD,  
do I put my trust...”*

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### TWENTY-YEAR-OLD DREAMS CAME TRUE

The believer's future is in the hands of his Saviour and Lord. Our interest today is not in dreams but in God's Word and in the fulfilment of God's plan in our lives. God revealed His plan for Joseph in dreams because he was chosen of God for a very special purpose, in a special time before God's Word was completed. So God sent him those very unusual dreams, which must have been a source of strength and comfort to him during his difficult years in Egypt.

In this week's reading, we see the literal fulfilment of Joseph's dreams after twenty years: the eleven sheaves making obeisance to Joseph's sheaf, and the eleven stars doing likewise to Joseph's star. Looking forward, twenty years seem a long time, but looking back, it is but as yesterday. In God's sight, a thousand years are as one day! The lesson for us is this: God's purposes never fail, whether they take twenty years or 2,000 years to come true. What we all need is patience and faith.

No doubt, God's Spirit was with Joseph through all those trying years, when his brothers hated him, manhandled him, stripped him, threw him into a pit, then sold him to slave traders - all out of jealousy and hatred. From a human standpoint, Joseph was finished. But God was behind every move, appointing and directing each minute detail. Joseph, sold as a slave, now appeared as a saviour! God's purposes may seem to take a long time to come to fruition, but it is never too late!

Are you on the point of giving up all hope because God seems to be silent? Remember that God neither slumbers nor sleeps. He ruled during Joseph's time, and He is still ruling today. History continues to be written. His Story is still being written by His Hand. Things around you may seem to be getting worse. Do not despair. Remember how God led Joseph. God will also lead you. Only trust Him to deliver.

**THOUGHT:** (Read Psalm 133:1.)

**PRAYER:** Grant me patience to wait for Thy perfect timing to reveal Thy good purpose and plan.

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TUESDAY, MARCH 11

GENESIS 44:1-15

PSALM 35:19-28

*Sing, for He hath  
done marvellous things.*

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### JOSEPH'S STRATAGEM

In his heart, Joseph was yearning to reveal himself to his brothers, but he wanted to be sure that they had fully repented before he showed himself. In his position as Governor and benefactor, he could further put the brothers to a final test, a test of real conversion, a genuine change of heart. Unless the eleven were thoroughly converted, united and loyal to the group, how could they be used of God to found a nation?

Joseph laid the groundwork for a final test. Let the brothers go on their way, loaded with good things, and the Governor's cup planted in Benjamin's sack. A mock pursuit by Joseph's stewards, a search on the spot and the incriminating cup found in Benjamin's sack. The brothers again found themselves in a tight spot. Of course they were innocent, and they knew it. So did the steward. So did Joseph! But there lingered the guilt of twenty years earlier, when the brothers' envy and hatred caused them to mercilessly dispose of their brother and disregard the feelings of their father. Joseph had seen evidence of their remorse and regret, but had they truly repented at heart?

The stage was then set for them to reveal their true colours. "*Then they rent their clothes... and returned to the city*" (Gen 44:13) where Joseph waited, to face the music. To us who have all the facts of the case, we call it a "frame-up." The brothers were innocent. Naturally, Joseph the mastermind knew it only too well as the crestfallen brethren were once again brought before him. As they approached the Governor, "*...they fell before him on the ground*" (Gen 44:14). Recall Joseph's dream!

Although fully innocent, they were in no position to argue. Here they were once again before the Governor, and at his mercy. But had he not showered them with kindness just the day before? Now he stood before them, stern and severe, accusing them of a vile misdeed. The brothers were too stunned for words. Hospitality one moment, hostility the next! Kind words yesterday, dark accusations today!

**THOUGHT:** The way of the Lord is past finding out.

**PRAYER:** Search me, O Father, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

GENESIS 44:16-34

PSALM 37:1-10

“...*the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous...*”

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### JUDAH PLEADED FOR BENJAMIN

Judah emerged as the spokesman for the brothers. He said: As far as the present charge goes, we are innocent! But “...*God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants...*” (Gen 44:16). The guilt of twenty years ago flashed back to the brothers’ minds. While they could not explain the mysterious finding of the Governor’s cup in Benjamin’s sack, they could not avoid the pangs of conscience which kept surfacing as God dealt with them through His chosen instrument. And Joseph was not going to let the brothers off without a full and fair test. The question in Joseph’s mind was: Had the brothers renounced their old ways? Were they mindful of their youngest brother? Did they care for their aged father?

Judah’s submission to the Governor was an expression of collective responsibility: “...*we are my lord’s servants...*” (Gen 44:16). Benjamin had the cup, but we identify ourselves with him: if he suffers, we suffer with him! They passed the first test! But the Governor insisted: Only the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant. The rest of you may go in peace to your father. At this, Judah made an ingenious and impassioned speech on Benjamin’s behalf. With utmost courtesy and respect, addressing Joseph as “*my lord*” (Gen 44:20), Judah pleaded that Benjamin be allowed to return home to their father on compassionate and humanitarian grounds, he being the child of his old age. Furthermore, argued Judah, it was only on his lord’s specific insistence that their young brother was allowed to leave home. And that was not without their father’s greatest reluctance, after Judah had offered himself as surety for him. In conclusion, he said, “*Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren*” (Gen 44:33). Judah had spoken for the rest of the brothers. Their unanimous plea was to preserve the bond between Benjamin and their father. In Judah’s speech, we see a forsaking of their old ways. Self was of no consequence. Their one concern was for their father and brother. Joseph saw that their repentance was genuine and complete. They had passed his test with distinction!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Proverbs 28:13.)

**PRAYER:** Help me, Father, to be transparent before Thee.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 13

GENESIS 45:1-15

PSALM 37:11-20

“Bless the LORD, O my soul...”

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### NOT YOU BUT GOD

Convinced that his brothers had truly repented of their past sins, Joseph revealed himself. He cleared the place of Egyptians, then speaking in Hebrew he said, *“I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?”* (Gen 45:3). With tears streaming down his face, Joseph released the intense and concealed emotions of the years. But his brothers were too stunned for words, for their guilt still weighed heavily on their conscience. How could they face the brother whom they had so unmercifully treated?

With words of comfort and assurance, Joseph allayed their fears. *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life”* (Gen 45:5). Three times Joseph explained: It was not they but God who did it! It was God’s providence.

God’s amazing grace and amazing ways! Out of evil, the Lord had worked good. Out of the brothers’ envy and hatred, the Lord had brought salvation to Israel. Even Jacob’s favouritism was used by the Lord to fulfil His purpose. In Joseph we see God’s chosen instrument for the conversion of his brothers and for the preservation of his family, the progenitors or founders of the race. To do this, God had made him *“a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt”* (Gen 45:8). Fact is indeed stranger than fiction!

While his brothers were still too lost for words, Joseph announced his plan to save the family from the famine. Jacob and all the clan should leave Canaan and settle in Goshen, Egypt. Being close to the capital, Joseph could conveniently care for them (Gen 45:11). Then followed a time of emotional reunion with tears of joy freely flowing, dissolving the bitterness of the past. Joseph embraced and kissed each brother in turn, endearing himself to them. What was past was past. Those things were best forgotten, put out of mind. Let there be a fresh start, a new chapter in their relationships. After the brotherly reconciliation, they had a time of sweet fellowship, to make up for the lost years!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Romans 11:33.)

**PRAYER:** I praise Thee, Father, for Thy great wisdom and knowledge. May I not trust in the wisdom of the world.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 14

GENESIS 45:16-28

PSALM 37:31-40

*The Lord reigneth!*

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### GOOD NEWS OUT OF EGYPT!

Joseph's extraordinary reunion with his brothers soon reached Pharaoh's ears. Pharaoh was pleased with the report and extended his welcome to Joseph's father and brothers. Without hesitation, he concurred with Joseph in his plan to save the family, and he made available for Joseph's brothers all necessary transportation to move the family out of Canaan to Egypt (Gen 45:18). The groundwork was laid here for the Exodus, God's mighty redemptive work, 400 years later.

It is amazing that God was saving Jacob's family by the hand of a heathen people and a heathen king. But Pharaoh was acting out of gratitude to Joseph whom God had sent to be Egypt's deliverer. The whole nation owed Joseph a debt, which was now being repaid:

1. Pharaoh personally directed the "rescue operation" by giving orders for a large convoy of animals, wagons and servants to fetch Jacob's household out of Canaan. With genuine goodwill and magnanimity, Pharaoh said, *"I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land"* (Gen 45:18).
2. Joseph, Governor over the land of Egypt, then prepared all the necessary transport and provisions for the long journey, and for the sustenance of a household of about seventy souls. To Jacob his father, Joseph sent a special gift of corn, bread and meat carried on ten asses.
3. The brothers then led the convoy to Canaan and broke the good news to their father. To Jacob, it was incredible! The lost son, presumed dead for over twenty years, now Governor of Egypt! *"And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not"* (Gen 45:26).

To leave the Promised Land was never a part of Jacob's thinking at any time, but he was compelled to do so for two considerations: to escape the grievous famine, and to see his long-lost son. *"...I will go and see him before I die"* (Gen 45:28).

**THOUGHT:** (Read Psalm 22:28.)

**PRAYER:** Let me learn to trust in Thee, one step at a time, O Father!

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SATURDAY, MARCH 15

GENESIS 46-47

PSALM 38:1-11

*In everything,  
small or big, be faithful.*

---

### A HAVEN FROM FAMINE

Would you normally expect God's people to find life-giving support from a nation of superstitious idol worshippers? Believers being provided for by unbelievers? Yet, this was what happened when Jacob and his household emigrated to Egypt to escape the grievous famine in Canaan. Egypt, the land of pyramids, was an amazing ancient civilisation with arts and crafts, science and technology, ahead of the times. Even to this day, the engineering and architectural skills involved in the building of the pyramids remain a total mystery.

In God's sight, however, Egypt was merely an instrument for the fulfilment of His eternal purpose. As the Psalmist put it, the Lord *"is the governor among the nations"* (Ps 22:28). Egypt's first major role in the Bible was to provide a haven from famine for God's people: first for Abraham (Gen 12:10), and later for Jacob and his family. For this purpose, God had sent one man, even Joseph, to go before the brethren, to preserve life.

God Almighty had so ordered events that Jacob, against his natural inclination, was moved to leave the Land of Promise for a season, to sojourn in this foreign land. Egypt suddenly became the cradle of the nation Israel, which multiplied in 430 years from seventy souls to over two million. Kept in relative isolation, preserved by their deliverer Joseph in the initial stages, and watched over by God Himself, the Israelites became a multitude. In the process, Egypt became the setting for the greatest rescue operation of all time – the Exodus!

Except for God, the haven had become a prison of no escape! And God's might was revealed as He delivered His people from this prison.

Are you in some kind of "prison of no escape"? Look to the Lord for deliverance. There is nothing too difficult for Him. Only make right with God. Live in obedience to His Word. Then He will bless you. He is able. He is the Almighty God!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Isaiah 40:17.)

**PRAYER:** May I see Thee, Father, in every situation of my life.

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### JACOB'S LAST JOURNEY

One of the most traumatic experiences in life is to leave home, especially for the young and the aged. Jacob, as a young man, had to leave home as a fugitive. Twenty years later, he returned to the land. To him, this Land of Promise was home, at least as far as this life was concerned. Surely his one great desire was to remain in the land, to see his sons well-settled in life, and to pass his last days in peace. Travelling abroad was far from his thoughts. He was advanced in years and long journeys were an ordeal not to be lightly undertaken.

But the sudden turn of events, the prospect of seeing his long-lost Joseph, made all the difference. The son of his beloved Rachel whom he had given up for dead was then alive! *"...It is enough... I will go and see him before I die"* (Gen 45:28). For some people, the consciousness of death's approach seems to dominate their thinking, and they tend to harp on this theme for many years before the actual event. Jacob seemed to belong to this category!

First stop, Beersheba. Here, Abraham and Isaac had sacrificed to God in past years. Jacob did likewise. The long journey and the prospect of living in a foreign country turned his thoughts to God. There must have been moments of doubt. Did God really want him to leave the land? Would there be a hope of returning? One night, God spoke to Jacob in a vision. *"...I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee... I will also surely bring thee up again..."* (Gen 46:3-4). Does this not remind you of Jacob's first journey from home many years before, when God spoke to him in a dream that first night out?

Our God is a God of His Word: He is a consistent God. He keeps His promises and He brings them to fulfilment. Do you know what He is doing in your life? Pray for spiritual understanding of what is happening around you.

**THOUGHT:** (Read Proverbs 3:6.)

**PRAYER:** Father, I acknowledge Thy greatness and Thy control over all things, including my life. Direct my path, Father!

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MONDAY, MARCH 17

GENESIS 46:8-27

PSALM 39

*Live daily for the Lord.*

---

### POPULATION EXPLOSION IN EGYPT

Today's reading may seem to be a monotonous recital of Hebrew names, and so it is to the casual reader! However, let not this obscure the great and historic fact that the founders of God's chosen nation were being transplanted from Canaan into Egypt, to become like the stars of heaven for number (Gen 15:5). Note Genesis 46:27. All the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt were threescore and ten. And when the Israelites left Egypt 430 years later, they numbered "*about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children*" (Exod 12:37).

Who made up the original seventy souls? These included Jacob, his twelve sons, fifty-one grandsons, four great-grandsons, one daughter (Dinah) and one granddaughter (Serah). You will notice from this summary that of the seventy souls, sixty-eight were males! God in His providence had given Jacob this extraordinary preponderance of males to provide the base for the rapid enlargement of the nation.

At this point, an interesting question arises. Where did the wives of all these men come from? Jacob's had come from Haran during his sojourn with Laban's kindred. Joseph's wife was Egyptian. Simeon's was a Canaanite woman. For the others, we may presume that the women of Shechem captured by Simeon and Levi (Gen 34:29) were absorbed into the clan; then the daughters of Ishmael, Esau and Keturah could also have been taken into the family. After all, they were descendants of Abraham.

Look back and see Abraham ninety-nine and Sarah eighty-nine, still childless, although God had promised twenty-four years earlier to make Abraham "*a great nation.*" Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6).

Do you believe God, and take Him at His Word? Things may seem impossible, but to God, nothing is impossible! See how the Lord had been working thus far in Genesis. He is still working today in your life!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Isaiah 60:22.)

**PRAYER:** I praise Thee, O Father, for Thou art the omnipotent God!

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TUESDAY, MARCH 18

GENESIS 46:28-34

PSALM 40:1-8

*“...where your treasure is,  
there will your heart be also.”*

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### ARRIVAL IN “EXODUS LAND”

Try to visualise Jacob’s journey from Canaan to Egypt: a large convoy of wagons, asses, perhaps camels, other beasts of burden, and a vast herd of livestock in the charge of Jacob’s sons and servants, slowly trekking westward over 200 miles of wilderness. Think of the problems of food and water supply, sanitation (primitive) and sickness, etc.

Despite all these, Jacob’s heart must have been filled with great expectation: that he would soon see his thought-to-be-dead son, Joseph. His heart must also be filled with gratitude to his Almighty God for this “miracle” of seeing Joseph alive again. Indeed, the Lord God is the God of impossibles!

Finally, they arrived at Goshen where Jacob was reunited with Joseph after a separation of over twenty years. It was an emotional event: Joseph “...fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while” (Gen 46:29). As for Jacob, he was contented to die “...since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive” (Gen 46:30).

Then Joseph got on with the pressing practical business of settling his father’s household in the land. In his God-given wisdom, he arranged first for an audience with Pharaoh, so that Jacob could present himself and his family, to offer their respects. Joseph then suggested that since they were shepherds, it might be best for them to settle in Goshen, separate from the Egyptians who regarded herdsmanship as a degrading task, “*an abomination*” (Gen 46:34).

**THOUGHT:** (Read Ecclesiastes 9:10.)

**PRAYER:** I thank Thee, Father, for the tasks Thou putteth in my hands daily. Help me to do my best for Thee, Father.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

GENESIS 47:1-12

PSALM 40:9-17

*Is the Lord pleased with me?*

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### “RENDER TO ALL THEIR DUES”

So said the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans, “*Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour*” (Rom 13:7). Christians and believers ought therefore to pay due respect and honour to those in authority. Jacob’s family was accordingly presented before Pharaoh as a mark of respect and loyalty. After all, they were aliens, guests in the land, and recipients of Egyptian food and hospitality.

Notice how the sons of Jacob called themselves “*servants*” before Pharaoh, and how they entreated the king to “*...let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen*” (Gen 47:4). After the brothers, Joseph presented his father Jacob. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Does it strike you as strange that the progenitor (forefather) of God’s people should bless a heathen king? But this is according to the teaching of God’s Word, wherever the powers-that-be exercise their rightful authority. Listen to the Apostle Paul: “*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority...*” (1 Tim 2:1-2).

On his part, Pharaoh graciously extended hospitality and land to Joseph’s family, saying, “*The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle*” (Gen 47:6).

In the past, the Singapore Government exhorted us with the slogan, “*Courtesy is our way of life.*” Courtesy must naturally include respect, tribute and honour towards those in authority over us. Similarly in church and at home, may the same message be observed: render to all their dues! Good Christians are courteous people!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Psalm 37:18-19.)

**PRAYER:** Father, may my life be a good testimony for Thee and bring glory to Thy name.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 20

GENESIS 47:13-26

PSALM 41

*Much prayer, much power.*

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### FAMINE ENRICHED PHARAOH

A Chinese proverb says: No food no virtue! Not even between father and son! Famine drives men to extremes, in order to survive. So it was in Egypt. And “...*the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine*” (Gen 47:13). There was no bread in all the land. Remember the seven lean and hungry cows and the seven thin ears of corn? The only food grain available was to be found in the storehouses erected by Joseph for Pharaoh during the first seven years of plenty. The Egyptians suddenly found themselves at the mercy of their king.

What will you not give in exchange for food to survive? The Egyptians were faced with this question. It was a matter of life and death. In the first year, it was money for food. “*And Joseph gathered up all the money... in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house*” (Gen 47:14).

After the first year, when the people’s money was exhausted, Joseph traded his food for their livestock. When their livestock was exhausted, they had only themselves and their land. So they came to Joseph and said, “*Wherefore shall we die...? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh...*” (Gen 47:19). And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. In a few years, there was a vast transference of wealth from the people to their king, thanks to one Hebrew mastermind! Furthermore, because of Joseph’s all-powerful influence, Pharaoh favoured Jacob’s clan, even above the Egyptians themselves. Look at Genesis 47:12: “*And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father’s household, with bread...*”

Here we see the seeds of future discontent leading to the eventual oppression of the Hebrew immigrants. While the Israelites enjoyed Pharaoh’s hospitality and bounty, the Egyptians became impoverished slaves to Pharaoh who waxed richer and richer by reason of the famine.

**THOUGHT:** “*In every thing give thanks...*” (1 Thess 5:18)

**PRAYER:** Whether famine or plenty, may I always give Thee thanks, Father!

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FRIDAY, MARCH 21

GENESIS 47:27-31

PSALM 42

“...thy word is truth.”

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### ISRAEL GREW AND MULTIPLIED EXCEEDINGLY

In the midst of a grim and desperate situation, when all the other inhabitants of the land were struggling to survive, we see the colony of Israel in a relatively isolated part of the Nile delta flourishing and prospering. Do you not think it ironical that the same famine which was afflicting the Egyptian natives was proving to be a source of unprecedented blessing to the alien Israelites? People of the world would attribute this to “fate” and “luck.” What do you think?

Our understanding of God’s purposes ought to give us a different interpretation of the matter. Let us see the unseen hand of God directing events to bring about the fulfilment of His eternal plan of world redemption. For it was God who sent Joseph into Egypt to pave the way for the salvation of Israel. And did not God cause the imprisoned baker and butler to dream dreams which Joseph interpreted? And because of this came the interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams, followed by Joseph’s elevation to high office.

Now you ask, “Why the special favours to Jacob’s household who were foreigners from Canaan?” The answer is simple. Because of God’s covenant relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What God had promised, He was bound to carry out. Let us recall the original promise to Abraham: *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing”* (Gen 12:2). So at Beersheba came God’s words to Jacob: *“...I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt...”* (Gen 46:3-4).

Why then should it surprise you or anyone that Israel grew and multiplied exceedingly? It was part of God’s plan! Israel was included in God’s covenant blessing. So is every believer! Did you know that?

**THOUGHT:** *“...fear not to go down... I will go down with thee...”*  
(Gen 46:3-4)

**PRAYER:** Father, grant me courage to do Thy bidding, always.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 22

GENESIS 48-49

PSALM 43

“...the Spirit gave them utterance.”

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### PROPHETIC PRONOUNCEMENTS

When Jacob arrived in Egypt, the overwhelming joy and unexpected pleasure of seeing Joseph caused him to say, “*Now let me die, since I have seen thy face...*” (Gen 46:30). He was then 130 years old and had good reason to believe that the end was not far away. However, God prolonged his days for another seventeen years in the land of sojourn (cf. Gen 47:28). “...for he is thy life, and the length of thy days...” (Deut 30:20).

Finally, Jacob sensed that the end was imminent, and the time was at hand for him to take his leave. What would you say to your family when you have arrived at the end of life’s journey? Here we see Jacob at the end of an unusually checkered life spanning 147 eventful years, on his deathbed, leaving his last words.

First, Jacob recalled God appearing to him in a dream on that unforgettable first night away from home, and blessed him with these words, “*Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession*” (Gen 48:4). Then Jacob recalled his beloved wife Rachel and her untimely death. But foremost in his mind was the grace of God, the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God who was the fountain of every blessing. “...God shall be with you...” (Gen 48:21).

Then looking into the future, Jacob prophesied (with God-given eyesight and insight) the destiny of each son in turn. The man after whom the nation Israel is named today became God’s prophet. He made utterances which projected into the future, concerning the sons, the nation and the world, something which neither Abraham nor Isaac were given to do!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Proverbs 9:11.)

**PRAYER:** Father, may I be thankful for each new day that Thou givest me.

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LORD'S DAY, MARCH 23

GENESIS 48:1-11

PSALM 44:1-12

*"...Blessed are the dead  
which die in the Lord..."*

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### A DYING MAN SPOKE

What are the thoughts of one who is about to depart this life? It is certain he would not be concerned with unimportant things. He would have time only for the most vital matters. For the believer, his thoughts would be turned heavenwards, to God and the Lord Jesus, and also to those dearest to his heart, particularly departed loved ones.

Jacob on his deathbed was nourished by thoughts of God, the God who had called Abraham and Isaac, the God who had spoken those precious promises at Luz when he fled from his brother's presence. After all that he had been through in his father's home, in Padanaram, serving his father-in-law Laban, his wrestling with God's angel at the ford Jabbok, his deliverance from Esau, the ordeal of Joseph's loss, the marvels of God's works in Egypt, and the reunion with Joseph, it could be simply summed up in the words of Genesis 48:3: *"...God Almighty appeared unto me... and blessed me."*

Now that he had reached the end of the road, he was able to look back and recount all the blessings that he had received from God's hand, exactly as He had earlier promised. So, the dying believer's last words are a testimony to his faith in the Lord, and to God's goodness. Martin Luther said, "God is the Lord by whom we escape death." John Calvin: "Thou Lord bruised me, but I am abundantly satisfied, since it is from Thy hand." Matthew Henry: "I bless God I have inward supports." Charles Wesley: "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness – satisfied, satisfied!" Dear reader, when your time comes, what will you have to say?

News of Jacob's physical decline brought Joseph swiftly to Jacob's bedside, accompanied by his two sons. To the ailing father, it was a double joy: *"I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed"* (Gen 48:11).

**THOUGHT:** What will I have to say on my deathbed?

**PRAYER:** Father, whether in life or in death, may I bring glory to Thy Name.

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MONDAY, MARCH 24

GENESIS 48:12-22

PSALM 45: 1-8

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

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### THE BLESSING OF THE CROSSED HANDS

Jacob on his deathbed, under the inspiration of God's Spirit, did two things: he blessed his son Joseph and Joseph's two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh); and he appropriated the two boys to be his sons, thus promoting them to the same status as the twelve. This gave Ephraim and Manasseh an equal inheritance with Judah and the rest. In so doing, Jacob transacted a most important business. He adopted Joseph's sons by his Egyptian wife, raised them to the status of sons, so that each of them became head of a tribe among the twelve in Israel. This ensured for them a share in the covenant blessing of God!

Joseph coveted his father's blessing not only for himself but for his sons also. His natural expectation was that Manasseh the elder boy should receive the greater blessing by Jacob's right hand. So he positioned them such that Manasseh was on Jacob's right and Ephraim on the left. But Jacob crossed his hands so that his right hand was laid on Ephraim and the left on Manasseh. Jacob was very sure of what he was doing. He made it clear to Joseph that it was no mistake or accident or partiality. Jacob had acted in compliance with divine counsels, in the spirit of prophecy.

History upheld Jacob's blessing of the crossed hands. Of course, both lads were blessed and Manasseh became great, but indeed Ephraim was the greater one. When the tribes assembled in the wilderness years later, Ephraim was more numerous, bore the standard of that squadron and was named first. From Ephraim came two leaders: Joshua and Jeroboam. Jacob had truly blessed “in the Spirit.”

God does not bless according to human expectation. He often chooses the weak things to perform mighty things for His glory. He is sovereign. He is all-wise and His ways are perfect. Acknowledging this, we then observe how God chose the younger before the elder: Abel above Cain, Isaac above Ishmael, Jacob above Esau, Judah above Reuben, David above all his brethren. These all had one thing in common: FAITH. Will you in FAITH also fall in the line of blessing?

**THOUGHT:** (Read Psalm 75:6-7.)

**PRAYER:** Father, may I never seek to promote myself.

---

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

GENESIS 49:1-12

PSALM 45:9-17

“...Surely I come quickly...”

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### JACOB THE PROPHET SPEAKING!

No deathbed scene can ever compare with Jacob's. It was unique in more ways than one. Here we see the great Patriarch (father) of the nation-to-come, leaving his will to his twelve sons. With eyes of faith, Jacob spoke “in the Spirit” great prophetic words of faith. “Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers” (Gen 48:21). “...Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days” (Gen 49:1).

1. Reuben, first by birth but not in character. Instead of integrity and stability, Reuben showed unrestrained carnality by committing adultery with Bilhah. He was incapable of constancy or leadership. His tribe was probably absorbed into the half tribe of Manasseh in later years.
- 2, 3. Simeon and Levi were paired together for their partnership in the massacre of Shechem. Their cruel, treacherous and wanton slaughter of the Shechemites deserved to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Why did they carry out their murderous assault on defenceless persons? Was it not out of hatred, malice and vengeance in the heart? Beware of these violent types! Avoid them! For their misdeed, the judgment was: “...divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel” (Gen 49:7). The Levites were dispersed throughout the land as priests. Simeon was largely absorbed by Judah.
4. Judah received high honour, as the leader among the tribes. Through David, the tribe led the nation to its greatest victories and conquests. In Judah was ascribed the royal household, like the lion which is king among the beasts. But the ultimate fulfilment of Judah's greatness is in our Lord Jesus when He returns in power and great glory as KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS. Then the kingdoms of this world are become the “kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev 11:15). In that day, Israel will say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt 23:39). “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...” (Gen 49:10)!

**THOUGHT:** Everything has been planned by God.

**PRAYER:** O Father, how long before Jesus returns?

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

GENESIS 49:13-27

PSALM 46

*Be thankful for all things.*

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### PERFORMANCE REFLECTS CHARACTER

5. Zebulun was the only son whose geographic inheritance was predicted, indicating an adventurous seafaring spirit. His territory was to include the famous sea-ports, Tyre and Zidon, on the Mediterranean coast.
6. Issachar was the symbol of spiritual weakness and failure to trust God. Not subduing the Canaanites, they became their servants.
7. Dan received a twofold assessment: (i) He would be a judge to lead his tribe northward to Laish. (ii) Though small, yet success was his. So Dan won an inheritance in the northern territory.
8. Gad was to suffer defeat before final victory.
9. Asher's lot was the rich and fertile coast northward from Carmel.
10. Naphtali was to be fruitful, and also successful in war.
11. Joseph deserved and received the largest and most extensive blessing. As a "*fruitful bough*," Joseph had proved useful and productive even in the face of extreme adversity. Enemies and afflictions did not prevent God from perfecting His purpose in his life. By God's grace, he maintained his integrity and composure through every trial, no matter how difficult. For Joseph, the future was assured. Why? Because the "*...God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father... they shall be on the head of Joseph...*" (Gen 49:25-26).
12. Benjamin was given a portrait of aggressive activity, both morning and evening, with exploits attended by victory.

In these blessings, we see strong indications of God's redemptive purpose to be effected in the future of the nation-to-be.

**THOUGHT:** (Read Psalm 127:1.)

**PRAYER:** Father, take charge of every aspect of my life.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 27

GENESIS 49:28-33

PSALM 47

*The earth is not our  
permanent home.*

---

### WHAT A BLESSED FAREWELL!

The twelve sons of Jacob received the father's blessing, more or less, each according to what he deserved. What a tremendous effort it must have been for a 147-year-old man to deliver that great sermon and last testament. The Spirit of prophecy from God came to Jacob like fresh oil to an expiring lamp. Having pronounced the blessing, he then prepared to depart, giving final and explicit instructions concerning his burial.

In those instructions, we see unmistakably Jacob clinging to God's promise, that Canaan should be the inheritance of his seed in due time. Egypt was only a land of sojourn, for a season. There had to be the remembrance of the blessed Promised Land. Then Jacob appointed his own burial place, "*the cave of Machpelah*" (Gen 23:9), which Abraham had purchased for a burial ground. There lay the remains of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah. To these Jacob requested to be gathered, so that his sons and those to be added to them might continually remember that they belonged to another country, and not Egypt.

When all this was said and done, he reposed himself in bed in an attitude of rest. Contented and composed, he lay down and "...*yielded up the ghost...*" (Gen 49:33). What a blessed, peaceful and triumphant passing for this great man of God! Could any believer ask for a better way of going Home? The Psalmist said, "*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*" (Ps 116:15). "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth... that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them*" (Rev 14:13).

Dear reader, the day comes sooner or later when we too shall go the way of Jacob. Will you be like him, ready to "yield up the ghost" and pass to the next world to meet the Saviour? If you are one of His, then death holds no fear for you. It will be a joyous experience!

**THOUGHT:** I am really not ready to live until I am ready to die.

**PRAYER:** Give me a pilgrim's heart, Father, a heart that ever yearns for Home.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 28

GENESIS 50:1-6

PSALM 49:1-10

*Keep on believing.*

*Jesus is very near.*

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### BURIAL, NOT CREMATION!

In land-scarce Singapore, it is commonly argued that cremation is preferable to burial. What does God's Word have to say in this matter? Should Christians follow the fashion, reduce their dead to ashes and deposit them in a columbarium, in a recess in a wall for a sepulchral urn? Many Christian leaders advocate cremation, being persuaded that it is the better method, although without Scriptural support.

Today's reading gives us an account of the preparation for Jacob's burial. No other burial in the Bible is described in such detail, a fact which emphasises the importance of Jacob in God's redemptive plan. In a practical way, it shows how believers should treat their dead with due honour and commit their bodies to the ground by burial. The Lord God in the Garden of Eden had said to Adam, "*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*" (Gen 3:19). In obedience to this injunction, the Scriptural method for disposal of the dead has through the ages been by burial and never by cremation.

It is interesting to note that Jacob was accorded the highest honour given by the Egyptians to their dead. Joseph had his personal physicians to embalm Jacob's body, an elaborate process lasting forty days. Then followed national mourning for the great patriarch for seventy days. This was only two days shorter than that for a pharaoh. After the mourning period was over, Joseph proceeded with arrangements for burial back in Canaan as requested by Jacob. Joseph first sought and obtained Pharaoh's permission for the clan to return to their homeland for the burial, with the promise that they would come back. Evidently, after seventeen years the Israelites had become an important, if not indispensable, component of the Egyptian economy. This was the principal cause of their detention in the land in later years.

**THOUGHT:** Scriptural injunction must override social expediency.

**PRAYER:** Father, may I not be just a hearer of Thy Word, but a doer as well.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 29

GENESIS 50:7-13

PSALM 49:11-20

“...Honour thy father and mother...”

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### A HISTORIC FUNERAL

Abraham and Isaac both had simple funerals, each attended by two sons. Jacob, however, was different. It was a State Funeral and a very stately funeral! He was attended to the grave by twelve sons and a very great company consisting of “...*all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father’s house... And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen...*” (Gen 50:7-9). All the pomp and grandeur befitting a national leader was accorded to Jacob. It would probably be correct to say that this cortege made the longest trip ever recorded, a distance of about 700 kilometre, to and fro. The whole elaborate procedure consisted of three parts:

1. The long caravan procession made its way up north-eastward from Egypt, skirting the Red Sea, across the Sinai desert, towards the south-east of the Dead Sea, then up the east bank of the Jordan River.
2. When the convoy reached the “...*threshingfloor of Atad...*” (Gen 50:10), they paused for a seven-day formal period of mourning in which the Egyptian officials participated.
3. The actual burial was attended only by the family members. “*For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah*” (Gen 50:13), which Abraham had bought for a burial place for the family.

The whole affair was attended by great sorrowing which even the Canaanites took note of, and by reason of this, the place was named “*Abelmizraim*” (Gen 50:11), meaning “The mourning place of the Egyptians.” Joseph loved his father dearly and to him was given the honour of burying him.

**THOUGHT:** “*To every thing there is a season... A time to be born, and a time to die...*” (Eccles 3:1-2)

**PRAYER:** Not just my life, Father, but may my death speak of Thy goodness too.

---

LORD'S DAY, MARCH 30

GENESIS 50:14-26

PSALM 50:1-11

*"We love him because  
he first loved us."*

---

## FORGIVING AND FORGETTING

True forgiving means also forgetting. When God forgives, He forgets. God's Word says, *"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"* (Jer 31:34). To those who seek God's forgiveness, our Lord Jesus says, *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matt 6:14-15). As Christians and believers, we must learn this lesson of forgiving one another.

Joseph understood this spiritual truth well. The brothers' wickedness and evil treatment did not make him bitter or vengeful. It was never in his mind to "get even" with them. By faith, he understood the incident at Dothan as an act of God. When he first revealed himself to the brothers, terror and remorse filled their hearts. But Joseph assured them that there was no need to be grieved or *"...angry with yourselves..."* (Gen 45:5). With eyes of faith, Joseph saw things differently: *"God did send me before you to preserve life"* (Gen 45:5).

After their father's death, the brothers, still conscience-burdened, imagined that Joseph might now want to settle old scores. When their message begging for forgiveness as a dying plea from their father was conveyed to Joseph, he wept. What was past was past! The wicked deeds of the brothers had long been forgiven and forgotten. *"...Fear not... ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good... to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them"* (Gen 50:19-21).

It is said, "To err is human, to forgive divine." We all need to learn to forgive and forget. Joseph set us the example. Recall how our Lord said, *"...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34). May His words from the cross melt our hearts and make them tender.

**THOUGHT:** (Read Ephesians 4:32.)

**PRAYER:** Father, grant me the tenderness of heart to forgive and forget.

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MONDAY, MARCH 31

GENESIS 50

EXODUS 1

*Make my day count for Jesus.*

---

### LIFE'S CHANGING SCENE

Reading through Genesis 50 and Exodus 1, there is that inevitable sense of loss and sadness as one by one, the familiar names are removed from the Stage of Life: Jacob, then Joseph, followed later by “*all his brethren, and all that generation*” (Exod 1:6). It brings to mind the famous Psalm of Moses: “*For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood...*” (Ps 90:4-5).

These lines from the pen of Isaac Watts, the great man of God, express the same thoughts:

*“Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly, forgotten as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.”*

Genesis closes with the death of Joseph, God’s great deliverer in the land of Egypt. His parting words were prophetic: “*...God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land*” (Gen 50:24) unto the land promised by God. Exodus opens on a solemn note: the twelve had passed from the scene. True, there was a great flurry of reproductive activity, but with the passing of years, fortunes changed for the children of Israel. Initially, favoured guests in the land, enjoying the hospitality and resources of Egypt, they had now become the object of envy and hostility.

Humanly speaking, the problem was one which defied human solution. We see the same kind of problem (though not as acute and explosive) in various countries today, where large immigrant populations create socio-economic and ethnic conflicts. The difference with the Israelites is this: they were God’s people and God was committed to bring them back to their homeland in Canaan.

The stage was set for the greatest rescue operation in history!

**THOUGHT:** (Read Ecclesiastes 7:2.)

**PRAYER:** May I treasure the days Thou givest me on earth, to use them in obedience to Thy direction, Father.

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## *Notes*

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